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SAN DIEGO DINING AND DRINKING

# Michelin Guide recognizes Valle, Kingfisher restaurants in 'sneak peek' of full honorees list coming Dec. 5



Chocolate de Metate at Valle Restaurant in Oceanside. (Courtesy of Valle)

The new Oceanside and Golden Hill restaurants are now eligible for Michelin

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BY PAM KRAG

NOV. 9, 2022 10:12 AM PT

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Two new San Diego County restaurants — [Valle](#) in Oceanside and [Kingfisher](#) in Golden Hill — are among 37 California restaurants that the Michelin Guide recognized Wednesday as new additions to its 2022 California guide.

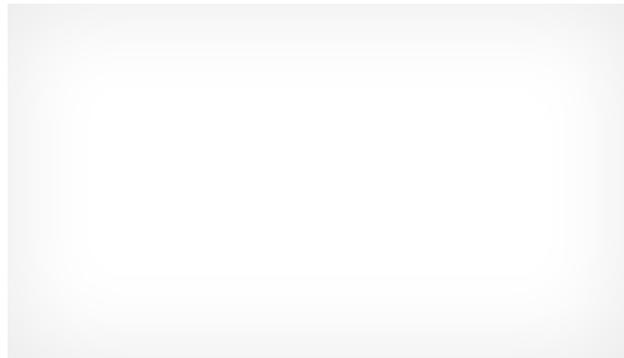
The full list of the state's 2022 Star, Bib Gourmand and Plate honorees will be unveiled next month.

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Wednesday's announcement aims to whet the public's appetite for the highly anticipated list of new 2022 honorees that will be announced in full on Dec. 5 at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles.

Until 2019, San Diego County restaurants weren't eligible for consideration by the elite and secretive ratings organization's awards. Since then, 52 local restaurants have joined the California Guide, including four Michelin Star honorees: two-star Addison, and one-star Jeune et Jolie, Soichi Sushi and Sushi Tadokoro.



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Salt Spring mussel escabeche with coconut, fennel and cucumber at Kingfisher Cocktail bar & Eatery. (Courtesy of Kimberly Motos)

In a brief description of the modern Vietnamese-French restaurant Kingfisher Cocktail Bar & Eatery — which opened last winter and has topped many “best of” lists in the months since — a Michelin inspector wrote: “A striking central bar provides the perfect perch for thirsty guests to wet their beaks with a terrific assortment of inventive cocktails, which serve as excellent complements to the mouth-watering menu of inspired Vietnamese cooking.”

And for Valle — which opened in October 2021 and serves a \$95 prix-fixe menu — the inspector wrote: “The name is a reference to the Guadalupe Valley of Baja California, Mexico’s premier viticultural region, which furnishes the restaurant’s wine list, and serves as inspiration for Chef Roberto Alcocer’s refined, modern expression of Mexican cuisine.”

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Chef Roberto Alcocer hopes that Valle, a 155-seat modern Mexican tasting-menu restaurant in downtown Oceanside will win a Michelin star someday. (Valle Restaurant)

Alcocer said last year that one of the reasons he moved his family from Baja to Carlsbad to open the 155-seat oceanfront restaurant at the Mission Pacific Hotel is the California Michelin Guide. Restaurants in Mexico — where he owns the 8-year-old Malva Cocina de Baja California in the Valle de Guadalupe — won't be eligible for Michelin recognition until 2023.

"Michelin has been in my head since day one," he told the [Union-Tribune last year](#). "I started my cooking career 20 years ago as an apprentice in a Michelin-starred restaurant in France. If I'm leaving my stability and moving to another country, I'm going to play for all the marbles."

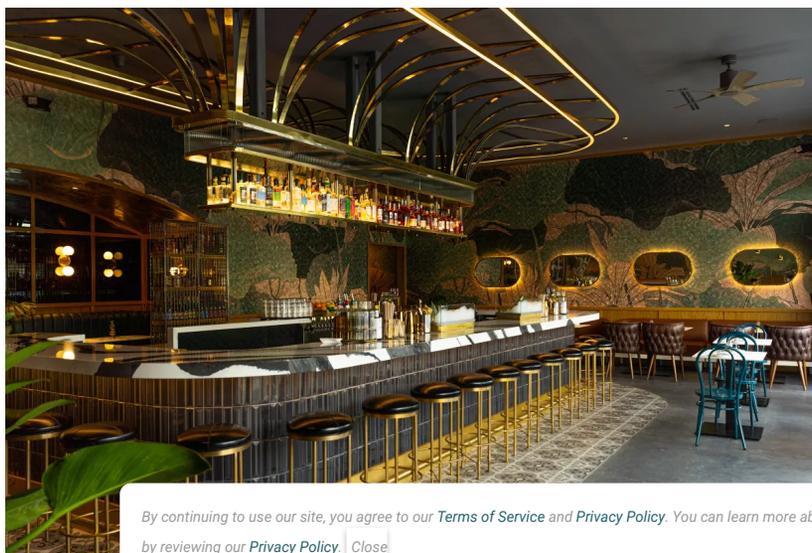
Alcocer's menu at Valle features ingredients and dishes from his native Mexico reimaged through the lens of his long career cooking in high-end restaurants around the world.



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The interior of

Kingfisher opened Jan. 14 in the quiet San Diego neighborhood of Golden Hill and quickly became its main attraction. It's the passion project of sisters Ky Phan and Kim Phan and Kim's husband, Quan Le, who together launched the Crab Hut restaurant company 15 years ago. Although they've had great success with the American-style seafood boil eateries, they wanted to open a more elegant venue that reflected their native Vietnamese heritage.

Kingfisher's executive chef is Jon Bautista, a longtime San Diego chef of Filipino heritage who previously served as chef de cuisine under chef-owner Trey Foshee at the George's at the Cove restaurants in La Jolla from 2013 to 2019. Bautista told the Union-Tribune last February that he developed the menu by cooking side by side with the owners' parents to learn traditional Vietnamese recipes.

"What I'm cooking now, it's me," Bautista said. "I'm classically trained, so that's the French. Vietnamese food is a lot of herbs and seafood and freshness, and my style of cooking is very light and clean."



Jon Bautista, executive chef at Kingfisher Cocktail Bar & Eatery (Jon Bautista)

Kingfisher's herbacious food is eye-catching, but the restaurant's showstopping 23-seat bar is what most people — including the Michelin inspector — talk about after they walk in. Designed by Ocio Design Group, the bar's overhead light fixture has been nicknamed the "super bloom."

"It's really overarching, like a big wave is coming down on top of you or a big hug," said David Tye, Kingfisher's general manager and bar manager.

While only two of the 37 restaurants announced in Michelin's "sneak peek" on Wednesday are in San Diego County, that doesn't mean the city will be overlooked when the 2022 announcements are made next month. Michelin inspectors have been making up for lost time in recent years, and several local restaurant owners and chefs have said they're certain they've spotted undercover inspectors in their dining rooms over the past six months.

Michelin Guide hasn't divulged which of the three levels of award Kingfisher and Valle will receive next month. The Plate is the designation for restaurants that serve

"very good

these rest

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The Michelin Bib Gourmand award honors restaurants that serve “great food at reasonable prices.” The coveted Michelin Star recognizes restaurants that achieve the highest standards of excellence. These top-tier restaurants can earn one to three stars based on the five criteria of flavor, technique, distinctiveness of the chef and their cuisine, value for the money and consistency.

For the full list of 37 Michelin Guide additions, visit [michelinmedia.com/co/michelin-guide-california-37-additions](https://michelinmedia.com/co/michelin-guide-california-37-additions).



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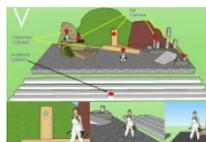
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