

Getting Creative With Food, Menus, Venue Upgrades - Orange County Business Journal

[Emily Santiago-Molina](#) November 28, 2022

Orange County's tourism industry is getting creative with their food offerings, such as new menu items, staff, and pop-ups sprouting up throughout the region at hotels and event venues.

Marriott, for example, is "dialing up different levels of service and amenities" across its local portfolio, according to Chief Sales and Marketing Officer **Julius Robinson**.

"That's what customers are looking for," he said.

The **Viv Hotel Anaheim**, fresh off its upgrade and rebrand from the Radisson Blu, is now part of Marriott's **Tribute** portfolio. Along with the rebrand, Chef **Edgar Beas** used the change to reintroduce menus of the hotel's two high-end restaurants, **Valencia's** and **Top of the V**, featuring Mexican and Spanish cuisine, respectively.

"Everyone's testing luxury a bit differently," Robinson said.

Huntington Beach Ski Lodge

New efforts include themed exhibits.

Last month, the 157-room **Kimpton Shorebreak** in Huntington Beach set up a restaurant pop-up on its patio with an '80s-themed, ski lodge-setting for the end of the year.

General Manager **Justin Simpson** had the idea following the success of a Christmas speak-easy pop-up bar in 2018; he wanted to create another winter event to last the full season.

The hotel hired a contractor to build an outdoor ski lodge for visitors to dine in peppered with pop culture items from the '80s. The menu featured fondue, coq au vin, mulled wine and winter cocktails.

"One of the hardest hit industries during the pandemic was food and beverage," Simpson told the Business Journal. "A lot of the fun, creative things you used to do went away. We had to go into survival mode and with less staff.

"This is our kind of revenge to get creative again."

Anaheim Menus

OC entertainment venues are also upping their dining options.

The **Honda Center** revealed new food items in October that can be ordered from the arena's various food and beverage stands.

In addition to concession stands that already sell higher-end items like sushi and poke bowls, the stadium now sells elevated plates to suite guests, such as a porcini rubbed flank steak or a sushi boat.

The venue's **Brewery X Biergarten** on the second level is in on the action with pan-seared scallops. Event catering is also an option.

The center welcomed back **Paul Tran** as its new executive head chef who worked on the updated menus. Tran previously worked at **Snap Inc.**, of the mobile app **Snapchat**, as an executive chef for the last five years.

Elsewhere in the city, the **Anaheim Convention Center's** catering company **Aramark** hired **Bernard Foster** as its new executive chef this month. Foster previously worked at multiple **Hyatt** hotels and other resorts worldwide.

"My goal is to provide clients an experience that is true to Anaheim where food is seasonal, sustainable, personable and memorable," Foster said in a statement.

The center's team serves an average of 1 million event attendees annually, according to officials.