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## CULINARY ITINERARY: SAN DIEGO AREA

If you ask Americans which city has the best weather, San Diego's blue skies and gentle Mediterranean climate is usually among the top of the list. Its year-round sunshine and warm temperatures beg for a day at its more than 70 miles of beaches or you can take advantage of virtually unlimited outdoor recreation activities. Its attractive lifestyle has lured people from all walks of life and cultures, which is reflected in the city's dynamic food scene. Bordered by Mexico, San Diego is one of the best places to take your taste buds south of the border without leaving the country. San Diego is just an hour away from the Temecula Wine Region in the Inland Empire of California, a great option for oenophiles who want to visit wine country without leaving Southern California.

### *Day One: San Diego*

If you're visiting between January and July, drive about a half hour north along the coast to **Carlsbad Strawberry Company**, a family-run grower of fruits and vegetables, which has been in business since 1948. The 80-acre strawberry field offers some of the most delicious strawberries you'll ever taste. [www.carlsbadstrawberrycompany.com](http://www.carlsbadstrawberrycompany.com). A few miles southeast is the San Diego area's famous **Chino Farms** (858-756-3184 – recorded information only), open year-round. Every morning dozens of San Diego chefs line up at this world-renowned culinary gem, located in the exclusive enclave of Rancho Santa Fe, for perfect produce. Farther-flung devotees of this small family farm include Alice Waters, Wolfgang Puck and the late Julia Child.

For lunch, you can't go wrong with two family-owned Mexican restaurants that have been around for years, dating back to when the area was covered in agricultural fields and catered to Mexican immigrants working at the farms – **Tony's Jacal** ([www.tonysjacal.com](http://www.tonysjacal.com)) or **Fidel's Little Mexico** (858-755-5292) in Solana.

Spend some time after lunch by exploring Solano Beach or taking a stroll in Cardiff-By-The-Sea, or Del Mar. Or, or perhaps visit some favorite attractions like LEGOLAND® in Carlsbad or San Diego Wild Animal Park just east of Escondido. If after all of that you need a little caffeine injection, check out **Pannikin Coffee & Tea** (<http://pannikincoffeeandtea.com/>), located in the historic train depot in the quirky seaside enclave of Encinitas.

For dinner, the areas north of San Diego offers many "farm to fork" options. **Carl Schroeder**, the celebrated San Diego chef behind the award-winning **Market Restaurant + Bar** ([www.marketdelmar.com](http://www.marketdelmar.com)), specializes in products harvested or hand-selected by local ranchers, farmers and fishermen. Focusing on organic and sustainable produce, meats and fresh fish, Schroeder produces California coastal cuisine that is refreshing, full of flavor and simply elegant. Another Del Mar hotspot is **Addison** ([www.addisondelmar.com](http://www.addisondelmar.com)), which earned a spot on *Esquire's* 2007 list of the country's best new restaurants, and has since earned four stars from

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Mobil and four diamonds from AAA. The restaurant features opulent décor with four indoor fireplaces, an expansive outside patio, sweeping golf course panoramas, and a 2,500 bottle floor-to-ceiling wine room. **Chef William Bradley** creates a menu that exemplifies his artisanal approach to cooking. At **George's California Modern** ([www.georgesatthecove.com](http://www.georgesatthecove.com)) in La Jolla, award-winning **Chef Trey Foshee** uses local farm products and sustainable menu items and maintains his close relationship with Chino Farms, stopping each morning at the vaunted produce farm. At **A.R. Valentien** ([www.lodgeattorreypines.com](http://www.lodgeattorreypines.com)) in La Jolla, **Chef Jeff Jackson** expresses a reverence for nature and craftsmanship in his cuisine. He uses locally grown vegetables, and sends his "food forager" on searches for products from specialty organic local farms. If beer is your bag, try Stone Brewing ([www.stonebrew.com](http://www.stonebrew.com)), a gorgeous farm-to-table restaurant in Escondido. The food is superb, as well as the brews, which includes their famous Arrogant Bastard Ale. A local landmark since 1941, **The Marine Room** ([www.marineroom.com](http://www.marineroom.com)) in La Jolla has always been famous for its location nestled along the sand of La Jolla Shores Beach. For generations, diners have thrilled to the changing tides and dramatic waves crashing against the restaurant's windows. This dynamic setting provides the perfect backdrop for **Chef Bernard Guillas'** sophisticated dishes like Togarashi plum-spiced Kobe beef carpaccio, Malabar pepper-scented ostrich and fennel pollen-dusted Maine lobster tail.

### *Day Two: San Diego*

In the morning, find your way to Balboa Park, the nation's largest urban cultural park. Nestled amid 1,200 beautifully landscaped acres is the **Balboa Wine & Food School** ([www.balboafoodwine.com](http://www.balboafoodwine.com)), which offers visitors a perfect urban oasis for culinary adventure. With classes led by local chefs and foodies that are fun, loose, simple and non-technical, the school focuses on education and entertainment for all skill levels. If you want to see one of the country's top zoos, stop by the world-famous San Diego Zoo, found in Balboa Park, as well as interesting museums.

Work up an appetite by surfing, playing golf, hiking or visiting the many attractions along the San Diego Trolley Tours route, such as the revitalized and historic Gaslamp Quarter, which is great for hip shopping, galleries and restaurants, such as **Confidential** ([www.confidentialsd.com](http://www.confidentialsd.com)), which is partially owned by Andrew Firestone of "The Bachelor" television show and Firestone Walker Brewery fame. This downtown lounge serves up delightful small plates in a sexy-vibe setting. The Cohn family of restaurants ([www.cohnrestaurants.com](http://www.cohnrestaurants.com)) add to the Gaslamp allure, including the hip and sexy **Gaslamp Strip Club**, where diners grill their own steaks and **Mister Tiki Mai Tai Lounge**, featuring a poke and sushi bar and exotic Pacific Island cuisine. Another Gaslamp favorite is **Croce's Restaurants and Bar** ([www.croces.com](http://www.croces.com)), a 25-year tradition. Opened by Ingrid Croce as a tribute to her late husband, singer-songwriter Jim Croce, the multi-room complex is decorated with family music memorabilia. Croce's was a pioneer during the early days of San Diego's urban revitalization. Today, the restaurant turns out contemporary gourmet American fare, and diners can relax on the sidewalk patio and listen to live music nightly.

Or, explore the region's newest restaurant row, located near Balboa Park along 30<sup>th</sup> Street in the revitalized neighborhoods of South Park, North Park and University Heights. The most prominent restaurant, **The Linkery** ([www.thelinkery.com](http://www.thelinkery.com)) has earned national acclaim for sourcing its ingredients locally, even working with ranchers to raise animals specifically for the restaurant. The owner visits the purveyors and partners with individual farmers to ensure that customers can draw direct links between themselves, their meal and the people who cooked, grew and raised the ingredients. Other options include **Alchemy** (<http://www.alchemysandiego.com/>) for contemporary American fare with international flair, **Urban Solace** (<http://www.urbansolace.net/>) for upscale comfort food at incredible prices, **Sea Rocket Bistro** (<http://searocketbistro.com/>) for locally-sourced seafood, **Jayne's Gastropub** (<http://www.jaynesgastropub.com/>) for sophisticated UK-inspired bistro

fare, and **Blind Lady Ale House** (<http://www.blindladyalehouse.com/>) for lovingly made pizzas and beer.

### *Day Three: San Diego/Temecula*

Start off the day with a chocolate high at **Chua Chocolate** ([www.chuachocolatier.com](http://www.chuachocolatier.com)), one of Southern California's few artisan chocolate shops. They use only pure Venezuelan chocolate and blend their own unusual flavors in-house at their Chocolate Cafes located throughout the region. Post-chocolate-frenzy, you can spend the morning chilling at Ocean Beach, a cozy little beach with a small town feel, nestled between the San Diego River and the hills of Point Loma. You can pull a chair up to the bar for a cup of coffee and settle in with the newspaper. Like a small town, people greet one another as they meet on the pier for a fish or cross paths on the boardwalk. Surfers enjoy the waves created by the jetties here while swimmers and sunbathers will be pleasantly surprised by the friendly, familiar atmosphere on the beach. Take some time to burn off the calories from breakfast, because no respectable foodie can leave San Diego without trying the city's unofficial dish: fish tacos. Brought to the region from San Diego surfers visiting the Baja coast in the 1970s, they can be casual and affordable or chic and upscale. Served in restaurants throughout the region, they are a classic San Diego experience. While in Ocean Beach, visit **South Beach Bar and Grill** ([www.southbeachob.com](http://www.southbeachob.com)), and sample the version that was named "best" fish tacos in the nation by *Bon Appetit* in August 2007.

If you're in the mood for something even more directly from the source, seek out one of San Diego's daily **farmer's markets** (<http://www.sdfarmbureau.org/BuyLocal/Farmers-Markets.php>). Held every day, year round in neighborhoods across San Diego, these free events showcase the incredible abundance of produce that makes San Diego a foodie's dream destination. At downtown's the **Little Italy Mercado**, on Saturday mornings sample sea urchin the day after it comes out of the waters off Point Loma. On Sunday mornings, visit the **Hillcrest Farmer's Market** and enjoy live music as you taste local cheese and breads. In Coronado, on Tuesday afternoons, or Ocean Beach on Wednesday evenings, you can mingle with locals and sample the San Diego lifestyle while you browse the region's freshest fruits and veggies.

In the afternoon, head over to Sea World, a great place to get in touch with your inner child – even if you're 80. If you're more in the mood for drier adventures, head to the **San Diego wine region** ([www.sandiegowineries.org](http://www.sandiegowineries.org)), where you can find more than a dozen top wineries in the area. Enjoy tasting, tours, shopping and picnicking at **Shadow Mountain Vineyards** ([www.shadowmountainvineyards.com](http://www.shadowmountainvineyards.com)). The 116-year-old **Bernardo Winery** ([www.bernardowinery.com](http://www.bernardowinery.com)), in the quaint town of Rancho, boasts quaint village shops including a café, coffee shop and salon, along with wine tasting.

For dinner, If you're craving Mexican food, and spirits of another sort, head to **El Agave** ([www.elagave.com](http://www.elagave.com)) in Old Town, where a second-floor hacienda-style hideaway boasts a mind-blowing tequila collection and a menu that specializes in upscale dishes that celebrate indigenous Mexican ingredients and complex, time-honored dishes like authentic moles. Or you can venture North to the **Temecula wine region** for tastings and dinner (See Inland Empire itinerary for suggestions). For winery listings, visit [www.temeculawines.org](http://www.temeculawines.org).

For more information on San Diego attractions, visit [www.sandiego.org](http://www.sandiego.org).

*The above itinerary was created based on feedback from various destination marketing organizations, so we apologize if there are any minor inaccuracies. Dates and hours may vary so we suggest you confirm dates and hours in advance of visit. Updated July 2009.*

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