

EATER

San Diego's 2015 Eater Awards Winners

By: Candice Woo



Restaurant of the Year: Bracero

Little Italy was already San Diego's buzziest dining area even before **Bracero** splashed onto the food scene. But the Javier Plascencia-helmed restaurant, with a menu that showcases the vibrancy of Baja, a strong bar program and stunning design, has solidified Kettner Boulevard as the locals' new favorite restaurant row and helped to turn the neighborhood into a food destination with reach beyond our city limits.

Chef of the Year: Javier Plascencia

Already a bonafide superstar chef in Mexico, with several acclaimed eateries under his belt, Javier Plascencia reintroduced himself to San Diego this year via **Bracero**, his first local project in more than 10 years. At his new Little Italy hotspot, where he's supported by chef de cuisine Claudette Aimee Wilkins, the charismatic Plascencia is exposing new diners to the electrifying cuisine found across the border and thrilling those who have already discovered its deliciousness.

Stone Cold Stunner: Coasterra

The Cohn Restaurant group's latest opening, the towering, waterfront-spanning **Coasterra**, makes the most of its panoramic city views and expansive outdoor dining options. The restaurant is also notable for being one of the late Graham Downes' final designs; the well-regarded local architect worked on the project for years but never saw the finished product due to his untimely passing.



So Hot Right Now: Galaxy Taco

A long-awaited second endeavor from the much-acclaimed George's at the Cove team, **Galaxy Taco** counts executive chef Trey Foshee, chef de cuisine Christine Rivera and bar manager Mark Broadfoot among the region's top creatives who are surfing the wave of Alta California cuisine, remaining faithful to the traditions and flavors of Mexico while applying modern sensibilities.

Empire Builder of the Year: The Patio Restaurant Group

This **homegrown group** has quickly established itself as one of San Diego's hospitality collectives to watch. The signature Patio Restaurant, with locations in Pacific Beach, Mission Hills and a third planned for Petaluma, is just one of its house brands, which also include The Front Porch and Swell Coffee, that's on the fast track to serious expansion. A new concept, the soon-to-debut Fireside by the Patio in Liberty Station, also seems destined to multiply.

Bartender of the Year: Steven Tuttle

This longtime industry vet spent **Kettner Exchange's** freshman year building a bar program that's steadily improved and garnered awards while showing that high volume and well-crafted cocktails aren't mutually exclusive. Tuttle, who will soon take on a new management position within the company that owns Kettner Exchange, will contribute his drink prowess to yet-to-be-revealed project opening next year.