

## Superdiners on casino dining in SD

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 20 August 2013 07:02 -

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Casinos are more than just gambling establishments — they are a food mecca of dining options. So with a ton of casinos in our own backyard, we asked the Superdiners to share their picks for the best local casino dining.

**Charles Kaufman, baker, owner of Bread & Cie Cafe (Twitter @BreadAndCie):** I'm no longer guilty of profiling casinos as "buffet only" after dining in Mama's Cucina Italiana at Pala Casino (11154 Highway 76. 760-510-5100 or palacasino.com). I've been driving to Pala for years to dine at Mama's alone. Forget the casino. House-made pasta, toothsome risotto with gorgeous daily sauces, a world-class osso buco and a balanced branzino (European sea bass) with Manila clams are a few of chef Luciano Cibelli's triumphs and my favorites. As far as buffets, little-known but in my experience the best is the newly redesigned and re-imagined buffet at Valley View Casino (16300 Nyemii Pass Road, Valley Center. 760-291-5500 or valleyviewcasino.com). The newest of the new, this buffet has taste, style, variety and, of course, the essential element of a casino buffet — quantity.

**David Salisbury, a law firm's director of business development, avid diner:** Not a guy who usually frequents the local casinos, but from time to time, I make the trek east to check out our little piece of Las Vegas right here in San Diego. Nothing says casino dining like an all-you-can-eat buffet, and when you're looking for quality along with variety, the Barona Resort and Casino (1932 Wildcat Canyon Road, Lakeside. 619-443-2300 or barona.com) has the best buffet in town, with Valley View Casino a very close second. These two offer everything you could ever want in an all-you-can-eat setting, including Asian-style short ribs, traditional prime rib and lobster, and all for a reasonable price — and even better when it's free as a member of one of their frequent-visitor clubs.

**Brandon Hernandez, food writer (Twitter@offdutyfoodie):** I'd like to say that I abstain from gambling because I save all my money for my food adventures, but the truth is, I'm just cheap (though frugal makes me come off a little better). But, truth is, since I don't gamble, I don't frequent casino eateries. But I once had a fun, indulgent post-concert meal at the Pink's Hot Dogs at Harrah's Rincon Hotel and Casino (777 Harrah's Rincon Way. 760-751-3100 or harrahsrincon.com), paid for by the gracious members of Miranda Lambert's touring band. That was pretty tasty — and way cool.

**Ricardo Heredia, executive chef at Alchemy Restaurant:** When I think of casino food, I think of buffets, which I despise. I am strictly business when I hit the floor, and food is the furthest thing from my mind, but after a nice lick on the craps table, I have had a good, dry-aged rib-eye

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and a '95 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne at Barona Oaks Steak House (at Barona Resort and Casino). This is a great old-school steak house and deserves its props.

**Joanne Bautista (formerly Arellano), human resources professional, avid Yelper, avid diner:** Valley View Casino has the best lobster buffet. There's always a crazy line for the buffet at this casino, but I can see why. The spread of the delicious food options is impressive, and it feels like I'm at a buffet at one of the mega casinos on the Vegas strip, but on a much smaller scale.

**Jeff Josenhans, director of beverage outlets and sommelier at U.S. Grant Hotel:** The buffet at Sycuan Casino (5469 Casino Way, El Cajon. 619-445-6002 or sycuan.com) is definitely worth a visit for anyone longing for that classic Vegas-casino buffet experience. *Of note: The U.S. Grant Hotel's Grant Grill is rolling out the third in a series of bottled-fermented cocktails (a process of combining the beer and champagne method of fermentation). This month is a remake of the cosmopolitan.*

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