

The best restaurant designs of 2016

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So long are the days when a decent dining experience could be captured by merely a thoughtfully made meal and a well-mannered waiter. To stand out in San Diego's dining scene, a restaurant must also take guests on a journey of all senses, evoking an experience before the fork ever touches the mouth. This year, new restaurants brought big design value to the table, creating worlds of whimsy and raising the city's hospitality reputation.



KINDRED - South Park (Paul Body)

KINDRED — South Park

Skulls, booze and vegan eats converge at Kindred, the South Park stunner designed by Paul Basile of BASILE Studio. A 35-foot marble bar anchors the room, while dark and twisted details cause a buzz, or at least, a conversation-starter. There's a haunting beast sculpture gazing down on one of the tables, creepy cat portraits in the restrooms and plenty of juxtaposition between dark and light visual effects throughout the 2,800-square-foot restaurant, which made its debut at the very end of 2015.

1503 30th St., South Park. (619) 546-9653 or barkindred.com



Campfire - Carlsbad (Lyudmila Zotova)

Campfire — [Carlsbad](#)

Designed by Bells & Whistles, Campfire captures a brush with nature in Carlsbad. To conjure a memory of camping along the coastline, the designers introduced elements such as a 12-foot custom teepee, a mountainous landscape mural and a private dining room inside of an old corrugated tin shed from Camp Pendleton. A copper bar, a glass-enclosed kitchen and a custom wood grill add to the outdoorsy feel of the 6,000 square feet space, which feature both outdoor and indoor seating.

2725 State St., Carlsbad. (760) 637-5121 or thisiscampfire.com



Herb & Wood - Little Italy (Andy McRoy photo)

Herb & Wood — Little Italy

As the debut design credit for Christopher Puffer, Herb & Wood is truly the first of its kind. Brian Malarkey's restaurant partner and general manager brought Southern charm and feminine whimsy with live greenery, custom channel-back banquettes, tufted leather booths and playful modern portraits of women by artist Johnny Lane winking at guests. The open and airy Little Italy restaurant feels endless with a lounge area, dining room and patio replete with a double-sided fireplace and plush couch seating.

2210 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy. (619) 955-8495 or herbandwood.com



North Park Beer Co. (Auda & Coudayre Photography)

North Park Beer Co. — North Park

The bar has been set high for breweries, thanks again to Paul Basile of BASILE Studio with the debut of North Park Beer Co. this year. No grime or grit to wade through here — just an elevated tasting room, brewery and restaurant with mid-century and Craftsman design details. Dark wood and copper touches line the upstairs and downstairs portions with throwback lamppost lighting, communal high tables, comfy bar stools, ample space for socializing and huge windows facing University Avenue.

3038 University Ave., North Park. (619) 255-2946 or northparkbeerco.com



Craft & Commerce - Little Italy (Zack Benson)

Craft & Commerce and False Idol — Little Italy

While Craft & Commerce first opened doors in 2010, the Little Italy cocktail bar spent a year undergoing a makeover from Paul Basile of BASILE Studio and reopened in September. Not only did the renovation add a second bar and a wrap-around patio, they also expanded upon the library theme with books stacked around every corner and quotes from literature transcribed throughout. An increased number of taxidermy heads hover along the walls now, completed with the help of the San Diego Natural History Museum. Tucked away in the back is False Idol, a hidden tiki bar with vibrant Polynesian décor.

675 West Beech St., Little Italy. (619) 269-2202 or craft-commerce.com