

COME HUNGRY, LEAVE HAPPY

North Eats culinary food festival comes to Carlsbad.

WRITTEN BY **DAVID BOYLAN**
PHOTOS BY **ZACH CORDNER**

I recall getting an email from Nino “Neens” Camilo about a year ago pitching me on his upcoming North Eats festival and I was amazed by the number of top-tier North County restaurants he had already lined up for this first-time event. That in itself was enough to sell me on the idea of having him as a guest on my show, “Lick the Plate,” on KPRI. Well, that and the fact that he had already produced several of his famous Poke Festivals. Neens is the creator and curator of this fabulous event and it’s being held again this year on April 26 at the Carlsbad Hilton Oceanfront Resort.

I get to a lot of these festivals and can honestly say this one stands head and shoulders above most of them in San Diego. Add in the fact that it’s so conveniently located and it makes it a no-brainer for any food, music and surf culture lover in North County. But convenience aside, the location is world class, the participating restaurants are amazing, there is very little waiting for food, very healthy sample portions, amazing beer and wine options, killer entertainment, an eclectic crowd and, of course, the Kook or Cook competition. It’s a matchup between pro surfers paired with professional chefs going head-to-head “Top Chef” style. That combination provided some great entertainment last year with the pro surfers displaying some surprising kitchen skills under pressure.

All my favorite restaurants from North County participate. Last year there were a few newcomers and this gave me the opportunity to do a little tasting in advance. I’ve been to these festivals





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before where the sample sizes are so small and the lines so long it was really not worth the effort. Not the case at North Eats: There is food in abundance and never a long wait... and if there is a wait, you will more than likely meet someone cool in line.

Neens is an event manager extraordinaire and he shows that off at North Eats. The layout flows between indoors and outdoors and the event unfolds as the sun is setting over the Pacific. I really can't think of a better way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

A sample of last year's participating restaurants includes Angels Salumi & Truffles, Baker & Olive, Bier Garden Encinitas, Bistro West, Blue Ribbon Artisan Pizzeria, Craftsman New American Tavern, Cucina Enoteca, David Bacco Chocolatier, Davanti Enoteca, El Callejon, Firefly Grill & Wine Bar, Fish 101, Guahan Grill, Hodad's (as a guest from the south), Mia Francesca, Old Mission San Luis Rey, Panca Peruvian, Petite Madeline Bakery, Privateer Coal Fire Pizza, Sadie Rose Bakery, Solar Rain, Solterra Winery, Trattoria I Trulli, Whole Foods Del Mar, Wrench & Rodent Seabasstropub, Yummy Cupcakes, Chandlers and a whole lot more. It's like the all-star game of North County restaurants, all together in one place, putting their best stuff out there for all you foodies to sample. And another bonus of the location is the ability to stroll around the beautiful Carlsbad Hilton Oceanfront Resort. Sample for a while, then walk it off, and then get back to it. It's the perfect combination of the best in North County cuisine, music, wine, beer and surf culture in the perfect setting. Not much more you can ask for from a culinary festival.

David Boylan is the "Lick the Plate" author and columnist (lick-the-plate.com).



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NORTH EATS

Sunday, April 26

Carlsbad Hilton Oceanfront Resort

1 Ponto Road

onoyum.com

a) Bistro West's dish; b) a sample from Panca Peruvian; c) sweets from Chandler's; d) attendees gather for a group photo outside the Carlsbad Hilton Oceanfront Resort; e) from left, North Eats creator Nino "Neens" Camilo, emcee Chris Coté and surfer/cook Benji Weatherly.