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Food

SHORT STACK Arterra's short ribs over duck fat potatoes.



## Trend Alert!

From slow food for carnivores to restaurants' casual affairs, three trends rock S.D.

**SHORT RIBS** Slow-cooked meats replaced prime cuts atop the protein totem pole this year. The best we tasted were those served over duck fat potatoes at **Arterra** (11966 El Camino Real, 858.369.6032), plus Cabernet-braised versions at **Market** (3702 Via de la Valle, 858.523.0007) and **Quarter Kitchen** (600 F St., 619.814.1000).

**CHARCUTERIE** What resto doesn't have a curing room these days? Tops still goes to **A.R. Valentien** (11480 N. Torrey Pines Rd., 858.777.6635) for the short rib pâté and **JSix** (616 J St., 619.531.8744) for the atomic salumi, but we have to give meat-plate newcomers **Tender Greens** (2400 Historic Decatur

Rd., 619.226.6254) a nod for its rabbit terrine.

**SPINOFFS!** The casual gourmet trend is in full swing, inspiring some top S.D. restos to spin-off low-cost alternatives. First came **Prepkitchen** (from **Whisknadle**), where owner Arturo Kassel can't keep slow-roasted Jidori chicken in stock. Then **Cavaillon** hatched **Luc's Bistro** with former Arterra executive sous Jason Kaplan, who has a massive hit in his baked mac 'n' cheese (moz, Parm, blue, bacon!). Now **Market** will open a \$20-and-under comfort food joint in Banker's Hill while **The Linkery** is opening a SoCal-meets-Baja small plates joint in the former Apertivo space.

GREEN GIANT!



Trey Foshee listens. When vegetarian regulars said they felt slighted by San Diego's top gourmets, the **George's California Modern** chef created not one, not two... but 14 leaf-eater plates (plus some vegan). His is the first high-end dining room in S.D. to do it. The best? His winter tabbouleh and butternut squash risotto with poached apples and feta salsa verde. [georgesatthecove.com](http://georgesatthecove.com).

THE OFFAL TRUTH



Savvy chefs turned to less popular cuts of meat to survive the downturn, and that led to an offal renaissance. Gourmands still rave about roasted bone marrow at **Whisknadle**. But our favorite? **Arterra's** popcorn sweetbreads. Jason Maitland deep-fries the silky thymus glands and serves 'em up with black truffle aioli. Like fried chicken, only not. At all. [arterrarestaurant.com](http://arterrarestaurant.com)

RAW TALENT



Molecular gastronomy was not a fad. Chefs just got too crazy with it. If you're going to use science to bend, deep-freeze and tweak food, you should do it like **Westgate Hotel** chef Fabrice Hardel—to breathe life into an overplayed dish. His take on seared ahi comes with soy cubes, lime foam and pearls of mango. Catch him Monday nights when the adjacent lounge turns into a piano-side sing-along. [westgatehotel.com](http://westgatehotel.com).



## Urban Renewal!

What recession? Caught serving froufrou white-linen food while Americans just wanted a burger and a hug, Laurel owner Tracy Borkum completely gutted her pretty resto and went for broke. Using recycled wood and coffee bags for chair coverings (plus local furniture designer Miki Iwasaki), and placing a \$20 max per dish, she single-handedly set the trend for casual gourmet in S.D. The reward? **Cucina Urbana** is the liveliest, most insanely packed restaurant in town. Regulars love chef Joe Magnanelli's fried squash blossoms. Not to mention the wood-fired pizzas. 505 Laurel St., 619.239.2222.



**SWARM EMBRACE** Packing 'em in at Cucina Urbana; ricotta gnocchi with sage brown butter and amaretti.



"We're a bit like the Bad News Bears. Against all odds, everything happens as it should." —CHEF CHRISTIAN GRAVES ON THE SUCCESS OF COOKS CONFAB (COOKSCONFAB.COM)