



SAN DIEGO CHEFS REVEAL THEIR FAVORITE TACOS

BY [ERIN JACKSON](#)



San Diego's taco cred is well-established. From [under-the-radar taquerias](#) to well-known favorites, the city is bursting at the seams with great spots to score seasoned meat, fish, or veggies wrapped in a warm tortilla. Because life's too short to eat less-than-extraordinary tacos, we tapped 10 San Diego chefs to name their favorite. Take a look to see which creations made the cut. Your to-eat list is about to get even longer.



Chef Abe Botello of West Coast Tavern

His pick: Mahi taco from Sandbar

Pacific Beach

Abe appreciates Sandbar's modern twist on a classic fish taco, featuring grilled or fried mahi and a flour tortilla crusted with melted cotija cheese. "It comes with cabbage, salsa fresca, more cotija cheese, and tangy and spicy aioli to tie the whole taco together," he says. Considering Sandbar has won DiningOutSD's Fish Taco TKO Championship at the San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival the last two years back-to-back, you can feel confident heading here to satisfy your next fix.



Sous Chef Ryan Tuskan of Encinitas Fish Shop

His pick: Voodoo taco from Duck Dive

Pacific Beach

Ryan deems the Voodoo Taco from Duck Dive a “unique fish taco experience” thanks to tasty elements like a “crispy, spicy tortilla” and “sweet and tangy papaya salsa with the perfect kick.” “It’s salmon cooked with a Sculpin Sriracha bbq sauce with hints of brown sugar and blood orange zest, topped with Napa cabbage and house-made papaya salsa, all in a crispy blacked flour tortilla,” he says. We’d hit that.



Chef-Owner Kurt Metzger of Kitchen 4140

His pick: Fish taco from Oscar's Mexican Seafood

Pacific Beach and Hillcrest

Chef Kurt appreciates how Oscar's sources high quality, local ingredients for their tacos and makes all of their sauces in-house, daily. His favorite sauce is the habanero, but he adds that “no matter what you choose, they always really elevate the flavor of the taco, which you can also order in either a corn or flour tortilla.”



Executive Chef Tim Kolanko of Leroy's Kitchen + Lounge

His pick: Taco de Barrio from Salud

Barrio Logan

Tim is a fan of this compact taco shop because it “perfectly captures” everything he loves about Barrio Logan. “There's nothing better than a restaurant that has a true sense of place,” he says. Tim’s go-to is the Taco de Barrio, which features stewed beef, black beans, and cactus wrapped in a handmade flour tortilla.



Chef Kevin Templeton of Barleymash

His pick: Pork adobada from Cantina Mayahuel

North Park

Kevin says he's a fan of all of the tacos available at Cantina Mayahuel in North Park (particularly the daily specials), but if pressed to choose, he'd pick the pork adobada. The restaurant's appeal extends beyond the food. For him, it's a winning combination of "atmosphere, quality product, and amazing tequilas."



Chef/Owner Ken Irvine of Bleu Bohème

His pick: Chicken and pork tacos from Las Cuatro Milpas

Barrio Logan

Ken says a lot of different tacos around town have a special place in his heart. “From Tj Oyster Bar, it’s the stingray machaca, smoked tuna, or octopus tacos. From Aqui es Texcoco, I love the quesataco -- grilled cheese with lamb or huitlacoche. If I had to pick one, it would be from Las Cuatro Milpas, because they make their own tortillas.” He describes the braised mixture of chicken and pork served with crema, queso fresco, and house salsa as “simple, good,” and “priceless,” because the tortillas are fried in lard. He likes to visit is at 2:30pm, right before closing, when there’s no line.



Chef Alberto Morreale of Farmer's Bottega and Fig Tree Café

His pick: Ocho taco from Tacos Perla

North Park

Tacos Perla is one of Alberto's (and his wife's) favorite spots to feast on tacos. He dubs the Ocho tacos (braised, then grilled octopus with poblano, pesto, and cheese wrapped in a fresh, hand-made corn tortilla served with salsa verde and fiery carrot habanero) "amazing" and "the perfect blend of flavors."



Corporate Chef Alfie Szeprethy of Sammy's Woodfired Pizza & Grill

His pick: Puerco Agridulce from City Tacos

North Park

City Tacos (one of the local restaurants we think should be a chain) is home to Alfie's most prized taco "by far" -- the Puerco Agridulce. "It has this unbelievable spicy and sour demi-glace, avocado pulp, red onions, fresh serrano peppers, cilantro, and crispy rice noodles," he explains. "Oh, and they make their tortillas in-house. Unreal!"



Terryl Gavre of Bake Sale Bakery, Cafe 222, and Bankers Hill Bar + Restaurant

Her pick: Zucchini and cactus taco from Puesto

La Jolla and Downtown (Marina District)

“I’m a HUGE Puesto fan. I love to sit at the bar on a Sunday and feast on tacos,” Terryl says. Even though she describes herself as “not even close to being a vegetarian”, the Zucchini and cactus taco is her “secret indulgence.” “A house-made corn tortilla is the perfect vessel for their delicious combination of crispy melted cheese, with a mixture of zucchini, sweet corn, and cactus,” she explains. “It may be vegetarian, but it is in no way ‘clean and healthy tasting,’ which is why I love it. If I want that, I eat at home.”



Chef Jaime Chavez of Sirena

His pick: Birria taco from Talavera Azul

Chula Vista

Jaime says Talavera Azul is a “hidden gem with a truly authentic and traditional feel” that also has “fantastic food.” His go-to taco is the birria, with “perfectly seasoned meat on a housemade tortilla.”