

# Time to Dine in Anaheim

A guide to restaurant options at Annual

by Laura Daily

Even a decade ago, the area immediately surrounding the Anaheim Convention Center was more culinary wasteland than Shangri-La. How times have changed. These days your greatest quandary may be choosing where to dine, so bountiful are the options. "A number of celebrated chefs and restaurateurs are paying attention to Orange County," says local food blogger Marian Bacol-Uba of [marianthefoodie.com](http://marianthefoodie.com). "And it hasn't yet peaked."

While dozens of options from fast food to five-star are a short stroll from the convention center, consider venturing further afield. Even a short cab ride to nearby neighborhoods reveals a melting pot of cultures and cuisines, while the Pacific Ocean beckons those who crave surf and turf up close and personal. Bon appétit!

## Anaheim Garden Walk

Orange County's newest oasis of outdoor shopping, dining, and entertainment just keeps growing and growing with more than 55 stores, plus a bounty of dining spots. Even better, it's a mere two blocks from the convention center.

### Bar Louie Anaheim

This casual neighborhood bar boasts a full food menu. Chow down on oversized sandwiches like sesame tuna or bacon and fried egg. Or try any of their killer flatbreads such as the roasted vegetable with spinach



Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. on the Anaheim Garden Walk.

and artichoke sauce. 321 W. Katella Ave., Suite 212. 714-495-4170. [barlouieamerica.com](http://barlouieamerica.com). L, D daily. \$\$.

### Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.

The restaurant inspired by the award-winning movie *Forrest Gump* serves up shrimp, of course, but also has sandwiches, salads, fresh fish, and ribs. And, no surprise, you can always get a box of chocolates. 321 W. Katella Ave., Suite 101. 714-635-4867. [bubbagump.com](http://bubbagump.com). L, D daily. \$\$.

### Fire + Ice Grill and Bar

No matter your tastes, you'll find something to suit them at this fun

all-you-can-eat Mongolian barbecue. Choose from an assortment of fresh meats, seafood, vegetables, and sauces, and then have one of the chefs cook it to perfection on the enormous (25-foot-round) grill. 321 W. Katella Ave., Suite 315. 714-808-9757. [fire-ice.com](http://fire-ice.com). L, D daily. \$\$.

### Roy's Hawaiian Fusion Cuisine

Founded by award-winning chef Roy Yamaguchi, this restaurant brings a taste of the islands infused with European sauces and bold Asian spices. Regulars opt for the mixed plates such as Roy's Trio and the Shellfish Sampler. You might

All photos courtesy of Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau



also consider the seasonal prix fixe menu with a choice of appetizer, entrée, and dessert. 321 W. Katella Ave., Suite 105. 714-776-7697. roysrestaurant.com. D daily. \$\$\$\$.

## Downtown Disney District

Less than one mile from the convention center, Disney has created a vibrant dining and nighttime entertainment zone. So everyone is wearing mouse ears, who cares? You're in the happiest place on earth with plenty of eateries and shops to enjoy and explore.

### Catal Restaurant and Uva Bar

Mediterranean-style cuisine, tapas and wine bar. Fine dining upstairs, with more casual dining on the street level. If the weather cooperates, try for a patio table. 1580 Disneyland Dr. 714-774-4442. patinagroup.com. B, L, D daily. \$\$.

### House of Blues

Orange County's hottest live music venue and restaurant features Southern-style, Delta-inspired cuisine. The world-famous Sunday Gospel Brunch will have you dancing in the aisles. 1530 S. Disneyland Dr. 714-778-2583. hob.com/anaheim. L, D daily, brunch Sun. \$\$\$.

### La Brea Bakery Café

This inexpensive spot is ideal for a quick breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Consider lingering in the evening, as on a clear night it's also a great place to sit and view Disneyland's fireworks show. 1556 Disneyland Dr. 714-490-0233. labreabakery.com. B, L, D daily. \$-\$\$.

### Naples Ristorante e Pizzeria

Neapolitan-style, thin-crust pizzas



Napa Rose at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel.

baked in a wood-fired oven, antipasti, pasta, and main-course dishes reflect the flavors of southern Italy. 1550 Disneyland Dr. 714-776-6200. patinagroup.com. L, D daily. \$\$.

### Ralph Brennan's Jazz Kitchen

In case you didn't get enough of a taste of New Orleans at last year's Annual Conference, this restaurant combines the French Quarter's dual legacies—food and music. Be sure to try the beignets, a Louisiana version of the doughnut. Three sections offer quick service, casual dining, or fine dining, plus there's live music nightly. 1590 S. Disneyland Dr. 714-776-5200. rbjazzkitchen.com. B, L, D daily. \$\$.

### Disneyland

The park itself might get a bad rap for pricey fast food, yet some of the area's finest dining can be found in two of its hotels.

### Napa Rose

If you want to splurge, do it here.

Located at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel, Napa Rose boasts more than 40 sommeliers on staff. Executive Chef Andrew Sutton skillfully crafts a creative menu using local, fresh produce, notes Cathy Thomas, food columnist for the *Orange County Register*. "I love the way he balances flavors. His menu always features intriguing appetizers, uniquely California dishes and delicious desserts." 1600 S. Disneyland Dr. 714-781-3463. disneyland.disney.go.com/grand-californian-hotel/napa-rose/. D daily. \$\$\$\$.

## PRICE GUIDE

Average price per person for entrée without appetizer, drinks, or tax.

\$.....	Under \$10
\$\$.....	\$10-20
\$\$\$.....	\$21-30
\$\$\$\$.....	\$30 and up





The Catch in the city of Anaheim.

### Steakhouse 55

With its elegant atmosphere, attentive service, and trademark steaks, Steakhouse 55 inside the Disneyland Hotel will have you falling in love with meat. Taking highest honors is the bone-in rib eye with Steakhouse 55 rub, juicy and cooked to perfection. Pair it with a side order of Chef's Potato Stack au Gratin, guaranteed to be thick and creamy. 1150 Magic Way. 714-781-3463. [disneyland.disney.go.com/disneyland-hotel/steakhouse-55/](http://disneyland.disney.go.com/disneyland-hotel/steakhouse-55/). B, D daily. \$\$\$\$.

### City of Anaheim

Orange County may sprawl across 798 square miles, but the city of Anaheim is easily accessible, within 5–10 minutes of the convention center, and can hold its own when it comes to fine dining fare.

### Anaheim White House

Make your reservations in advance. This northern Italian restaurant is number one on every area gourmet's

"best of" list. Steamed salmon fillet atop white chocolate mashed potatoes might sound a bit different, but the sweet and savory taste combo is absolutely divine. And, yes, the exterior of this renovated 1909 home is all white. 888 S. Anaheim Blvd.

714-772-1381. [anaheimwhitehouse.com](http://anaheimwhitehouse.com). L Mon.–Fri., D daily, brunch Sun. \$\$\$\$.

### The Catch

Fresh seafood, prime steaks, and thick chops form the core of the menu, but you'll also find more casual fare like the Catch Burger, 12 ounces of Angus beef with all the fixin's on a brioche bun, or the Veracruz Chopped Salad served in an oversized wooden bowl, tossed tableside, and showered with jumbo grilled shrimp. 2100 E. Katella Ave. 714-935-0101. [catchanaheim.com](http://catchanaheim.com). L Mon.–Fri., D daily. \$\$\$.

### Mr. Stox

Chef Scott Raczek is a master of meat, not to mention seafood and risotto. The lobster bisque is legendary and a must-try dining experience. A large herb garden and fruit trees on the two-acre property ensure the freshest ingredients make it to the table. If you are celebrating, Mr. Stox will also give you a special signature dessert and write the rea-



House of Blues in the Downtown Disney District.



son or your name artfully on the plate. 1105 E. Katella Ave. 714-634-2994. [mrstox.com](http://mrstox.com). L Mon.–Fri., D daily. \$\$\$\$.

## Olive Tree

The Little Arabia area is filled with shops, restaurants, ethnic markets, and produce stands, and Olive Tree is the neighborhood's best choice. No tablecloths or fancy decor but a true ethnic joint serving delicious, authentic Middle Eastern food like smoky eggplant dip and marinated grilled whole fish that locals call "heaven on a plate." Gather 13 of your closest friends and preorder a whole roasted lamb with spiced rice and yogurt sauce. 512 S. Brookhurst St. 714-535-2878. L, D daily. \$.

## The Ranch Restaurant and Saloon

The urban cowboy in all of us will appreciate this saloon and fine-dining restaurant. Executive Chef Michael Rossi cooks from scratch to capture the rustic style of wine country and has a real talent for sophisticated dishes. Try the Skuna Bay salmon or maplewood-smoked free-range chicken. Thanks to Master Sommelier Michael Jordan, the cellar holds 14,000 bottles of wine. If you like live country-western music, the dance hall is the place to do the two-step and West Coast swing. 1025 E. Ball Rd. 714-817-4200. [theranch.com](http://theranch.com). D daily. \$\$\$–\$\$\$\$.

## Old Towne Orange

For the feel of old California, Priscilla Willis of She's Cookin' suggests venturing to the nearby city of Orange, which dates back to the 1880s. Today, the Old Towne Historic District contains more than 100 antique dealers, plus tea rooms, art galleries, architectural treasures, and a bevy of tempting eateries.



Catal Restaurant and Uva Bar in the Downtown Disney District.

## Avila's El Ranchito

This family owned and operated restaurant is the place for traditional Mexican food. Specialties include Mama Avila's Chicken Soup, authentic botanas, burritos, fajitas, and fresh tortillas made while you wait—and the wait will seem especially short while sipping a pomegranate margarita. 182 S. Orange St., Orange. 714-516-1000. [avilaselranchito.com](http://avilaselranchito.com). L, D daily, brunch Sun. \$.

## Bruxie

A waffle sandwich? Yes it sounds ridiculous, but to food blogger Bacol-Uba, it's the best street food around. The "Bruxie" is unlike any waffle offered: light, crisp, yeasty, and not sweet. What's your pleasure—BBQ pulled pork, albacore tuna melt, or maybe smoked salmon slathered in dill cream cheese? Regardless of choice, your mouth will thank you. 292 N. Glassell St., Orange. 714-633-3900. [bruxie.com](http://bruxie.com). B, L, D daily. \$.





AnQi in the South Coast Plaza.

### Haven Gastropub

House-cured salmon, roasted spaghetti, and housemade potato chips soaked in beer all make their way onto the upscale pub food menu. Chef Greg Daniels loves working with every part of livestock so don't be surprised to find the likes of rabbit liver, pig's ear, or lamb neck. Willis praises the signature Haven Burger as well as the mac 'n cheese with black truffles. Wash it all down with a whole line of craft beers. 190 S. Glassell St., Orange. 714-221-0680. [havengastropub.com](http://havengastropub.com). L, D daily. \$\$.

### Rutabegorz

Rutabegorz is known for its healthy menu that doesn't sacrifice taste or break the bank. Great soups, wraps, smoothies, and salads, such as garlic chicken salad with a homemade balsamic vinaigrette. Popular, with the lines to prove it, but worth the wait. 264 N. Glassell St., Orange. 714-633-3260. [rutabegorz.com](http://rutabegorz.com). L, D Mon.-Sat. \$.

### South Coast Plaza

One of the few places in the world that rivals Rodeo Drive, South Coast Plaza is not just a shopping mall, but a destination. This upscale shopping center spans 128 acres with 250 luxury boutiques (Prada, Carti-

er, Tory Burch, Louis Vuitton, and Chanel all call it home) and department stores, 30 restaurants, and four performing arts venues.

### AnQi Gourmet Bistro & Noodle Bar

One of Bacol-Uba's favorites. The menu is Asian with an emphasis on Vietnamese spices. Dishes are healthy and light, packing a lot of flavor. AnQi is famous for its garlic noodles and sushi, as well as salt-and-pepper calamari, summer rolls, and Fashionably Late Friday—a late-night happy hour starting at 10 p.m. that features half-price, handcrafted cocktails like the Viet-Jito and the Pink Lotus martini. 3333 S. Bristol St., Costa Mesa. 714-557-5679. [anqibistro.com](http://anqibistro.com). L, D daily. \$\$\$\$.

### Antonello Ristorante

Since 1979, Antonello's has been taking diners on a journey to the Old World with its extensive menu of traditional Italian cuisine, along with more than 700 wine selections.



Las Brisas in Laguna Beach.



Entrées may be crafted by the chefs, but the influence of owner Antonio Cagnolo's mother, Mama Pina, is ever-present. 3800 S. Plaza Dr., Santa Ana. 714-751-7153. antonello.com. L Mon.–Fri., D Mon.–Sat. \$\$\$\$.

### Marché Moderne

It doesn't get any more French than this lovely bistro inside South Coast Plaza. Chef Florent Marneau changes his menu with the seasons, but true to his roots you may find everything from foie gras or coq au vin to pork belly confit or braised rabbit. Keeping it in the family, Marneau's American-born wife Amelia is pastry chef. No matter the dessert choice, expect delicious. Reservations strongly suggested. 3333 Bristol St., Costa Mesa. 714-434-7900. marchemoderne.net. L, D daily. \$\$\$\$.

### Scott's

Locals attending shows at the Orange County Performing Arts Center (or looking for a way to cap off a successful shopping spree) flock to Scott's for its fresh seafood, prime-aged steaks, and an extensive wine list. 3300 Bristol St., Costa Mesa. 714-979-2400. scottsrestaurantandbar.com. L, D daily. \$\$\$.

### On the Waterfront

You've come this far, so it would be a crime not to at least dip a toe in the Pacific Ocean. Some of Orange County's most popular restaurants reside in its chic beachfront communities. Pair fine food with sandy expanses of beach and fresh sea air and you have the recipe for a perfect night on the town. Depending on the time of day, it could take you 45 minutes to get here from Anaheim, but the payoff is big.



The Rooftop Lounge in La Casa del Camino in Laguna Beach.

### 21 Oceanfront

Situated in a historic building on Newport's boardwalk with a breathtaking ocean view and opulent decor, 21 Oceanfront features some of the freshest seafood and prime-aged beef along the coast. You won't find a better spot for people watching. 2100 W. Oceanfront, Newport Beach. 949-673-2100. 21oceanfront.com. D daily. \$\$\$\$.

### Las Brisas

This landmark building in Laguna Beach since 1938 overlooks the picturesque coast and the Pacific Ocean. It serves fresh seafood and authentic Mexican dishes inspired by the sun-drenched resorts of the Mexican Riviera. 361 Cliff Dr., Laguna Beach. 949-497-5434. lasbrisaslagunabeach.com. B, L Mon.–Sat., D daily, brunch Sun. \$\$\$.

### The Rooftop Lounge

Perched atop La Casa del Camino hotel, the Rooftop Lounge offers a front row seat for a spectacular sunset. Indulge in appetizers (all

designed for two) and California casual cuisine during one of the best happy hours around, with signature fresh-fruit Mojitos. Bacol-Uba recommends the Hawaiian Ahi Poke and Guava BBQ meatballs. 1289 South Coast Highway, Laguna Beach. 949-497-2446. rooftoplagunabeach.com. B Sat.–Sun., L daily, happy hour Mon.–Fri. \$\$.

### Reservations Please

Can't decide where to dine? Your first choice should be the Restaurant Reservations Desk inside the Anaheim Convention Center across from Hall B. Here you'll find more than 150 current menus along with knowledgeable staffers who have spent many a day and night sampling their way across the Orange County culinary landscape. Not only can you pick up recommendations and maps, but they'll also make reservations for you. Do-it-yourself types can use the free direct-dial phones. ■

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