

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

QUEST FOR THE FISH TACO

Uncovering memorable examples
of San Diego's signature fare

KELI DAILEY • U-T

Shortly after I waded into San Diego's vast fish taco waters — to find the best! — I was in trouble.

I'd attacked mahi mahi, sea bass, ono, snapper, cod, halibut, catfish, swordfish and whatever else could be plucked from the sea, bundled within a tortilla, and stuffed into my face. But a few months passed and there were still more taco contenders to try here, in America's home of the fish taco. Probably thousands more.

"To be a restaurant in San Diego, you have to serve fish tacos of some kind," restaurateur Jay Porter recently blogged. About adding some to his Linkery and El Take It Easy menus, he said, "It's like a cultural law, which is awesome."

What's also awesome is how much we've cranked up our fish-in-a-tortilla production since Ralph Rubio opened the first U.S. fish taco shop here in 1983. Now, it's a huge understatement to say they're San Diego's signature food.

So to put this list together, I looked at the usual "best of" suspects. I nagged readers and chased down new recommendations. I engaged some of you in the great Batter-Fried vs. Grilled debate. And I spent time with a fish taco that successfully threw down with Bobby Flay. (It didn't make my cut.)

Of those nominees, these were the fish taco makers that did something memorable with their medium.



George's California Modern serves a sashimi-like taco. MARSHALL WILLIAMS

George's California Modern

1250 Prospect St., La Jolla. (858) 454-4244
or georgesatthecove.com/california-modern

This "fish taco" is more like sashimi. Chef Trey Foshee drops the unleavened bread element, uses raw yellowfin tuna for the "tortilla," and uses crushed corn nuts as a cornmeal-flavor substitute. The result (with crème fraîche, radish and a poof of fried avocado) is buttery, salty and alternately sighs and shatters in your mouth. \$16 for three "fish tacos," dinner only.