

# NEW DEALS

**BARS AND RESTAURANTS OFFER FRESH BARGAINS AND REVAMPED MENUS TO LURE CUSTOMERS IN FOR HAPPY HOUR.**

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Wine and new appetizers can be found on the Oak Grill happy hour menu at Newport Beach's Island Hotel.

CINDY YAMANAKA  
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## HAPPY HOUR

# GOOD DEALS, NEW MENUS

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Everyone loves a deal, even restaurant owners. If they didn't, happy hour wouldn't exist.

Though happy hour reduces profits because restaurants are selling core appetizers and alcoholic drinks at a discount, it can still be a boon to business. On average, restaurants with discounted bar menus can generate roughly 26 percent more revenue during happy hour, restaurant software firm Cake told industry trade publication Nation's Restaurant News.

Bars with happy hours generate roughly 33 percent more food orders than those who forgo the after-work program. And, if restaurants can entice diners to order full price drinks and meals at the bar, that can often make up for happy hour bargains.

Happy hour is also critical because it appeals to all demographics. About 77 percent of adults and 85 percent of millennials said they would visit a bar or restaurant during off-peak hours if they received a discount, according to Cake.

But today's foodies are finicky. So restaurants must constantly tweak bar menus to ensure the menu is craveable, cost effective and better than a rival's.

"The quality and quantity must match the pricing," Cake said.

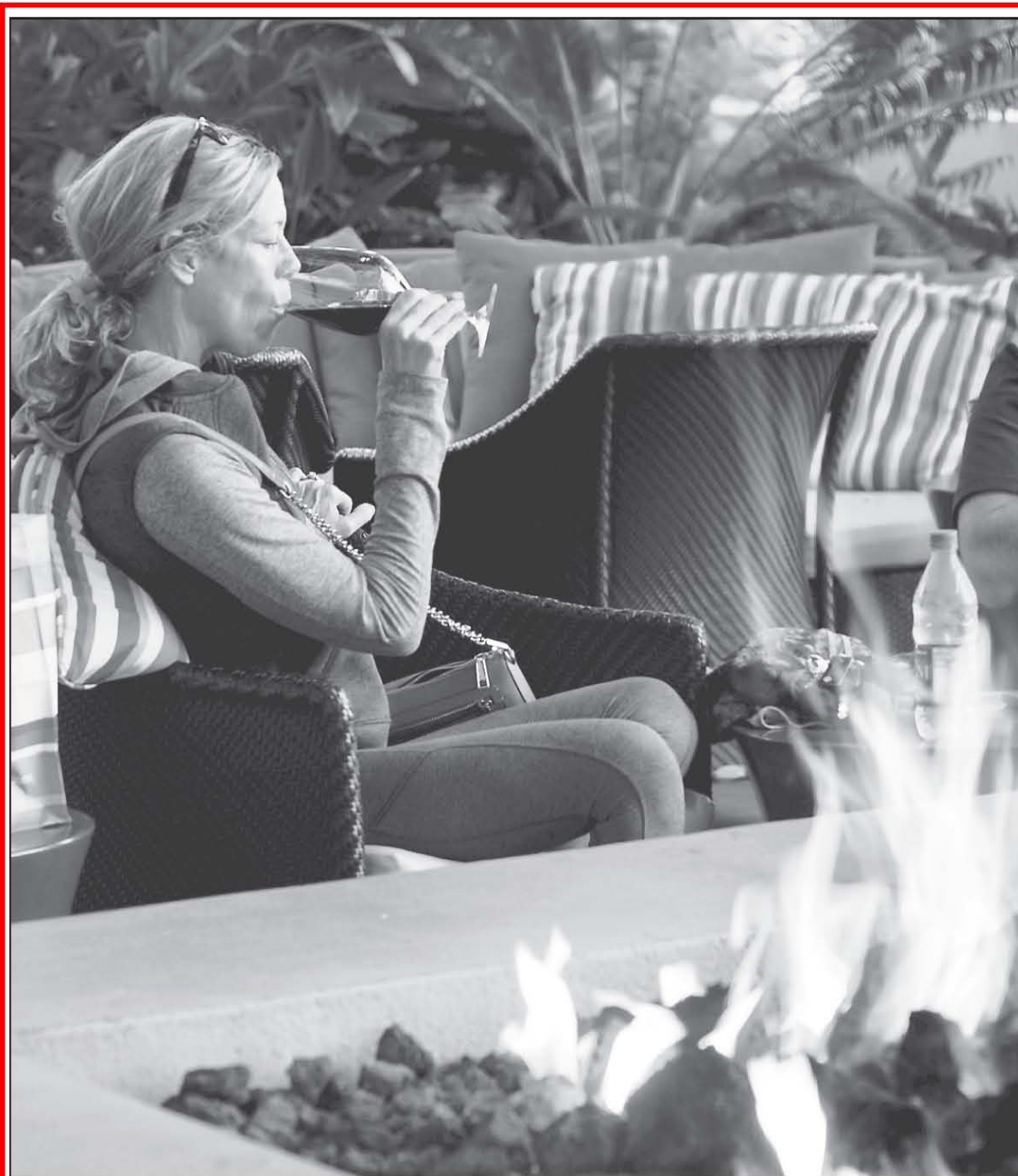
According to a new social media study, Californians are obsessed with happy hour, especially those in Southern California. The U.S. city with the most #HappyHour Instagram mentions per capita is Hollywood, according to research by Seattle-based real estate firm Redfin. West Hollywood and Beverly Hills also ranked high.

In Orange County, some restaurants have recently rebooted their happy hours and late-night menus to stay competitive as they battle to win diner loyalty.

Here's a roundup of the latest revamps just in time to celebrate National Happy Hour Day on Nov. 12.

## Throwback at Yard House

Yard House, born in Southern California and now owned by the parent company of Olive Garden, has reintroduced its old happy hour program at select restaurants.



PHOTOS BY CINDY YAMANAKA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Oak Grill's al fresco dining at the Island Hotel in Newport Beach includes live music. New executive chef Peter Lai has introduced four appetizer dishes to the happy hour menu.

Thirteen locations, including restaurants in Irvine, Newport Beach and Costa Mesa, are testing a 50 percent off menu from 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The restaurants have scrapped tiered pricing introduced after Yard House was purchased by Florida-based Darden Restaurants. Marketing officials said returning to the old 50 percent off menu simplifies choices for customers. The menu also includes \$2 off beer, wine, spirits and cock-

tails.

"Right now it's really a test to see if people even embrace it," said Jennifer Weerheim, vice president of brand management for Yard House, whose headquarters moved from Irvine to Florida five years ago.

Weerheim said other restaurants in the chain will continue to offer tiered pricing with select appetizers priced at \$5, \$6 and \$7.

Appetizers on the throwback menu include poke nachos, spin-

ach cheese dip, chicken nachos, chicken lettuce wraps, sliders, onion ring tower, fried cheese curds, fried calamari, egg rolls, boneless wings and fried macaroni and cheese. All pizzas are half-price as well.

Other restaurants participating in the happy hour test are in San Jose, Illinois, Ohio, North Carolina, Indiana and Florida. If the test stores do well, the remaining Yard House restaurants will likely adopt the new happy hour pricing

in January, Weerheim said.

## Sunset at Las Brisas

Over the summer, the iconic Laguna Beach institution introduced its first happy hour.

The Sunset Celebration Menu includes a variety of bar bites ranging in price from \$6 to \$12, with blistered Shishito Peppers (\$7), Nueske's Bacon Sliders served on fried steam buns (\$8), oysters on the half shell (\$6), pomegranate goat cheese tacos (\$6) and pork belly tacos (\$8).

Happy hour is held Monday through Friday from 5 p.m. to sunset in the restaurant's newly revamped cantina, with its sleek 65-foot long bar top made of Koa wood from Hawaii. 361 Cliff Drive, Laguna Beach.



Aqua Lounge's "Burgers & Brews" special is Monday through Friday from 4 to 7 p.m.

## Island Hotel: Burger, fries and beer, oh my

Oak Grill and Aqua Lounge, separate venues at the Island Hotel in Newport Beach, have tweaked happy hour offerings under new executive chef Peter Lai.

The regular happy hour menu, offered daily at both restaurants from 3 to 7 p.m., features 50 percent off several appetizers found on the al fresco Fireside bar menu. (That same menu can also be found at Aqua Lounge.)

Lai, who oversees both menus, has added four new dishes: warm artichoke and parmesan dip with tortilla chips (HH price: \$7.50); ahi tuna wonton salad with Asian carrot slaw (\$8); bison sliders with smoked gouda and fries (HH price: \$8) and burrata fundido served with a crispy baguette (HH price: \$8.50). Other items on the menu include fried spuds, hummus and

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# Happy

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pita bread, tomato and mozzarella and two thin-crust pizzas.

The 50 percent off specials, which include discounts on select wines by the glass, draft craft beer and cocktails, are available at Aqua Lounge, and Oak Grill's bar and Fireside patio.

Aqua Lounge also hosts a "Burgers & Brews" special Monday through Friday from 4 to 7 p.m. During the three-hour period, diners can get a burger, fries and craft beer for \$10. 690 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach (adjacent to Fashion Island).

(Tip: Not new, but the Fireside menu also has late-night specials Friday and Saturday from 10 p.m. to midnight. Items include mac and cheese, fried Brussels sprouts, a burger, loaded tater tots, street tacos and buffalo wings. Prices: \$12-\$16.)

## TAPS Fish House & Brewery

In August, the two-year-old Irvine restaurant updated its happy hour with several new items — ranging from snacks to shareable large-size appetizers.

Items include: Nacho Camacho, topped with carnitas, black beans, cheese and other standard accoutrements (\$10.99); Tanaka-San Pork Ribs, hoisin glazed ribs (\$8.99) and Caprese salad (\$7.99); shishito peppers (\$5.99) and warm marinated olives (\$6.49).

A handful of pizzas are also \$5 to \$7 off during happy hour.

Drinks: \$6 for TAPS beer, \$7.50 select wines, \$8 select cocktails.

Happy hour prices are available in the bar, lounge and patio daily from 2-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, and 3:30-5:30 p.m. Sunday. 13390 Jamboree Road, Irvine.

## Slater's 50/50 Bar Bites

The new owner of Slater's 50/50 is revamping its restaurants, expanding through franchising and adding a new Bar Bites menu.

The deal runs from 3 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and restarts from 9 p.m. to close. The revised happy hour menu includes half-price craft beer, wine and cocktails, mini-hot dogs, tater tots, lettuce wraps, pretzels and cheese and mozzarella sticks and prices range from \$3 to \$6.

Slater's also is staying competitive during NFL games. The regional burger chain, which has restaurants in Huntington Beach and Anaheim Hills, extends happy hour during NFL games on Monday and Thursday nights. The chain also added a Sunday brunch for football fans.

## Park Ave. slays it

When you're a seasonally-driven restaurant with your own backyard garden, the menu is constantly changing. Happy hour is no different at Park Ave. in Stanton.

Chef and owner David Slay said he's added a few new items to the bar menu. The program, which runs from 4-6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, includes \$8 wine by the glass, \$7 draft beers (16 ounces), \$7 well drinks and \$7 martinis.



PHOTOS BY CINDY YAMANAKA, — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The happy hour crowd gather around Aqua Lounge's 360-degree bar at the Island Hotel in Newport Beach.



Bison sliders with smoked gouda and fries is part of the new revamped happy hour menu at the Island Hotel.

Eight appetizers, priced at \$7 each, include turkey sliders, "wet" cheese fries, marinated steak bites and chicken taquitos.

Like Slater's 50/50, Park Ave. also is offering deals during Sunday and Thursday night NFL games. At the bar, diners can order a \$12.50 gourmet burger served with house-made chips, fries or coleslaw. 11200 Beach Blvd., Stanton.

## Happiest Hour at Andrei's

In Irvine, Andrei's Conscious Cuisine & Cocktails, is offering a deal within a deal.

The "Happiest Happy Hour" gives diners an additional 50 percent off the regular happy hour menu.

The deal debuted over the summer to celebrate the restaurant's eight-year anniversary. It was meant to be a limited-time special, but the restaurant made the hour-long deep discount permanent last month because of popular demand.

Here's the deal: Monday through Saturday from 3 to 4 p.m., customers get 50 percent off existing happy hour menu specials. Some of the half-price items include Portobello steak fries for \$4 (normally \$8 at happy hour and \$10 with no discount). Other items include seafood ceviche, chicken kebabs and grilled cheese avocado bites.

New executive chef Porfirio Gomez, who recently replaced Yves Fournier, designed the new happy hour menu.

Regular happy hour is 3-6:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday. 2607 Main St., Irvine.

## Ways & Means Oyster House

The Huntington Beach seafood restaurant recently replaced its Sunset Social with a new happy hour called "5 for 5."

The bar offers five drinks and five food items for \$5 (per item) from 2-6 p.m. Monday-Friday. The restaurant lets customers design their own cocktails using certain spirits such as Hangar 1 vodka or Agavales Tequila Blanco.

The bar bites menu includes a taco plate (shrimp and fish), hot wings, sliders, and battered jumbo shrimp. Ways & Means is at Pacific City shopping center in Huntington Beach.

## Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar

Fashion Island's popular bar menu, first launched as a recession-buster nine years ago, has been tweaked.

After the Great Recession, the \$6 bar menu became permanent. Crowds routinely form lines before the restaurant opens at 5 p.m. so they can snag a seat in the small bar area.

Eventually, Fleming's added a late-night happy hour. That latter program was recently eliminated as Fleming's prepares to unveil a major makeover next month.

The new happy hour menu, dubbed "Five Six Seven" has been streamlined to wine, cocktails and appetizers ranging in price from \$6 to \$12. Happy hour runs nightly from 5-7 p.m.

Food items, available in the bar only, include tenderloin carpaccio, prime burger, prime rib dip sandwich, roasted Portobello mushroom ravioli, house-made burrata, and sweet chili calamari. 455 Newport Center Drive, Newport Beach.

## Mix Mix stays up late

The year-old global bistro by chef Ross Pangilinan recently added a late night happy hour.

The twist: Mix Mix is offering the discounted drink menu from 10-11:30 p.m. on



Ahi tuna glistens in a wonton salad with Asian carrot slaw is served at the Aqua Lounge and Oak Grill.

Friday and Saturday. The menu includes three cocktails (Silly Rabbit, Perfect Manhattan, and Chef's Cocktail) for \$10, and free chicharrones.

## Summit House Restaurant Sundays

The Summit House Restaurant in Fullerton, known as a picturesque location for hilltop weddings, might not be on everyone's radar when it comes to bar eats. The 26-year-old restaurant wants to change that, having added a Sunday happy hour.

This month, the restaurant's John Dory Tavern began offering discounted food from its popular menu from 4 to 9 p.m. every Sunday.

The five-hour feasting offers the same specials available during its traditional Monday through Friday happy hour, which goes from 4 to 6:30 p.m. It includes \$3 to \$5 off tavern specialties, such as Chesapeake style crab cakes, lobster risotto, roast prime rib sliders and Seaside Sampler. Good for sharing, the sampler includes the crab cakes, chilled Mexican prawns, ahi sashimi.

Drinks: \$2 off craft beer on draft; \$5.50 well drinks. 2000 E. Bastanchury Road, Fullerton.

## Legado Bar + Kitchen

It could be argued that Legado, which opened in April, hosts happy hour all-day. The Laguna Niguel restaurant serves the same menu all day. Starters, salads and pasta entrees comes in two sizes: Full portion and small. The petite plates are anywhere from \$4 to \$7 off all day.

Though they have no need for a formal happy hour, the owners recently added daily drink specials from 3-5 p.m. Available throughout the restaurant, happy hour includes \$1.50

off house wines (Excelcior Estate Cabernet, Merlot, Chardonnay, and Scarpetta Pinot Grigio); \$1.50 off well liquor; and \$1 off bottle and draft beer. 30065 Alicia Parkway No. A, Laguna Niguel.

## Roti specials at Hendrix

The new Laguna Niguel restaurant at Ocean Ranch Village recently launched its happy hour. The restaurant specializes in rotisserie meats, so thankfully the discounted bar menu showcases a few small plates with slow-cooked porchetta and chicken.

Prices range from \$5 to \$9 on dishes that include porchetta sliders, squash blossoms, chicken fritters, Kennebec fries and fried Brussels sprouts. Drinks: \$6 for Hendrix Mai Tai, OC Mule and Scratch Margarita; \$10 for Tito's Martini; \$2 off wines by the glass and \$5 for draft and bottled beer.

## Cocktails on tap at Salt & Ash

The Placentia eatery launched a happy hour program in late September after obtaining its full liquor license.

The Salt & Ash happy hour menu, available throughout the restaurant, discounts five food items such as guacamole and chips ranging in price from \$2 to \$10. Drinks: \$2 off draft beer, \$5 well drinks, \$6 (chardonnay or cabernet) \$8 cocktails.

The new menu also comes with a new bar, installed at the front of the restaurant. Happy Hour runs daily from 2-5 p.m. (Coming soon: Late night happy hour) 1390 N. Kraemer Blvd., Placentia.

## Juliette Kitchen + Bar

Juliette launched its happy hour last year, and routinely updates the menu

to keep diners coming back for more.

The latest selection of small plates includes cheese and charcuterie from \$15 to \$25, steak tartar (\$14), grilled fish tacos (\$10), duck confit toast (\$8), albacore toast (\$9), Juliette burger (\$12) and Romeo burger (\$12). Draft beer is \$2 off, house cocktails are \$8 and wine by the glass is \$7. Hours: 2:30-6 p.m. Monday-Friday. 1000 Bristol St. North No. 11, Newport Beach.

## The Cure Kitchen + Bar

This Cal-Asian eatery opened in mid-July. Its daily social hour menu, available throughout the restaurant, contains a variety of plates, some great for sharing. Prices range from \$3 to \$9. Shareables: drunken chicken wings (\$6), coconut seafood ceviche (\$9), crispy shrimp and lamb spring rolls (\$6), truffle furikaki fries (\$6); Single bites: beef taco (\$3), chicken or pork belly slider (\$3) and tilapia taco (\$3). Social hour is daily from 2-7 p.m. and Friday and Saturday late night from 11 p.m. to midnight. 7862 Warner Ave., No. 101, Huntington Beach.

## Taco Brat

This newly opened taqueria/sausage house keeps it simple. All tacos, normally \$4.50, are \$3. The Brat also sells burritos and salads. However, only the tacos are discounted.

Guests are treated to free chips and salsa. Drinks are \$2 off for draft beer and specialty drinks. Happy hour, available throughout the restaurant, is held from 3-6 p.m. Monday and Wednesday-Friday. 2101 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa.

## The Blind Pig

The Rancho Santa Margarita restaurant recently added three new items to its happy hour menu: Steak tartare, mini crab tacos and shrimp ceviche.

Mainstays such as edamame, bruschetta and salt and vinegar chips remain on the seasonally-driven menu. The \$5 to \$8 prices on these tapas-style dishes are available from 3-5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Drink specials are offered from 3-6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Prices include: \$5 draft beers, \$6 well drinks, \$3 off a glass of wine and \$9 cocktails. 31431 Santa Margarita Parkway, Rancho Santa Margarita.

## Brio Tuscan Grille

The chain, which specializes in Northern Italian cuisine, introduced a new bar bites menu this month.

On weekdays from 3:30-6:30 p.m., diners can choose from the following new dishes: Shishito pepper hash made with crispy fingerling potatoes, feta, green onions and sriracha aioli (\$5); house-made fried pickles served with chili lime ranch dipping sauce (\$4); and potato skins smothered in cheddar cheese sauce, Applewood bacon, green onions and lime crema (\$5).

Drink specials include: Red Sangria (\$5); French Gimlet (\$6); Tropical Cosmo (\$5); Wild Island, a pineapple infused vodka drink mixed with moscato, lemon and pineapple juice (\$5); Very Berry Margarita (\$6) and Cucumber Basil Gimlet (\$6). 774 Spectrum Center Drive, Irvine (Irvine Spectrum Center).