

THE DISH News from San Diego's restaurant industry

VISTA-RAISED CHEF TO COMPETE ON 'TOP CHEF' SEASON 18

Tommy Bahama opens after 8-month pandemic delay at Fashion Valley

BY PAM KRAGEN

Sara Hauman, a native of Vista whose early kitchen experiences included cooking stints at local health spas, is one of the 15 chefs chosen to compete this spring on Bravo's "Top Chef" season 18 in Portland, Ore.

The upcoming season, which premieres April 1, was filmed in a quarantine bubble at a Portland resort last fall. Bravo has not made Hauman available for a phone interview yet, but her website, Instagram account and online articles filled in some details on her background.

According to her website, the 33-year-old Hauman discovered her obsession with food when she moved to Spain to live with her father after graduating from a Vista high school. When she returned to San Diego a year later, she earned a culinary degree from The Art Institute in 2008 while working in local resort kitchens. At 22, she moved to San Francisco, where she worked for chef Brandon Jew at Bar Agricole.

In 2013, she spent seven months staging (interning) at Spain's Asador Etxebarri restaurant. When she returned to San Francisco as executive chef of Huxley, she was named a James Beard Rising Star Chef semifinalist in 2016 and 2017 and she earned a 3-star review from the San Francisco Chronicle. She went on to work as chef de cuisine at Michelin-starred Octavia in San Francisco, where the Chronicle named her to its 2017 Rising Star Chef list.



STEPHANIE DIANI BRAVO

Sara Hauman's passion for food, discovered in Spain, inspired a culinary degree at The Art Institute in San Diego and work in kitchens here. In San Francisco, she emerged as a rising-star chef.

Since August 2019, she has been executive chef at Soter Vineyards in Carlton, Ore.

Hauman is one of two California chefs competing on "Top Chef" this season; the other is Nelson German, the chef/owner of AlaMar Kitchen in Oakland. Also featured this coming season as regular guest judge is Richard Blais, the Del Mar chef who won "Top Chef: All Stars" in 2011.

For more details, visit bravotv.com/people/sara-hauman.



COURTESY PHOTO

Tommy Bahama Marlin Bar has opened at the Fashion Valley shopping center.

Tommy Bahama opens at Fashion Valley

After an eight-month, pandemic-related delay, Tommy Bahama Marlin Bar has opened in the Fashion Valley shopping center in Mission Valley. The indoor and outdoor restaurant/bar is part of a dual concept 7,200-square-foot space that includes an adjacent Tommy Bahama retail store selling sportswear, swimwear and home decor items.

The restaurant's signature items include coconut shrimp, blackened mahi mahi, jerk chicken tacos and Nashville hot chicken sliders. The full bar offers custom cocktails, rum drinks, martinis, wine, beer and nonalcoholic cocktails. The outdoor bar area is open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The location is at 7007 Friars Road, Suite 305, San Diego. Visit tommybahama.com/restaurants.

Cerveza Jack's opens in Gaslamp

Cerveza Jack's Gaslamp, a Southern fusion comfort food restaurant owned by the San

Diego hospitality company Good Time Design, opened Thursday in the Gaslamp Quarter.

The new restaurant took over the former Cold Beers & Cheeseburgers location at 322 Fifth Ave. It serves dinner on weekdays and lunch and dinner on weekends, with 40 beers on tap. Live music will be offered in the future. This is the Good Time Design's second Cerveza Jack's location. The original in Nashville is temporarily closed for rebuilding after a suicide bomber detonated his van on the downtown street outside the restaurant on Christmas Day. Visit cervezajacks.com.

Biggie's Burgers opens in Vista

Biggie's Burgers, a small '50s-style burger chain with locations in San Clemente and Pacific Beach, opened its third location last month in Vista.

Founded in 1991 in San Clemente, Biggie's makes and preps most of its ingredients — patties,

fries and onion rings — in-house. The new Vista location is in the Target shopping center at 1711 University Ave., Vista. Visit biggiesburgers.com.

Split Bakehouse opens in La Mesa

Split Bakehouse, the vegan-friendly wholesale bakery founded in 2018 by former Nomad Donuts chef Kristianna Zabala, opened its first public bakery on Feb. 10 at the Grossmont Center outdoor mall.

Over the past three years, Split has built a large distribution network for its vegan and nonvegan pastries at more than 40 coffee shops and restaurants county-wide. For now, the Grossmont location of Split is offering to-go sales through a takeout window near the mall's food court at 5500 Grossmont Center Drive. For details, visit splitbakehouse.com.

Kragen writes about restaurants for The San Diego Union-Tribune. Email her at pam.kragen@suniontribune.com.



COURTESY PHOTO

A sampling of dishes from Cerveza Jack's Gaslamp, which opened Thursday in the Gaslamp Quarter of San Diego.

TIKTOK'S VIRAL BAKED FETA PASTA LIVES UP TO HYPE

BY AARON HUTCHERSON

My initial sentiment toward viral food moments tends to fall between immense skepticism (the tortilla wrap "hack") and downright disdain (mermaid toast). The latest trend to hit the social media airwaves, baked feta pasta, is an outlier in that I was a believer from the jump. It's a low-effort recipe for pasta with tomatoes and cheese — what's not to love?

Though Tiiu Piret posted a version of the dish on her blog in February 2018, fellow Finnish blogger Jenni Häyrynen is credited with making uunifetapasta (Finnish for "oven-baked feta pasta") go viral in her country after posting her simplified version a year later. "The stores actually ran out of feta cheese here," Häyrynen told Today.

The baked feta pasta phenomenon came state-side once MacKenzie Smith, the blogger behind Grilled Cheese Social, posted a video to her TikTok of yet another rendition at the end of January (though she posted it to her blog in June 2019). Smith's single video has now gained nearly 3 million views as of the writing of this article, with the #bakedfetapasta hashtag

collectively amassing 52 million views and counting on TikTok.

The premise is simple: Toss a block of feta, tomatoes and a bunch of olive oil together in a pan and throw it in the oven until softened, before mixing it all together with pasta and fresh basil. There are minor differences based on whose recipe you follow. Häyrynen's version calls for the inclusion of a fresh chile pepper, while Smith opts for more pantry-friendly crushed red pepper flakes. Other differences arise with the garlic (roasted in large chunks with the rest of the sauce ingredients or minced and added fresh at the end) and basil (stirred into the hot pasta and allowed to wilt or carefully placed on top of the pasta just before serving).

The one aspect of this dish that initially gave me pause was the tomatoes, given the time of year. On the one hand, I prefer fresh tomatoes during the summer when they're at their peak, but on the other, I don't think many people will notice much of a difference in the taste of this overall recipe given the assertiveness of the feta. (And I grabbed grape instead of the prescribed cherry tomatoes when testing this recipe.)

Some critics of the recipe can't get over the perceived grittiness and brokenness of the sauce. However, that's solved by using the right cheese — Greek feta cheese, which is made from at least 70 percent sheep's milk, has a creamier texture than feta-style cheese made from cow's milk — and mixing in some of the pasta water at the end to help bind it all together.

While some written blog posts mention these details, many of the social videos I've seen do not. Don't blame the baked feta pasta, blame the social media users who don't — and sometimes can't, given the constraints of the medium — include all of the specifics in a single Tik Tok video.

In short: The baked feta pasta is good.

How good? My roommate made a version of this recipe (with zucchini noodles in lieu of wheat pasta) a few days ago before I even knew I would be covering the topic and was utterly raving about how much she loved it.

"It's so easy, even my 10-year-old nephew could make it," she said. "I'll definitely be making it again."

Hutcherson writes for The Washington Post.

Baked Feta Pasta

This viral social media recipe is low-effort and packed with flavor. A simple pasta sauce full of salt, tang, acid and a little bit of spice is made from baking feta cheese, tomatoes, olive oil and crushed red pepper flakes until soft before mashing it all together with a fork. For a creamier texture, be sure to use Greek feta (which is made from at least 70 percent sheep's milk) in lieu of feta-style cheese made from cow's milk. Any pasta shape you have on hand will do, but we recommend a medium-length pasta that holds onto the rustic sauce for optimal enjoyment.

Makes 4 servings

2 pints (17½ ounces) cherry or grape tomatoes

4 cloves garlic, halved lengthwise

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided

Kosher salt

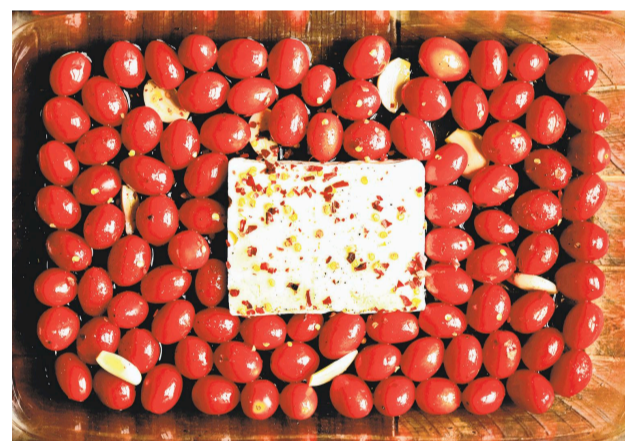
1 block (7 ounces) Greek feta cheese

½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

Freshly ground black pepper

12 ounces medium-length dried pasta, such as campanelle, rigatoni or rotini

Fresh basil leaves, for serving



AARON HUTCHERSON THE WASHINGTON POST

Position a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 400 degrees.

In a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, combine the tomatoes, garlic and ¼ cup of the olive oil. Sprinkle with some salt and toss to coat. Place the feta cheese in the center of the tomatoes and garlic, top with the remaining olive oil, and sprinkle the entire dish with red pepper flakes and a little black pepper. Bake for about 40 minutes, until the garlic

has softened and the tomatoes have burst their skins.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta according to package directions until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of the pasta water and then drain the pasta.

Mash the feta and tomatoes with a fork and mix until evenly combined. Mix

the sauce with pasta, adding the reserved pasta water as needed if it looks a little dry. Taste, and season with additional salt and pepper, if desired. To serve, divide among bowls and top with plenty of basil leaves.

Storage note: Leftovers can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

Adapted from Jenni Häyrynen's Liemessa blog.

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