

COAST

ORANGE
COUNTY



2014 RESTAURANT AWARDS



THE BEST OF THE BEST

Restaurant critic **BRAD A. JOHNSON**'s opinions are among the most valued (and at times feared) in California's culinary world. He's the only critic to have ever won both the James Beard Award for criticism (2009) and the Cordon Bleu World Food Media Award (2010). For more than a decade, he's presented his annual restaurant awards in L.A. and OC. To arrive at this year's selections, he dined over 400 times, driving more than 8,000 miles across Orange County in a never-ending search for something great to eat. This is the result: the best of the best for 2014.

} *Chef of the Year* RYAN ADAMS, }
 Three Seventy Common and The North Left }

Fettuccine, sausage, garlic, broccolini and an egg: There's a good chance we all have these ingredients in our fridge. But nobody makes better use of them than chef and owner Ryan Adams at Three Seventy Common in Laguna Beach. In his hands, these everyday items become one of the best, simplest, most memorable pasta dishes of the year.

Adams has a way of turning the mundane extraordinary. A grilled cheese sandwich becomes an unlikely star, served one bite at a time. Poutine, a heap of fries smothered in a glop of short rib chili, becomes a strangely refined culinary masterpiece. Meatloaf encased in a crisp layer of bacon awakens as an individual work of art.

Roughly once a month, Three Seventy Common sends out an alert to its loyal customers that family-style buckets of fried chicken will be offered on an upcoming

Sunday, and if you're lucky enough to open your email before everyone else, you might still be able to get a reservation. Good luck with that. The chicken is hauntingly good and eerily reminiscent of Thomas Keller's Ad Hoc in Napa Valley, except maybe even better.

Capitalizing on the success of Three Seventy Common, which Adams opened in 2011, it was inevitable that he would branch out. The Laguna Niguel native could have opened a second restaurant pretty much anywhere, and diners would have come. But the location he chose for a follow-up venture is the site of one of the year's most notorious crimes, the infamous nightclub killing at the former The Crosby in downtown Santa Ana. It was a daring move that cannot go unmentioned.

However, I sincerely believe The North Left, the phoenix that Adams has raised from those ashes, could be exactly

what downtown Santa Ana has long needed to push it beyond the tipping point. Some of the kitchen crew from the old place remains at the stoves, but with Adams now running the show, everything feels different: grown up, well-behaved, organized and earnestly focused on being taken seriously as a restaurant.

Adams splits his time between The North Left and Three Seventy Common, devoting quality time to both kitchens every day. The cooking in Santa Ana is an evolution of what he started at Three Seventy, a dose of the familiar with a pinch of the unexpected.

■ Three Seventy Common, 370 Glenneyre St., Laguna Beach :: 949.494.8686 :: 370common.com

■ The North Left, 400 N. Broadway, Santa Ana :: 714.543.3543 :: thenorthleft.com



Chef/Owner Ryan Adams at Three Seventy Common
INSET Chef Ryan Adams with Chef Oscar Lopez, who started as a dishwasher in Adams' restaurant



TOP 10 NEW RESTAURANTS

DRIFTWOOD KITCHEN Ocean breezes, crashing waves and spectacular sunsets. Whole fried redfish. Roasted halibut and a crisp grüner veltliner. Sticky toffee pudding. 619 Sleepy Hollow Lane, Laguna Beach :: 949.715.7700 :: driftwoodkitchen.com

SOLITA TACOS Y MARGARITAS Awesome margaritas and civilized sangrita. Soulful enchiladas. Oak-fired carne asada from a Santa Maria-style grill. Bella Terra, 7631 Edinger Ave., Huntington Beach :: 714.894.2792 :: solitatacos.com

THE WINERY Epic lamb chops. Chili-rubbed mahi-mahi. Milk-fed elk. USDA prime steaks. Legendary wines and birthday vintages. 3131 W. Pacific Coast Hwy., Newport Beach :: 949.999.6622 :: thewineryrestaurant.net

WATERMAN'S HARBOR Modern seafood on the harbor. Swordfish au poivre. Mexican-style shrimp cocktail. Prawns with Asian rice dumplings. Plus one helluva burger. 34661 Golden Lantern St., Dana Point :: 949.764.3474 :: watermandp.com

THE NORTH LEFT A phoenix risen from the ashes. Beetlejuice on the rocks, the signature cocktail. Ribeye tartare with bonito flakes and vermouth sabayon. Prawn ceviche with coconut milk and Fresno chili. Stewed apples with miso ice cream. 400 N. Broadway, Santa Ana :: 714.543.3543 :: thenorthleft.com

PUEBLO TAPAS Finally, great Spanish tapas in OC Lamb meatballs, pork belly with clams, housemade chorizo and lentils, pan con chocolate. The wine list still needs work. SOCO, 3321 Hyland Ave., Costa Mesa :: 714.340.5775 :: pueblotapas.com

WEI SHIAN NOODLES Dumpling house with 30 seats and crystal chandeliers. Spicy Sichuan-style dandan noodles – electroshock therapy has never tasted so good. 5408 Walnut Ave., Irvine :: 949.653.6138 :: weishiannoodles.com

PIROZZI Next-gen, slow-food Italian. Wood-roasted prawns. Bistecca Fiorentina. Handmade pasta. Plus OC's most authentic Neapolitan-style pizza. 2929 E. Coast Hwy., Corona del Mar :: 949.675.293 :: pirozzicdm.com

ADYA Fast-casual Indian with the soul of a chef. Order at the counter, then find a seat. Tender, luscious, yogurt-marinated chicken. Wickedly good keema pav. Packing House, 440 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim :: 714.533.2392 :: adyaac.com

PROVENANCE Garden-fresh redefined. A vegetable lover's lucid dream. Salad days. Steak nights. Housemade cream soda. 2531 Eastbluff Drive, Newport Beach :: 949.718.0477 :: provenanceoc.com