



## GOOD-FOR-YOU CHOCOLATE

→ Spoil the vegan in your life with **XAN CONFECTIONS**. Try the lower-calorie Sainly Sins (\$6 to \$22 for three to 12 pieces) sweetened primarily with agave nectar, or the faceted, iridescent Jewel Collection (\$10 to \$22 for three to 12), which pairs ancho chili and bananas Foster with caramel flavors. All of the vegan chocolates are dairy- and gluten-free, but we most love the Vertles (\$3 each), vegan pecan or almond turtles. Available online, at *Bristol Farms* and *Whole Foods*, and at *Xan's headquarters: 1202 McGaw Ave., Irvine, 949-833-2928, xanconfections.com*

## VIETNAMESE DUMPLINGS

→ Dine at **NGU BINH** and witness central Vietnam's rice-flour wizardry all on the same combo plate (\$6.50): tiny, snow-white pancakes scattered with dried shrimp, fried scallions, and pork rinds; crystalline dumplings filled with shrimp; even a tamales-like dumpling steamed in a banana leaf and packed with pork and shrimp. No wonder there's a line out the door. *14072 Magnolia St., Westminster, 714-903-6000*



CHILI CHUTNEY

## MARBLED MEAT

→ The wait at **ANJIN** can be crushing (show up before it opens at 5 to minimize your downtime), but the promise of even a bite of the restaurant's Wagyu beef (\$12) should be enough to keep you patient. You can do no wrong even as you grill it yourself—the rosy slices of beef are so fatty they all but dissolve in a rush of meat liquescence when they hit your tongue. *3033 Bristol St., Costa Mesa, 714-979-6700*

### READERS SAY

With kids, they dine at Ruby's, Red Robin, or WAHOO'S. "Perfect place to meet after a soccer game!" says Ying Woo-Clark of Laguna Beach, of the fish taco parlor.

## READY-TO-ROAST CHICKENS

→ Superfresh, naturally fed, Luis Silva's **LA BAHN RANCH** chicken (\$3 a pound) is sold at four weekly O.C. farmers markets—Wednesdays in Fullerton, Thursdays in Costa Mesa and Orange, and Saturdays in Huntington Beach. The petite size of the Temecula-raised birds makes them perfect for roasting a la San Francisco's Zuni Café. (For a recipe, visit *orangeoast.com/blogs/tasteoforangecounty*.) Terrific eggs, too. *orangeoast.com/guides/farmersmarkets*

## TONGUE-TINGLING CONDIMENTS

→ Everything at **CHILI CHUTNEY** is slicked with the Afghan restaurant's eponymous condiments. There are two types, each equally addictive: a verdant cilantro-and-jalapeño chutney, and a sweetly spicy bell pepper chutney. Spread your favorite on the burgerlike *chaplee* kebob (\$7) or a slice of the leek-filled *bolani* flatbread (\$8), then buy a jar to take home (\$6). *24301 Muirlands Blvd., Lake Forest, 949-859-1778, chilichutney.com*

## BEST of the TRENDS



### SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

» Our recent survey of a handful of mid-priced and upscale seafooders found **WALT'S WHARF** in Seal Beach doing an exemplary job of hopping on board the sustainable trend. They go the extra mile, buying wild-caught salmon in Alaska and flash-freezing it for a supply that lasts all year. Other local favorites, **BLUEWATER GRILL** and **MCCORMICK & SCHMICK'S**, follow close behind.



### GREEN TEA GOODIES

» Green tea is turning up all over in baked goods, from tiramisu at **BOULANGERIE PIERRE AND PATISserie** to **85°C BAKERY CAFÉ'S** sponge roll with sweet red bean cream. **FREESOUCAFFÉ** in Tustin uses brightly colored organic matcha from Japan for its superlative green tea waffles, cheesecake, pound cake, cupcakes, and biscotti.



### HOUSE-MADE POTATO CHIPS

» From **TAPS** and **THE CATCH** to **CHARLIE PALMER**, restaurants have been frying their own tater chips. We like the thick-cut, supercrunchy ones (\$2.50) at **SLAPFISH** in Huntington Beach. They're tossed with plenty of sea salt, pepper, and smoked paprika—addictive!