

On the Menu: Getting all your ducks in a row at Pacific Beach's iconic The Duck Dive



A trio of French toast options are among brunch menu items at The Duck Dive in Pacific Beach. (Alternative Strategies)

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If you're looking for a beachy, kitschy, local eatery and gathering place with rubber duckies floating in craft cocktails, French fries delightfully dredged in duck fat, seafood freshly caught from local waters, plenty of sports hoopla on plenty of big screen TVs, dining under the stars and moon, and eye-popping 3D artwork covering the walls then The Duck Dive is for you.



A craft cocktail is among many beverages available at The Duck Dive. (Alternative Strategies)

Tom Winn, owner and visionary restaurateur who converted the once Irish pub called Hennessey's Tavern into a "beach lounge with a fun vibe," serves coastal American cuisine with a side of spunk.

The eatery with thematic décor is appropriately named after the surfing term where one pushes the board under water and dives beneath the wave. Images include surf scene murals dazzling with neon back lit bulbs that change colors for different moods. There are also surf boards cut like chunky bricks surrounding the perimeter. Meanwhile, the ceiling replicates a wave crashing into the sprawling patio on Mission Boulevard with delicate ocean

breezes drifting in.



The Duck Dive in Pacific Beach. (Alternative Strategies)

Winn said he is thrilled to have the restaurant and bar back in full force after a roller coaster ride through the pandemic house of horrors.

The Duck Dive will be celebrating its 10th anniversary on March 30 by offering once again its iconic weekend brunches with bottomless mimosas, sports and trivia nights, farm-to-table dinners and creative, scrumptious offerings.

The kick-back, casual menu will please taste buds of all manners, whether the stream of locals from their 20s to their twilight years, the college crowd on weekends, families doing brunch, spring breakers from coast-to-coast and summer seasonal tourists.

Want to visit?

The Duck Dive

Address: 4650 Mission Blvd., Pacific Beach

Phone: 858-273-3825

Website: TheDuckDive.com

New expanded hours: 10 a.m. to close (around midnight and beyond) on Tuesdays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 2 a.m. on Saturdays; and 9 a.m. to close (around midnight) on Sundays.

Good to know: Brunch is available from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on weekends. Delivery is available through DoorDash for a fee.

According to Winn, the number one seller, hands down, is The Duck Dive burger. It is constructed from a half-pound of all-natural beef, pimento cheese, tomato, relish, caramelized onions, lettuce and a drizzle of garlic aioli on a brioche bun.



A burger and fries at The Duck Dive. (Alternative Strategies)

Other faves he mentioned include an array of tacos from adobe chicken and citrus carne asada to ahi poke and mahi done two ways (beer-battered or grilled), and dressed with shredded cabbage, queso fresco and jalapeno crema on a flour tortilla.

But there's more. Oysters Rockefeller served on the half shell; refreshing shrimp, cucumber and avocado ceviche; and for hearty appetites the classic surf and turf platter with grilled fillet and broiled Maine lobster tail accompanied by cilantro rice, roasted poblanos and house-made mole sauce.



Oysters on the half shell at The Duck Dive. (Alternative Strategies)

For just desserts a table of those with a sweet tooth can share The Duck Dive's do-it-yourself s'mores served hibachi-style, complete with a rotating platter, sterno fluid and a supply of marshmallows, graham crackers, Hershey's chocolate and wooden skewers.

For Saturday and Sunday brunch there are three seating times offered to a packed house drooling over such specialties as breakfast enchiladas, chorizo potato hash and the French toast trio of candied walnuts and caramel sauce, cheesecake with seasonal berries plus and peanut butter and strawberry jam.

A handful of other fun events that draw frolicking crowds include the monthly Trivia Night with a DJ and prizes, and Wednesdays' Farm-to-Table Dinners with a specialty cocktail prepared by the bar manager from fresh picked garden goodies. There is also a chef's plate with seasonal offerings.

Finally, The Duck Dive is a mecca for sporting events, including MLB, NBA and NFL playoffs, along with college games. In particular, it provides an official watch site for the Nebraska Cornhuskers' alumni on the 17 screens displayed throughout the eatery.



Breakfast enchiladas at The Duck Dive. (Alternative Strategies)

Winn said the restaurant supports other San Diego businesses by using local purveyors like Pacific Shellfish for fresh caught treasures of the sea delivered throughout the week, Sadie Rose Bread, Hilda's Bakery and Gabriel's Tortilleria.

Over the years he recalls receiving awards from Discover PB for best burger and best bar, along with top ranking in the Taco-fest, but said his biggest accomplishment is surviving the pandemic years.

Winn said he owes a debt of gratitude to his dedicated core team who worked hard, and hung on through these tough times, including Chef Miguel Meraz, assistant general manager Carl Anderson and general manager Rebekah Winn, who also happens to be his wife.



Beer-battered mahi tacos at The Duck Dive. (Alternative Strategies)

Recipes from The Duck Dive

The Duck Dive's Shrimp Ceviche

Serves 8

Ingredients:

3 lbs. of diced raw shrimp

1 C. fresh lemon juice

1 lb. of diced tomatoes

3/4 lb. of diced cucumbers

1/2 lb. of diced red onions

1 bunch of chopped cilantro

1/2 lb. of diced carrots

1/2 tsp. of white pepper

2 C. of house-made tomato sauce

1 1/2 T. kosher salt

avocado

fresh corn tortilla chips

Instructions:

1. Combine the diced raw shrimp in a bowl with the fresh lemon juice.
2. Let the mixture sit in the fridge for at least 3 hours. This allows the shrimp to “cook” in the acid of the citrus.
3. Once the shrimp is “cooked” and cured, combine with the following mixture of diced tomatoes, diced cucumbers, diced red onions, chopped cilantro, diced carrots, white pepper, house-made tomato sauce and kosher salt.
4. Portion and fan an avocado, serve with fresh corn tortilla chips and enjoy!



The blueberry mojito at The Duck Dive. (Alternative Strategies)

Blueberry Mojito

Ingredients:

1.5 oz. Bacardi Oakheart

0.75 oz. fresh lime juice

0.75 oz. simple syrup

5 to 8 fresh blueberries

4 or 5 fresh mint leaves

Instructions:

1. Add blueberries, mint and lime juice to a shaker.
2. Muddle ingredients.
3. Add ice, Bacardi Oakheart and simple syrup. Shake vigorously.
4. Pour contents into a cocktail glass.
5. Top with soda and enjoy!