

Taste of the Town / Dining News



Celebrations for the holidays abound at local resorts including The Ranch at Laguna Beach (left) and Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort & Spa.

HOLIDAY HOSTS

Holiday events abound in Laguna Beach this season. A plethora of happenings will take place at **MONTAGE LAGUNA BEACH**, including gingerbread house decorating (Dec. 10 and 16), a life-size gingerbread display paying homage to the resort's 20th anniversary (through Dec. 22) and a nightly lighting of a Hanukkah menorah (through Dec. 15). Guests can also dine on-site with a seasonal a la carte meal on Christmas Eve, a Champagne brunch on Christmas Day or a special prix fixe tasting menu Christmas evening, plus a celebration in the Lobby Lounge on New Year's Eve. (949-715-6420; montage.com)

Nestled in a picturesque canyon, a visit to **THE RANCH AT LAGUNA BEACH** will make you feel as if you've stepped away from town for the holidays. After enjoying some holiday shopping at the property's Base Camp, dine in for Pancakes with Santa on Dec. 17 or slow-roasted prime rib, seafood specials and sticky toffee pudding on Christmas night. A New Year's Eve dinner will also feature fresh lobster, caviar, house-made truffle pasta and warm butter cake—plus celebratory Champagne and a party favor. (949-715-1376; theranchlb.com)

Splashes, the signature restaurant at **SURF & SAND RESORT**, will offer

a special Christmas Day meal from noon to 8 p.m. Dec. 25. The prix fixe menu, crafted by Executive Chef Ron Fougerey, features four courses. Everyone will receive an amuse-bouche. Then, diners can choose from appetizers like pork belly, sesame seed-crusted yellowtail, confit duck ravioli or leafy greens as well as entrees such as scallops, halibut, butternut squash risotto, braised lamb shank or rib-eye. Finish with dessert: goat cheese parfait or a yule log. (888-281-3502; surfandsandresort.com)

On Sundays through Christmas Eve, guests can visit Aveo Table & Bar at **WALDORF ASTORIA MONARCH BEACH RESORT & CLUB** for breakfast with Santa. Expect a savory menu with Latin flair and artisan coffee drinks by the fire, complete with tableside visits from the jolly man himself. Throughout the month, the resort will also offer snow play and sledding areas as well as complimentary family portrait sessions on select dates. (949-234-3200; waldorfastoriamonarchbeach.com)

Dine in luxury this holiday season at **THE RITZ-CARLTON, LAGUNA NIGUEL**, where offerings include Breakfast With Santa (Dec. 17), a Christmas brunch buffet with all the fixings Dec. 25 as well as a prix fixe menu with seasonal flavors that night at Raya. An additional set menu dinner

will take place on New Year's Eve. And don't overlook the resort's afternoon tea, where you can enjoy festive decor, holiday-inspired teas, Champagne and both sweet and savory bites. (949-240-2000; ritzcarlton.com)

Santa will stop by **LAGUNA CLIFFS MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA** on Dec. 10 for a holiday breakfast complete with lawn games or a Christmas Eve buffet on Dec. 24, with seasonal specials offered during both breakfast and dinner. Laguna Cliffs Marriott will be alive with holiday cheer throughout the month as well, offering letters to Santa, caroling by local high school students, holiday film screenings and a station offering hot cocoa, apple cider and sugar cookies. (949-661-5000; marriott.com) —Ashley Ryan

DINING IN THE CAVE

In popular California wine regions like Napa Valley, Paso Robles and Sonoma, dining in a wine cave isn't unheard of. But in Orange County, that experience is much more rare. However, **WALDORF ASTORIA MONARCH BEACH RESORT & CLUB** has launched an exclusive dinner series in its on-site wine cave highlighting varietals from different vineyards. The monthly series, which kicked off in September, concludes with vino from Sonoma's Aperture Cellars on Dec. 21. Guests

are welcomed on the terrace with a complimentary beverage and passed hors d'oeuvres, before being escorted into the wine cave for a multicourse meal with special wine pairings. (949-234-3900; waldorfastoriamonarchbeach.com) —A.R.

TEA TIME

The Ranch at Laguna Beach's signature restaurant, **HARVEST**, is working with Laguna Beach company Jadetiger Tea to offer a collaboration at the resort. A fall blend called Spiced Peach Garden Tea, available through mid-December, features black tea, cinnamon, clove and marigold petals from the resort's Harvest Garden plus natural flavoring. These bespoke blends will debut seasonally, each highlighting the fresh flavors of Harvest's ever-changing garden. Each tea variety will be available at Harvest in both hot and iced preparations. At lunch and dinnertime, the tea blend may also be enjoyed in a cocktail or mocktail. For example, the fall tea is being used in the bourbon-based Savannah Sour. The winter tea blend, soon to be announced, will be an oolong tea inspired by the upcoming Year of the Dragon as part of the Lunar New Year celebration. Jadetiger Tea is known for its proprietary herbal blends made with the highest quality single-estate tea leaves from around the globe. (Jadetiger Tea: 844-832-5433; jadetigerteat.com) (Harvest Restaurant: 949-715-1376; theranchlb.com) —Sharon Stello

RESTAURANT LISTINGS

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ROUX WRAPS UP

There's less than a month left to enjoy dinner at **ROUX CREOLE CUISINE**, which will serve its last meals on New Year's Eve. Owners Michael and Cindy Byrne have decided to close after more than six years, saying "it's just time" after going through the pandemic and some personal challenges. It was important to them to find a local to take over the space. The couple chose Evan Lewis, who owns a catering company and runs Evan's Gourmet food booth at Sawdust Art Festival. Lewis plans to open her first brick-and-mortar restaurant, Evan's Gourmet, on Jan. 19 in the Glenneyre Street space. Some dishes from her booth will be on the new eatery's menu, from her ahi sandwich to the Angus burger, quinoa salad and Asparagus Cigars—egg roll wrappers around asparagus spears—as well as New Orleans-style barbecue shrimp in tribute to Roux and swordfish as a nod to Cafe Zoolu, a longtime seafood restaurant that filled the space before Roux opened in 2017.



Dishes at Roux Creole Cuisine

On New Year's Eve, Michael Byrne says Roux will offer a few timed seatings with a prix fixe menu including a choice of salad, some of the restaurant's standard Creole items and some dishes not typically offered, plus a special dessert. "In the last six years, we've met some amazing people that have become regulars from all over the country," Michael Byrne says. "We hope to see as many people as we can ... between Christmas and New Year's." (Roux: 949-715-3707; rouxlaguna.com) (Evan's Gourmet: 949-388-1568; evansgourmet.com) —S.S. ■



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