

Duck Dive celebrates 12th anniversary in Pacific Beach



Duck Dive has become a cornerstone of the beach community's bar-restaurant scene. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By DAVE SCHWAB

Throughout April, Duck Dive is celebrating its 12th anniversary in Pacific Beach.

Situated at 4650 Mission Blvd., Duck Dive has become a cornerstone of the beach community's bar-restaurant scene. Known for its walls-to-ceiling three-dimensional surfboard-inspired décor, and its local beach-themed murals, Duck Dive opened on March 30, 2012 as a haven for those seeking elevated bar fare and handcrafted cocktails.

The lively beach bar is also renowned for its ever-exciting lineup of weekday specials, crab boils, drag brunches, themed trivia nights, monthly specialty cocktail creations, and elaborate holiday takeovers.

Owned by Tom and Rebekah Winn, Duck Dive is supported by a family of bar crew, servers, hosts, and chefs.

To commemorate its dozen years of serving PB, the San Diego Community Newspaper Group held a Q&A with establishment co-owner Tom Winn to find out what makes – and keeps – Duck Dive a special place.

SDCNG: Refresh our memories on how Duck Dive got started. Isn't your name a reference to surfing and surf culture?

WINN: We came up with a name to go with the community we serve. Surfing is a lifestyle for a lot of our locals who live by the beach. So we were thinking of names that had some tie to the



The interior of Duck Dive has walls-to-ceiling three-dimensional surfboard-inspired décor. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

San Diego community. We wanted to create a spot where locals, as well as visitors from out of town, feel comfortable in an easy, laid-back environment with an elevated cocktail/beverage and dining experience.

SDCNG: What sets Duck Dive apart from the other coastal bars/eateries in PB?

WINN: I would say our management team and staff set us apart. Consistency would be number one. We've worked hard over the years to form a family atmosphere in Duck with our staff and regulars. We have an extensive cocktail/beverage program that my wife Rebekah has proudly put together with our pretty amazing management team. Management has worked hard on making sure these cocktails come out with proper ingredients, garnishes, and in the correct glassware, so the guests know what they are getting will taste the same as the last time they were in. Same for the food side. Our chef Miguel has worked hard

to make sure that when customers choose Duck Dive to dine at, their order comes plated correctly and tastes the same each time they stop in.

SDCNG: Tell us about the restaurant/bar market in PB. Is the seasonal nature of the business a challenge?

WINN: The PB market has shifted in the 20-plus years I've lived at the beach and worked in this industry. Every few years things change and evolve, but you see a difference when you look back 10 or 20 years. We have always been a huge destination spot for spring-breakers and the summer crowd, as San Diego, is a beautiful community with gorgeous beaches up and down the coast. The fairly consistent weather is an obvious draw. After 20-plus years in the industry, we are pretty aware of the seasonal changes. So it's not much of an issue for us.

SDCNG: What have you learned after 12 years in business?

WINN: After 20 years in the

DUCK DIVE

Where: 1033 Garnet Ave.
Hours: 10:33 a.m.-7 p.m. daily
Info: randallssandals.com.

business I've learned way too much to put into words. The restaurant industry is one of the hardest for a reason. It's not an easy industry to be in, especially in management or ownership. There is a lot to deal with from the front-of-house staff and customers to the back-of-house kitchen staff. You formulate relationships with purveyors/ reps and people in the industry that take years and years to turn into blossoming partnerships. The only way we (collectively) thrive is by forming those deep ties. Not all last, and you have to make moves that make sense for the business that aren't always popular. But if you are consistent and treat people well, you typically see those relationships return one way or another.

SDCNG: How have you changed the menu at Duck Dive over the years? Do you change it seasonally?

WINN: We typically do a few menu changes throughout the year. They typically coincide with heading into the summer or the winter, but there are no set dates. We look at product mixes to see what is selling and what are dead horses, and we chop the items that aren't selling to try something new.

SDCNG: Tell us about any plans you have for enhancing/expanding your business model.

WINN: We are always open to the idea of expanding. It's such a huge investment, not only monetarily but mentally as well, so the right timing, location, and terms are always a must, as to whether we should pull the trigger on another venue.



Prince Street Pizza plans to open in Pacific Beach.

PHOTO BY THOMAS MELVILLE

MORE PIZZA & BURGERS COMING TO PACIFIC BEACH

New York City-based Prince Street Pizza and Los Angeles' 78-year-old Irv's Burgers are both opening locations in Mission + Garnet Food Hall at 4505 Mission Blvd., which closed all but one of its six onsite eateries. The food hall is transitioning from operating all the onsite restaurant stalls to subleasing most of the space to another operator. Only Early Bird Breakfast Burritos is staying. The building will be taken over by Lawrence Longo. Irv's Burgers serves a simple menu of burgers, hot dogs, sandwiches, fries, and shakes. Early Bird Breakfast Burritos will move to the Spitfire Tacos space. The rest of the building will be renovated and occupied by Irv's Burgers and Prince Street Pizza, which are expected to open this summer. For more information, visit princestreetpizza.com and irvsburgers.com.

NEW PB EATERY

Los Angeles-based Baja Sharkeez Restaurant Group is gearing up for a summer opening of Pacific Beach Hideaway, a California beach bungalow-inspired bar and restaurant

at the former Fat Fish Cantina Grill space at 4474 Mission Blvd. In 2022, the hospitality company took over the oceanfront space last occupied by Fat Fish Cantina Grill. Expected to open in early summer, Pacific Beach Hideaway will be a 5,500-square-foot, California lifestyle-inspired restaurant with both an interior and outside, open-air bar, as well as several classic arcade games. Expect a menu created by corporate chef Raymond Alvarez featuring California-inspired spins on American classics, including shareable bar bites, wood-fired pizzas, sandwiches, burgers, salads, and entrees.

LANDINI'S IN PB

The owner of Landini's Pizza has taken over the space previously occupied by Iron Pig Alehouse at 1520 Garnet Ave. for the opening of a new concept named Slowly Bar & Restaurant. Florence-native Leo Landini started his San Diego culinary career in 2005 as the general manager of what was then the oldest Italian restaurant in the Gaslamp, the now-defunct Trattoria La Strada. In 2008, Landini took over the former Pizzeria Luigi in Little Italy and opened his namesake

pizzeria. In 2018, Landini launched a small-scale eatery inside the Liberty Public Market in Liberty Station.

In October 2020, Landini opened Scuderia Italia in Pacific Beach. Landini has now taken over the building that last housed Salsa & Smoke/Iron Pig Alehouse, across the street from Scuderia Italia. Slowly's executive chef is Spencer Hays, who previously worked in the kitchen at Eric Ripert's Le Bernardin, a three-Michelin star French seafood restaurant in New York City.

CROWN POINT BEER

Earlier this year, North Park Brewing Co. took over the 2,268 square-foot space that last housed The Hen House on the corner of La Playa and Ingraham Street in Crown Point. This new location, named North Park Beer Co. Pizza Shop, will feature an onsite bar with taps devoted to North Park Beer's award-winning brews, with a kitchen serving house-made pizza and other tavern fare. The new eatery will be across Ingraham Street from Rocky's Crown Pub, Bayside Landing, and a new location of Tajima Ramen House.



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