

SAN DIEGO FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL

The [San Diego Food + Wine Festival](#) Returns
November 1–8, 2026 with Reimagined Grand Weekend Presented by
Southwest Airlines®

*Festival unveils its first wave of culinary talent, new culinary districts and three
signature Grand Weekend experiences:
Icons + Legends, Grand Tasting and Grand Fiesta*

(San Diego / August 13, 2026) - The West Coast's premier culinary celebration is back, this November, and it's pulling out all the stops. Now in its 22nd year, the award-winning San Diego Food + Wine Festival (SDFW) returns November 1–8, 2026 with a reimagined Grand Weekend, presented by Southwest Airlines®, featuring all-new culinary districts and, for the first time, a seamless two-day waterfront celebration that brings Grand Tasting and Grand Fiesta together in one iconic setting.

Drawing over 11,000 passionate food and wine enthusiasts from the U.S., Mexico and beyond, the Festival transforms "America's Finest City" into an eight-day epicurean playground. More than a party, it's a convergence of James Beard Award winners, Michelin-honored chefs, world-class winemakers, renowned spirits producers and emerging culinary talent, all coming together to celebrate the distinctive flavors and cultures of Southern California and Baja.

The Grand Weekend kicks off Friday, November 6 with the debut of Icons + Legends at JULEP Venue, then flows to the waterfront at Embarcadero Marina Park North for Grand Tasting and Grand Fiesta. Vibrant new culinary districts pop up throughout both days, inviting guests to explore live-fire cooking, chef demonstrations, regional wine pavilions and immersive cultural programming. Alongside the continuation of the Festival's Food Rescue Program and a slate of dynamic new experiences, these elements will set a new standard for how guests discover food, wine, culture and sustainability.

Returning as the Official Airline, Southwest Airlines joins the Festival alongside the Southwest Rapid Rewards® Credit Cards as Official Credit Cards. Additional Festival partners include Brandt Beef, Temecula Valley Winegrowers, Acqua Panna, S.Pellegrino, Maille, Devil's Grin Gin, Rethink Food, the Consulate of Mexico, Baja California Tourism, El Faro Seafood and Chef Works, with additional partners to be announced.

"The San Diego Food + Wine Festival has always been more than a celebration—it's a statement about who we are as a region. This year, we're taking that further than ever: a fully reimagined Grand Weekend along the Embarcadero, new culinary districts that invite real discovery and a lineup that reflects the incredible diversity of cultures, traditions and talent that define Southern California and Baja. After 22 years, the thing that excites me most is that we're still evolving and still finding new ways to champion local farmers, celebrate sustainability and bring the world's best to our own backyard," says SDFW co-founder, Michelle Metter.

First Taste of This Year's Culinary Lineup

The festival honors the influence of Latin, Asian and BIPOC cultures on Southern California's exploding food and beverage scene, uniting top chefs from the United States and Mexico. Renowned culinary talents from *Food Network* and *Top Chef* will join chefs honored by the *Michelin Guide* and the *James Beard Foundation*. A highlight of this year's culinary and beverage powerhouses include:

- Joe Sasto – Top Chef finalist
- Chris Oh - Michelin-recognized chef and restaurateur: Um.Ma (San Francisco), Chingu (Honolulu), Kamu (Las Vegas) and Seoul Sausage Co. (Los Angeles); Eater SF Best New Restaurant, Thrillist Best New Restaurant
- Maynard Llera (Kuya Lord) – James Beard Award winner, Best Chef: California (2024)
- Kareem "Mr. Bake" Queeman – Award-winning pastry chef and founder of Mr. Bake Sweets; James Beard Award semifinalist, Outstanding Pastry Chef or Baker (2023)
- Susan Bae (Moon Rabbit) – James Beard Award winner, Outstanding Pastry Chef or Baker (2026); North America's Best Pastry Chef (2025); Michelin Guide; North America's 50 Best Restaurants
- Suzette Gresham – Two-Michelin-star chef (Acquerello, San Francisco); first female apprentice on the U.S. Culinary Olympic team; winner of the Antonin Carême Medal
- James Trees – James Beard Award finalist, Best Chef: Southwest (2020)
- Matt Vawter – James Beard Award winner, Best Chef: Mountain (2024)
- Gale Gand – Two-time James Beard Award winner (Outstanding Pastry Chef 2001; Service 2007); inducted into the Chicago Chefs Hall of Fame; host of Food Network's *Sweet Dreams*
- Javier Plascencia – Michelin-recognized chef and Baja culinary pioneer
- José Luis Hinostroza – Michelin-recognized chef
- Miguel Ángel Guerrero – Pioneer of BajaMed cuisine
- Marcelo Hisaki – Michelin-recognized chef; Bocuse d'Or Mexico competitor
- Sabina Bandera – Internationally acclaimed "La Guerrerense" street food icon; Michelin-recognized
- David Sim – Michelin Guide – Kingfisher
- Cha McCoy – Certified sommelier, wine educator, and television personality; James Beard Media Award winner (2026) for *Wine Pairing for the People*

- Roberto Alcocer – Michelin Star (Valle, Oceanside); Michelin-recognized (Malva, Valle de Guadalupe); James Beard Award semifinalist, Best Chef: California (2025)
- Eric Bost – Michelin Star (Jeune et Jolie, Lilo); James Beard Award semifinalist, Best Chef: West; *New York Times* 50 Best Restaurants (Lilo, 2025)
- Danny Romero + Dante Romero – Chefs and co-owners, Two Ducks (San Diego fine dining pop-up) and The Lion's Share
- Aidan Owens – Culinary Director, Herb & Wood & Herb & Sea (San Diego); Food Network (*Chopped Castaways*, 2026)
- Tara Monsod – James Beard Award finalist, Best Chef: California (2024 & 2025); Michelin Plate (Animae); executive chef, Animae and Le Coq, San Diego
- Bernard Guillas - Maître Cuisinier de France; American Chefs' Hall of Fame inductee; IACP Award-winning cookbook author (*Flying Pans*)
- Aron Schwartz - Chef-owner, Blank Slate

Additional chefs, restaurants, sommeliers, winemakers and culinary personalities will be announced throughout the coming months.

One Weekend. Three Signature Experiences.

Friday, November 6 | [Icons + Legends](#)

JULEP Venue

The Grand Weekend begins with Icons + Legends, the Festival's official opening night and the ultimate elevated tasting experience, where award-winning chefs, exceptional wines and premium spirits take center stage.

Named for the culinary icons and legendary producers who have shaped today's food and beverage landscape, Icons + Legends brings together many of the Festival's most celebrated chefs, wineries and spirits producers for an unforgettable opening night. Guests will savor extraordinary culinary creations paired with highly awarded wines, rare bottles and standout spirits while mingling with some of the industry's most celebrated chefs, winemakers and beverage visionaries.

Saturday, November 7 | [Grand Tasting, Presented by Southwest Airlines®](#)

Embarcadero Marina Park North

The event that started it all is back and it's never been grander. An epic waterfront celebration of all-star chef and beverage talent featuring Live Fire VIP experiences, Michelin-honored and James Beard nominated chefs, the return of Cohn Restaurant Group's "Cohnchella", One World Beef's Brandt Experience, live music and countless immersive tastings from domestic wine regions including, Temecula Valley, Sonoma, Lake County, and international wine and spirits.

New culinary districts invite guests to experience live-fire cooking, chef demonstrations, artisan shopping, regional wine pavilions, interactive tastings and engaging programming celebrating the people, places and flavors that define San Diego and Baja. Experience gourmet foods, art, live musical entertainment, and the thrilling "Chef of the Fest Competition," an action-packed culinary showdown where chefs battle it out for your vote to be crowned "2026 People's Choice – Chef of the Fest", earn bragging rights for a year, a plaque to prove it, and up to \$5,000 in cash and prizes.

Sunday, November 8 | [Grand Fiesta, Presented by Southwest Airlines®](#)
Embarcadero Marina Park North

The ultimate finale to the Grand Weekend. For the first time, Grand Fiesta joins the Grand Tasting at the Embarcadero, creating a seamless two-day waterfront celebration of food, beverage and culture from Baja and beyond. Expect expanded cross-border connections, more guest Bocuse d'Or and Michelin recognized chefs from Mexico, and an even larger selection of Baja wines and spirits. Guests will enjoy abundant culinary stations, live music, an expanded VIP experience and the return of beloved annual "Taco TKO" competition, the ultimate showdown of taco supremacy.

Discover New Culinary Districts

New this year, Grand Weekend introduces a collection of culinary districts designed to encourage exploration throughout the Festival. Dive into *Smoke + Fire*, a live-fire playground where premium proteins meet open flame hosted by a soon-to-be-announced *Food Network* star and famed pitmaster, *Sweet Street* hosted by Kareem "Mr. Bake" Queeman, an indulgent destination devoted to pastry, desserts and coffee; *So San Diego*, showcasing the city's thriving local indie innovation and arts and culture scene, and *South of the Border*, an immersive journey into the people, places and craftsmanship that define Baja and Mexico—from legendary winemakers and regional producers to the culinary traditions that have shaped the border region for generations.

Saturday's Grand Tasting will also feature *Street Feast: Asian Market*, inspired by Asian night markets, while Sunday's Grand Fiesta debuts *Street Feast: Mercado*, a lively, contemporary marketplace where guests can discover emerging Mexican brands, sample street food, shop artisan products and taste their way through the most exciting flavors crossing the border right now. Together with an expanded lineup of experiences along the Embarcadero waterfront, these culinary districts offer guests more ways than ever to experience the Festival.

Over 800 incredible wines and spirits will be poured throughout the festival, representing the world's most distinguished wine-growing regions. Guests will enjoy selections from Lake County, Paso Robles, San Joaquin Valley, Sierra Foothills, New Zealand, Mendocino Ridge,

Wines of Georgia, Côtes du Rhône, Baja, Spain, France, Slovenia, Lodi, Temecula, Napa Valley, San Diego County, Sonoma County, Santa Rita Hills, to name a few. Spirits enthusiasts will have chances during the week to taste from some of the world's most sought-after whiskeys, learn about tequila and mezcal, and explore low and alcohol-free wine and spirit options.

San Diego Food + Wine is growing its food recovery program this year, led by Ken Baker of [Rethink Food](#) and developed in collaboration with the San Diego Food Bank and its citywide network of distribution partners. The effort is designed to redirect surplus prepared food from the festival to San Diegans facing food insecurity, with additional partner and programming details to come.

Where California Meets Baja

More to taste. More to explore. From intimate dinners and waterfront celebrations to unforgettable tastings and celebrated chefs, this year's lineup of events showcases the flavors, people, and places that make San Diego so delicious.

Beyond the signature weekend experiences, discover star-studded celebrations, exclusive dinners, expert-led tastings, a cross-border culinary excursion, and more—all part of one unforgettable week of food and wine.

- Sunday, November 1st: [Dia de los Muertos at Grand Del Mar](#)

The most exclusive Día de Muertos Gala in the United States returns to the Fairmont Grand Del Mar for its fourth year—an extraordinary evening honoring Chef José Andrés, founder of World Central Kitchen, whose humanitarian leadership has fed millions in crisis around the globe. The culinary stage features Michelin-honored chefs Javier Plascencia, Roberto Alcocer, Drew Deckman and Esteban Luis alongside a celebrated roster of Mexican and cross-border talent. Proceeds benefit Fundación Tijuana Sin Hambre, which delivers 3,500 nutritious meals daily to 40 shelters across the Tijuana region.

- Thursday, November 5th: [Romesco Mexiterranean Bistro 20 Year Anniversary Dinner Featuring Chef Javier Plascencia + Friends](#)

An unforgettable evening celebrating two decades of Romesco Mexiterranean Bistro. Featuring Michelin-starred chef Javier Plascencia and special guest chefs.

- Thursday, November 5th: [Legacy of the Land Dinner at Grand Del Mar](#)

San Diego is home to more small farms than any county in the nation, and this dinner is their celebration. At the Fairmont Grand Del Mar, a collection of celebrated chefs, winemakers and culinary luminaries come together for a multi-course evening built entirely around the freshness, diversity and extraordinary quality of what this region grows so beautifully.

- Thursday, November 5th: [Baja Culinary Expedition](#)

Curated and hosted by Baja Wine + Food founder Fernando Gaxiola, this all-inclusive cross-border journey through Valle de Guadalupe offers rare behind-the-scenes access to legendary winemakers, Michelin-recognized chefs and the culinary landmarks that define North America's most celebrated wine country—including private tasting at Baja's oldest winery.

- Friday, November 6th: [Bevan Cellars Wine Lunch at Mister A's](#)

An intimate five-course lunch high above San Diego's skyline at the iconic Mister A's, paired with wines from Russell Bevan's acclaimed Napa Valley winery, home to more than 40 perfect 100-point scores and some of the valley's most coveted Cabernet Sauvignon.

Individual tickets and weekend packages are currently available for purchase for [Icons + Legends](#), [Grand Tasting Presented by Southwest Airlines](#), and [Grand Fiesta Presented by Southwest Airlines](#) and specialty dinner experiences. Travelers can find information on hotel partner packages [here](#) and flights via our official airline partner, Southwest Airlines. For more information, please visit the festival [website](#) and Instagram at [@sdfoodwine](#).

ABOUT SOUTHWEST AIRLINES®

[Southwest Airlines Co.](#) operates one of the world's most admired and awarded airlines, offering its one-of-a-kind value and Hospitality at 122 airports across 12 countries. Southwest took flight in 1971 to democratize the sky through friendly, reliable, and low-cost air travel and now carries more air travelers flying nonstop within the United States than any other airline¹. By empowering its more than 73,000² People to deliver unparalleled Hospitality, the maverick airline cherishes a passionate loyalty among more than 134 million Customers carried in 2025. Southwest leverages a unique legacy and mission to serve communities around the world including harnessing the power of its People and Purpose to put communities at the Heart of its success. Learn more by visiting [Southwest.com/citizenship](#).

1. Based on U.S. Dept. of Transportation quarterly Airline Origin & Destination Survey as of Q4 2025

2. Fulltime-equivalent active Employees as of March 31, 2026

ABOUT THE SAN DIEGO FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL

The 22nd Annual San Diego Food + Wine Festival is an international showcase of the world's premier wine and spirits producers, chefs and culinary personalities, and gourmet foods. Held November 1-8, 2026, the award-winning festival raises funds for culinary, oenology and hospitality scholarships and grants, and has awarded over \$600,000 to individuals and nonprofits through previous events. For more information, please visit [www.sandiegowineclassic.com](#) and [@sdfoodwine](#).

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