



## The case for octopus

Don't fear the tentacle — it can be delightful when cooked properly

**KELI DAILEY • U-T**

You're about to lose your cephalopod bias.

And this is coming from someone who did battle with fried cuttlefish in a dingy Hong Kong market, and subsequently learned not to take our restaurant letter-grade system for granted.

But — bias be gone! — there are tasty times to be had with octopus.

It's the cephalopod cousin of cuttlefish and squid. Cooked correctly, it carries a lightweight sea flavor, and, I've discovered, its dense white meat gives heft to any appetizer menu.

The \$10 octopus at Starlite's scenester supper club is a mainstay — you'll always find the parboiled marine goody served Mediterranean-style (smoked paprika oil,

a little lemon, grilled, and served on a bed of locally sourced arugula). You get two tentacles worth.

Over at the reinvented Linkery — the North Park farm-to-table haunt that stripped away some of its décor and moved its menu toward smaller plates and more varied veggies and proteins — you get three burgundy tentacle tips per \$8.5 order.

This is important to know, because the Linkery lists its wild Mexican octopus with house-cured bacon as a shareable item.

The octopus is braised, flash fried and grilled, gift-wrapped in a bacon strip, placed on top of pig's trotter mayonnaise (aka mayo made with pig's feet) and lettuce, then garnished with house-pickled onions.

When only three tentacles arrive — like beautiful SyFy network props — it

### Octo-bites

**Starlite:** 3175 India St., Mission Hills. (619) 358-9766; starlitesandiego.com

**The Linkery:** 3794 30th St., North Park. (619) 255-8778; thelinkery.com

**George's California Modern:** 1250 Prospect St., La Jolla. (858) 454-4244; georgesatthecove.com

will feel like a major act of generosity to share with your tablemates: The octopus is so flavorful, meaty and not at all chewy.

As done by the La Jolla crew at George's California Modern, octopus from Monterrey is grilled and served as a salad with celery leaves and thin-sliced celery, spears of potato confit, and dressed with fennel-saffron aioli. The presentation is dainty, the sea flavor is faint, and the tentacles range from teeny to stubby. "I'd get a full octopus steak if I could," my date declared after a few bites of the \$12 dish.

"This is something a meat-eater would eat."

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The farm-to-table restaurant The Linkery serves up three wild Mexican octopus tentacle tips wrapped in bacon. THE LINKERY