



**A IS FOR APEX** Owner Bertrand Hug only hires the best at Mister A's. "If you don't have a vast wine knowledge, you're just not hired," says a captain whose day job is to rep a high-end boutique winery. This is no summer job.

## Best Neighborhood Joints

**1. Urban Solace** Matt Gordon does lots well. His orange-tinted biscuits, his Niman Ranch riblets, his dense-mallow s'mores. But it's that damn watermelon salad—the wettest mound of waif-model catnip ever plated—that elicits our most respectful “WOW.” 3823 30th St., 619.295.6464, [urbansolace.net](http://urbansolace.net).

**2. Neighborhood** The burgers are good. Same with the garlic fries and the roasted veggie sandwich. But Neighborhood wins for wildly

splattering creativity on just about everything they do. It's a cool place to hang with rare S.D. beers; a server painted Jesus and Freud

in full carnivore action for the walls; the owner is an odd, polite cross between Salvador Dalí and Mr. Belvedere; and dillweeds who treat women like waist ornaments are 86'd from the hidden back bar. They just kinda make us feel good about giving them money. 777 G St., 619.446.0002, [neighborhoodsd.com](http://neighborhoodsd.com).

**3. Wellington Steak & Martini Lounge** At a restaurant named “Ribeye,” order the fatty cut of meat. Here, get the beef Wellington—filet mignon and cremini mushroom

duxelles wrapped in puff pastry and sauced with Madeira. It's like being in Dublin when Napoleon's small man complex was peaking. 729 W. Washington St., 619.295.6001, [thewellingtonsd.com](http://thewellingtonsd.com).

**4. Puerto La Boca** A famished economist's dream. The Argentinian resto's happy hour is phenomenal—30 percent off apps (housemade empanadas and sausages) with \$3 glasses of wine (stick to the Argentinian Malbec and Torrentes). 2060 India St., 619.234.4900, [puertolaboca.com](http://puertolaboca.com).

## Best Pies

**Cucina Urbana** (505 W. Laurel St., [urbankitchengroup.com](http://urbankitchengroup.com)) blazed S.D.'s under-\$20 trail. But it wouldn't be packed at 5:20PM on Mondays (it is) if the food stunk. Chef Joe Magninelli's foraged mushroom pizza is one of the city's best—rolled thin with tangy Taleggio cheese, braised leeks and a whiff of truffle oil. Our remaining thin-crust love goes to **BASIC's** (410 10th Ave., [barbasic.com](http://barbasic.com)) massive, floppy pies with that zing-

perfect red sauce and slight oven char. For girth, we grab the Bible-thick Chicago-style at **Lefty's** (two locations, [leftyspizza.com](http://leftyspizza.com)).

## Best Izakaya

Leucadia's Lilliputian eatery **Yu Me Ya** is locked in an epic battle with Yakitori Yakyudori for S.D.'s best *izakaya* (Japanese tapas). Yu Me's rep lies in the baked scallops and mushrooms in cream sauce, plus homemade udon and a spicy tuna carpaccio served in a wonton shell. The bounty of shouju, sake

and the heirloom rice-and-sake beer called Red Rice ain't bad, either. Make reservations or expect to wait. 1246 N. Coast Hwy., 760.633.4288.

## Best May-September

The grande dame has taken on a few fresh young fellows. **Grant Grill**—whose lobby still bears the 1930s plaque stating “No women before 3PM”—has new vigor with chef Chris Kurth and mixologist Jeff Josenhans. Kurth is a devout farmers marketeer crafting standout dishes like halibut cheeks over agretti with spring onions, sunchokes, fennel and garlic vinaigrette. Josenhans specializes in rare liquors, bitters and seasonal fruits. He rivals **Whisknadle's** Ian Ward as S.D.'s top spirit wizard. 326 Broadway, 619.744.2077, [grantgrill.com](http://grantgrill.com).

## Best Bivalves

Tarragon growers of America should sponsor **Jsix** chef Christian Graves. The “king of herbs” makes frequent cameos in his dishes, to royal effect. Our current jones? His Prince Edward Island mussels in a white wine and spring onion-tarragon broth, with thin-cut fries sprinkled with fennel pollen and Meyer lemon aioli. “They're best with a tall glass of Lost Abbey's Red Barn,” says Graves. “But so are my socks or just about anything.” 616 J St., 619.531.8744, [jsixrestaurant.com](http://jsixrestaurant.com).

Addison's dishes are constructed one tiny detail at a time.



## Best Pampering

As one top local chef noted: “William Bradley's food *better be amazing*—he only has a few tables a night.” True. **Addison** is where princes, heirs and golf pros come to escape paparazzi and blood-related panhandlers. You don't go for “the scene!” You go for the servers who float out Bradley's famed seasonal risottos in perfect sync, as if starring in *Dining, The Ballet*. You go for the *three* advanced-level sommeliers proffering Bacchus-worthy bottles, some available few other places on earth (Krug Clos du Mesnil, anyone?). Bradley's kitchen is Wimbledon-silent, an edict to focus staff on obsessively refined dishes. This isn't food. It's cuisine, from Escoffier's ghost to the gods of industry's mouths. 5200 Grand Del Mar Way, 858.314.1900, [addisondelmar.com](http://addisondelmar.com).

## BEST VIEW

Shame on us. For years, we neglected **Bertrand at Mister A's**. It wasn't hot, trendy or “newsy” enough. Plus, we heard the food had faltered. Poor, silly us. Our rekindled love affair started with the truffle mac ‘n’ cheese. Then it was the bone marrow dumpling (thank chef Stéphane Voitzwinkler's mom) and a “short rib candy” in tempura twisted like a Tootsie Roll wrapper. But the view—a 360-degree gasper of sunset vision massage—is the ultimate survey of a city on fire. Mister A's rivals pandas as S.D.'s oldest attraction. We'll take a panda rib eye at table five.

2550 Fifth Ave., 619.239.1377, [bertrandatmisteras.com](http://bertrandatmisteras.com).