

Wine Guide

O.C. VINTNERS BEHIND LABELS YOU LOVE

Orange Coast

SEAFOOD SPECTACULAR

O.C.'S BEST



DISHES, SAUCES, MARKETS & RAW BARS

PLUS



Home
AN OCEAN VIEW
IN COSTA MESA?

Travel
GOLDEN, COLO.

Dining
JULIETTE
KITCHEN & BAR

Love ON THE Rocks

OYSTER AND RAW BARS SEDUCE
US WITH THEIR BRACKISH BOOTY

TAPS FISH HOUSE AND BREWERY

Bivalves are trending up in Brea, where the town's biggest restaurant has expanded its raw bar to 21 seats and satisfies slurpers with a rotating cast of raw oysters, including Fanny Bay from British Columbia, Malpeque from Prince Edward Island, and Coromandel from New Zealand. No raw-raw spirit? Oysters Rockefeller, baked with spinach, bacon, Pernod, and Hollandaise, are splendid. 101 E. Imperial Highway, Brea, 714-257-0101, tapsfishhouse.com

SHUCK OYSTER BAR

This bare-and-spare newbie at the OC Mart Mix professes love for unsung oysters from indie farms. Partners Noah Blom and Leonard Chan showcase Eastern bivalves including Tomahawks, Stingrays, and Olde Salts, as many as 15 varieties at any time. For the oyster-averse, try a juicy chowder or a gooey grilled cheese w/ich. 3313 Hyland Ave., Costa Mesa, 949-420-0478, shuckoysterbar.com

WILDFISH

A mountain of glittering ice arrayed with crimson lobsters, craggy oysters, and bulging crab claws is the sensuous come-on at this deluxe seafooder, where raw specialist Lozaro Rodriguez prepares your picks to order. Oysters by the hundreds are served every night, but the most popular raw bar dish? Tartare of ahi loin spiked with curry (Page 85). *The Bluffs*, 1370 Bison Ave., Newport Beach, 949-720-9925, wildfishseafoodgrille.com

KING'S FISH HOUSE

Oyster lovers are happy as clams with this selection, O.C.'s biggest for topless, salty beauties shucked to order. Look for seasonal varieties flown in from esteemed sources—Kumamotos from Puget Sound, Chincoteague Bays from Maryland, Barcats from Chesapeake Bay. Or, pair luscious tuna sashimi with a Japanese beer. *O.C. locations in Huntington Beach, Laguna Hills, and Orange*, kingsfishhouse.com





THE Fisher King

Eat more fish. It says so on **Sam King's** business card and on the menu at his thriving empire of 15 seafood-centric restaurants. President and CEO of Costa Mesa-based King's Seafood Co., the Long Beach native oversees dining venues ranging from Huntington Beach's jaunty Fish Camp to downtown L.A.'s vaunted Water Grill to a trio of King's Fish Houses in Orange County.

Is today's diner more demanding? He's far more educated than 15 to 20 years ago. The rise of food content on television has been a game-changer—shows such as “Rachael Ray,” “Chopped,” and “Top Chef” keep them interested and educated about what they eat.
Where have you eaten recently and what did you order? Angotei in Costa Mesa for lunch. I had miso soup, and yellowtail and toro sashimi.
How often do you dine out? Several times a week, depending on

active projects. During our remodel of Water Grill, we probably dined in more than 100 restaurants, from L.A. to N.Y.C., looking for inspiration.

Any advice for home cooks on buying seafood? Don't be afraid to ask questions at the counter. Even the major supermarkets have taken it up a notch, and top-tier markets such as Bristol Farms and Whole Foods won't disappoint you. As for cooking seafood, practice makes perfect. Use YouTube if you don't have a clue about what to do with that swordfish fillet you just bought.

What two dishes can't you take off the King's Fish House menu for fear of customer revolt? Barbecued shrimp and Alaskan halibut.
Besides seafood, what other protein do you enjoy? I love a great rib-eye, on or off the bone.

Word association time! I say Joe's Crab Shack, you say: Good value proposition with their buckets.

I say Taps Fish House, you say: Taps serves good seafood like King's and it's also a good brew house.

Oysters or sashimi? Tough choice, but I pick sashimi. Can't beat an order of great big-eye tuna toro! Always end with uni and quail egg.
Name an O.C. diner quirk you don't see in L.A.? O.C. diners eat much earlier.