

# Taste of the Town / Dining News

## ISLAND INFLUENCE

Laguna Beach's nearby coastline and cool spring breeze make it the perfect place for an island-inspired eatery, so it comes as no surprise that Rum Social Kitchen & Cocktails is celebrating a year of success. In addition to select \$1 bottles of wine that were available in April, the restaurant has launched a number of anniversary specials with bold, exotic flavors. Try the tuna poke, with notes of sweetness from pineapple pico de gallo, avocado and Thai sauce, or the crispy coconut prawns with cucumber and house-made cocktail dipping sauce. New salads—like the crispy Brussels Caesar, topped with crunchy shallots and cotija cheese, or the apple rum option with

roasted grapes and walnuts—bring added freshness to the menu as well. For the main dish, seafood lovers will want to opt for the new garlic butter prawns or striped sea bass while the slow-braised wagyu short rib is sure to make mouths water. **(949-549-4014; rumsocial.com)** —Ashley Ryan

## SPRING SAVOR

With spring comes fresh things—and at Skyloft, this means new menu items. Five special offerings were unveiled in early April as the eatery gave its menu an upgrade. The baked brie appetizer, topped with dark cherry jam and served with crunchy crostini, is the perfect way



New seasonal dishes at Rum Social Kitchen & Cocktails include crispy coconut prawns, an apple rum salad, striped sea bass and more.



Brisket hash, a new menu item at Skyloft

to start any meal. Another starter recently added to the menu is the Instagram-friendly Veggie Tower, where colorful layers of vegetables are piled high atop a bed of sauces. And an exciting new entree was added as well, giving guests the chance to sample a variety of the restaurant's proteins. Deemed the Skyloft Sampler, the board comes with smoked turkey, barbecue ribs, a giant prawn and charred Brussels sprouts—plus barbecue sauce and spicy mustard. The weekend brunch also features some elevated dishes with this revamp, including the avocado toast, which is a great option for those who are health-conscious or avoiding meat, as well as the savory brisket hash, topped with a picture-perfect fried egg. **(949-715-1550; skyloftoc.com)** —A.R.

## HOT DIGGITY DOG

Yummy Dogs, a casual restaurant serving up gourmet hot dogs plus arcade games, opened downtown in late April at 381 Forest Ave. Start with a basic hot dog, a vegan or turkey frankfurter, or Polish sausage and choose your own toppings or sauce. Or order a specialty item like the Laguna Dog with avocado, tomato, bacon bits and white sauce; the OC Dog with chili, chipotle aioli, white American cheese and crispy onions; or the Mac & Cheese Dog, which is topped with, well, macaroni and cheese in addition to bacon bits. There's also a Maui version with teriyaki sauce, mango-peach salsa, spicy mayo and red onion; a Reuben

TOP: SAMANTHA WHARTON/SKYLOFT; BOTTOM: OUTSHINE PR



Arcade games (top) and the LA Chili dog (above) at Yummy Dogs

variety with thousand island dressing, sauerkraut and Swiss cheese; as well as traditional New York and Chicago dogs. But not everything here is served on a bun: Snacks range from regular or vegan chili, nachos with cheese and jalapenos, and a Bavarian pretzel. Yummy Dogs was founded by father-daughter team Mitchell Gold and Julie Caricato. The idea came about when Gold, who is from New York—where hot dogs are sold on almost every street corner—couldn't find a good place to buy a hot dog in Laguna. After talking with his daughter, who has two school-age children, they came up with the plan for an eatery selling hot dogs paired with an arcade to provide inexpensive eats and family-friendly fun. The arcade includes games for adults and kids, including basketball, a virtual reality roller coaster and machines using a claw to try to grab a prize. **(888-986-6910; yummydogs.co)** —Sharon Stello

## TAIL-WAGGING TREATS

Local pups will rejoice over this new business: Salty Paws, which opened at the beginning of April, offers dog-friendly ice cream and other treats for local pets. Perfect for the summer heat that will soon be upon us, the downtown shop at 207 Ocean Ave. offers dine-in and take-home options in lactose-free flavors like



Lobster with crispy rice at Red Dragon



Salty Paws offers ice cream for dogs.

peanut butter, maple bacon, blueberry, vanilla, pumpkin, cheese and more. Just like a traditional ice cream parlor, you'll choose from a cup, cone or waffle bowl and you have to be sure to add toppings, such as dehydrated meats ranging from chicken and beef to venison and rabbit as well as biscuits in flavors like sweet potato, yogurt, peanut butter and steak. In addition to ice cream, baked goods like cookies, cakes and doughnuts are also available while visitors can also shop for toys, collars and other pup-approved retail items. Salty Paws also serves as an event venue, with availability for everything from doggy birthday parties and ice cream socials to breed meetups and fundraising events. **(858-860-4509; saltypawslagunabeach.com)** —A.R.

## CANTONESE CREATIONS

It has been more than seven years since Red Dragon announced its anticipated opening in Laguna, and the restaurant's efforts have finally come to fruition, with the upscale Chinese restaurant opening

its doors at 680 S. Coast Highway for a soft launch in early March. With a focus on traditional and modern Cantonese food and dim sum, the eatery offers rotating prix fixe and a la carte menus, currently available for dinner only. Striving to provide a memorable dining experience for all who visit, some of the eatery's current appetizers include a black wood ear mushroom salad as well as the popular crispy chicken bites. Various soups are also available, including a lobster option with crispy rice and a chicken soup with morel mushrooms. As for entrees, try the sweet-and-sour pork made with berries; the spicy American wagyu beef, which is cut into cubes; two types of sea bass; Angus beef ribs; and two signature delicacies: abalone and fish maw. A grand opening is scheduled for May 28. **(reddragonca.com)** —A.R. ■

## RESTAURANT LISTINGS

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