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IRVINE WEEKLY


APRIL 17, 2019 • NO. 13



NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL

YOUR GUIDE FOR WHAT TO WATCH

BY: NICK WALKER



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BUILD YOUR OWN BOWL - PHOTO COURTESY OF SAJJ

DISHES WORTH THE DRIVE

KOBE MEATBALLS, CRAB CAKES AND CHOCOLATE HUMMUS MAKE THE LIST.

BY: MICHAEL COOPER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: FEATURED RESTAURANT

It's time again to take a culinary tour through Irvine of dishes that are so good that they're worth a drive in traffic from Los Angeles. This month, we have some delicious dishes to spotlight from a brand new Italian steakhouse and a new Mediterranean restaurant. There may be plenty of Italian and Mediterranean food in Los Angeles, but these specific dishes are so good that we're recommending a trip down south for them.

The first restaurant we're showcasing this month is Davio's Northern Italian Steakhouse at Irvine Towers. Although the Irvine location has only been

open since October 2018, it belongs to an already established family of restaurants with locations in Atlanta and along the East Coast. Their food is inspired from Northern Italian cuisine and includes handmade pasta, seafood and, of course, steak. "It has always been a dream of mine to open a restaurant in California ... and what could possibly be better than being in Irvine? It's very exciting for us to be here. We can't wait to become part of this wonderful community," says Steve DiFillipp, chef and owner of Davio's.

The first dish offered at Davio's that makes the drive from L.A. worthwhile

is the Kobe Meatballs. These are made with American Kobe beef, veal and pork. It actually takes three days to make these, and you can really tell. They're so tender that they melt in your mouth; whether you're a meatball connoisseur or you just really love meat, you have try these meatballs. It's mind-blowing to think that they almost never came to be. "In 1985 we didn't have meatballs on our menu. No way, I said. Meatballs are an American invention; they're not Italian," says DiFillipp. "I didn't want any of it in my upscale restaurant. ... Fast-forward to present day, meatballs are acceptable

in upscale restaurants. ... Finally, I gave in and showed the guys how to make them like my mom did. Working together, we tweaked the recipe, substituting Kobe beef for normal ground beef. Today, we sell more meatballs than you can imagine."

On weekends, you can also splurge on a \$100 meatball, which is made of American Kobe Wagyu beef, black truffles and a molten center of truffle cheese and faux gras. It's then topped with a champagne cream sauce and more shaved black truffles, and served with a glass of Barolo. Or if you're on a budget, Davio's still has you covered.



KOBÉ MEATBALLS • PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVIO'S

During happy hour, which is 4 - 7 p.m. Monday-Friday and 5 - 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, American Kobe Beef Meatball Sliders are available for \$9 on the Bar Bites menu. No matter if you get the Kobe meatball from the traditional menu, as a \$100 meatball or in a slider, it's a unique dish that's so scrumptious, it's definitely worth the drive from L.A. to Irvine.

If meatballs aren't your thing, or you prefer seafood, the second dish we chose to spotlight is the crab cake. It's one of Davio's signature dishes, consisting of lump crab cake that's oven baked and topped off with a whole grain mustard sauce. The combination of the crab meat with the mustard sauce really makes this dish special and worth the drive from Los Angeles.

Moving from Italy to the Middle East, our second restaurant, SAJJ Mediterranean, just opened its Irvine location last November in the Sand Canyon Plaza shopping center (their first location is in Santa Margarita). So what makes this Mediterranean

restaurant so special? First, everything is customizable. That's why our first dish to spotlight is their Build Your Own Bowl (pitas or salads are also choices for your base). Diners can choose to fill it with chicken or steak shawarma, pomegranate chicken, shawafel (falafel and shawarma) or their signature falafel. After that, unlimited toppings and sauces, including hummus, cilantro mint chutney, tahini, tzatziki and peri peri are available for further customization.

Recently, SAJJ launched "lifestyle" bowls to appeal to various types of diets. "In the last year or so, we've watched as the restaurant industry has begun to adapt and change to meet the specific dietary needs and preferences of consumers, and while our offerings are already highly customizable to fit those needs, we wanted to take that one step further and make it easier for guests to order a bowl that fits their lifestyle," says Zaid Ayoub, Founder and CEO of SAJJ Mediterranean. "Our goal at SAJJ has always been to serve fresh, healthy food

fast, and the introduction of our new Lifestyle Bowls will fulfill every part of that promise!" Lifestyle bowls include a Paleo, Keto and Double Protein bowl. Essentially a make-your-own Mediterranean bowl for anyone's taste or diet, it's truly worth the drive from Los Angeles.

The second dish we want to spotlight is so unique that it can't be found in most Mediterranean restaurants, making it definitely worth the drive to Irvine: chocolate hummus. That's right, you read it right. It's a healthy dessert alternative that is low in fat, sodium and carbohydrates - it's only 240 calories per 6-ounce container. The dish is made with just six ingredients: garbanzo beans, tahini, cocoa powder, chocolate hazelnut spread, maple syrup and vanilla extract. It can be ordered with house-made cinnamon sugar-dusted chips or on its own. There aren't many places in L.A. that offer this unique of a dish, so it's definitely worth the drive to Irvine! All entrees at SAJJ are also served with complimentary lentil soup. Fries, pita chips, hummus, falafel and baklava can be purchased as additional sides.

Traditional Middle Eastern beverages, like mint and strawberry lemonade, tamarind and a mint yogurt drink, are house-made and available to order as well.

Whether you're in the mood for a culinary trip to Italy or to the Middle East, these dishes are so delicious that we recommend our Angelino friends up north come down to Irvine and try them. Stay tuned next month for four new dishes worth the drive from Los Angeles to Irvine!

Davio's Northern Italian Steakhouse

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HOLOGRAM PETR THE ANTEATR - FROM CARDIO PETR'S COLLECTION

THE UNSEEN ARTISTS OF UCI

IRVINE GUERRILLA ARTIST WANTS TO BUILD CULTURE ON CAMPUS ... WITH STICKERS.

There's a movement brewing. An unseen hand tucks a water bottle behind a rock, with something inside. A picture is posted to Instagram, and then all of a sudden a crowd comes running. The owner of the bottle is nowhere to be

found.

A figure in all black sits down at a table on the UC Irvine campus. He looks like a shadow, a silhouette, but upon further examination you see that he's wearing a morphsuit. On top of his head sits a bright red beanie. Around his waist is a

black fanny pack.

It's Petr the Anteatr.

No, that's not a typo. The owner of the unseen hand tells me later that "Petr" is pronounced "Pet-urr," in ironic homage to the UCI mascot, Peter the Anteatr.

Petr opens the fanny pack and pulls

out sticker after sticker after sticker, and on every single one is a little doodle well-known to the Irvine community: A bow-legged anteatr with a big snout and a triangle on his chest. He stands on two legs, has crossed eyes and looks constantly bewildered.

Once Petr is spotted, his location is broadcast on Instagram, Reddit, Snapchat and, presumably, over text. The line begins to form and then snakes outwards, each person queuing up to get a sticker from his fanny pack and then leave. They compare "Petr's" later. Some received holiday-themed stickers from this shadow benefactor, while others bring home cowboy- or Pokemon-themed ones.

Who is Petr the Anteatr? I had seen his work all over the /r/UCI subreddit, but was unclear on exactly what was going on here. There seemed to be several people posting original versions of the sticker online, and it was impossible to tell who was behind the sticker craze, or even to figure out how many people were doing it.

As it turns out, there are two Petrs on campus: The original artist, and an even more secretive individual. I got in touch with both, though only was able to get a sit-down chat with the latter.

For clarity, both individuals are being referred to as "he." I'll be referring to the original artist as Petr the Anteatr (Original Petr). He is the one who is frequently seen around campus. The one I sat down with in person I'll refer to as "Cardio Petr" (CP). He is never seen; he runs the stickers all over campus. He explained the situation.

So, I asked them both, who is Petr the Anteatr? Who is Cardio Petr?

As Cardio Petr helpfully explained, he himself is only one thing -- a UCI student with a passion for building culture on campus and making people aware that there's more to Irvine than beige buildings and great public schools.

As for what Petr is, that's more complicated -- he's a person, an ironic character and a community asset. Petr the Anteatr is a stressed-out UCI student who's cautious about being identified. He's a guerilla artist, a funny little anteatr on two legs, a new tradition.

As it turns out, Cardio Petr is less a guerilla artist and more a guerilla ... organizer? Distributor? In his own words:

"If you want to refer to me, you can refer to me as The Community Petr. That's what I really am. People will submit their own designs of Petr,



and I'll hold a competition, and the community (in my particular case, people on Reddit and on Instagram) will vote for what design they want to win. That's the design that's printed and then distributed."

Petr had become a sort of cultural touchstone on campus, from what I could tell off the UCI forums, and I asked both of them about that. Why the anteater, specifically? Was there something inherently funny about it, or something about the UCI student body that would naturally endear them to Petr the Anteater?

"If you look at our meme accounts, et cetera, that's where most of our culture comes from," Cardio Petr pointed out. Original Petr said that it was always his intention for Petr to become such a widespread and well-known symbol of campus culture, and both seemed to agree on that:

"So, back to the origins of Petr." Cardio Petr was prepared to explain from top to bottom how the whole movement started. "It popped up on reddit as a design and the whole pretext was, we want to bring something to UCI culture."

He complimented the student body's event planning, but noted that some students are not as interested in social events, and he feels very positively about helping them experience college in their own way. Petr, compared to events like Shocktoberfest or Freshman Orientation, "is a lot more spontaneous. It pops in and out. Somebody will show up

and be like, alright I'm here for like two hours. I have a bunch of stickers, come swarm me and I will give you all the stickers ... it's a lot more spontaneous, and it's a lot more sarcastic." Original Petr seemed to be in agreement, adding that he wanted to add to the culture in any way he could.

"Sarcastic?" I asked. He clarified. "I mean, [the anteater] is just a funny looking icon. [Petr the Anteater] is a community interpretation of what our mascot really is." The community interpretations haven't just stopped at the anteater himself, as both Petrs pointed out.

"About my Petrs," Original Petr texted.

"I love them all so much, but it's also within my creative mindset, so they don't excite me the way other people's renditions do."

And what was your favorite version? I asked.

"I once got a Peter of me," he responded. "It had my beanie, gloves, and the whole get up. It was holding a Petr sticker as well!" There had been other interpretations, too, more unusual ones -- engineering projects, rave totems, photo mosaics and Cardio Petr's personal favorite: A rendition of the goofy little anteater with a tear running down his face, clutching a midterm bearing a red "C-".

When asked about what's in store for the two most famous, secretive Petr-sticker vendors on campus, both had big answers. Original Petr kept it vague, saying that he has much in store both Petr-wise and "not directly Petr-related." Cardio Petr alluded to a larger citywide version of his notorious online scavenger hunt.

You can follow Original Petr for updates on Instagram at @petr_the_anteater, and contact Cardio Petr at his email address, communitypetr@gmail.com. Both Petrs can also be tracked easily with the #petr tag on Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram.



TYGA2

THE LIFTOFF TAKES OVER FIVEPOINT AMPHITHEATRE

POWER 106 BRINGS AN ALL-STAR LINEUP TO THE GREAT PARK VENUE.

BY: SHIRLEY JU

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: POWER 106

Summertime is upon us! Which means Power 106 is doing it bigger than they've ever done in the past. Living up to their slogan of being "Los Angeles' #1 For Hip Hop" radio station, concert-goers are blessed with an all-star lineup of

both up-and-coming and mainstream artists, including Mustard & Friends, G-Eazy, Tyga, French Montana, Blueface, T-Pain, O.T. Genasis, A-Track, Roddy Ricch and more.

Presented by Mercury Insurance, the one-day festival on Saturday, May

18 is slated to take place at Irvine's most prominent venue – FivePoint Amphitheatre – where some of music's biggest names come to perform.

Dianna Jason, vice president of marketing, said she's "excited to be back in Orange County again! We

always had amazing shows in the O.C. and the fans are great. I'm also very excited about the surprise guests that we're unable to tell you about at this time to keep them a surprise, but I know who a couple of them are and they're fantastic!"

DJ Felli Fel, on air from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., also shares the same sentiment about the surprise guests, saying "I'm most excited for the special guests that I can't speak on!"

One notable thing about this year's event is the name change. It is now titled The Liftoff, as opposed to their annual Powerhouse showcase which has been in place for over 20 years. For those who were wondering where Cali Christmas was last year, it was replaced by SoCal's enormous Rolling Loud festival.

In addition, Jason brings up a great point that fans can get their money's worth in one day, verses coming back for more. "I'm excited that the show is one day because as much as I love and go to a lot of festivals, I can't give up multiple three-day weekends! I get to see everyone in one day that I want to see."

The announcement for this year's Liftoff was a movie in itself. French Montana and Gashi came up to the station to party and turn up with all the on-air personalities and staff, live streaming from Power 106's Youtube page while sipping on Frenchie's own



T-PAIN

French Vanilla Ciroc.

Speaking of Gashi, he will be one of the main artists performing on Liftoff's New Music stage.

Bryhana, on air from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., states, "I prefer festivals because I like

a lot going on. I love that we have two stages. One for up-and-coming artists to give them a platform and a place to perform for people who haven't even seen them before, and also see bigger artists that they probably still haven't

seen. It will be cool to vibe out the whole entire day!"

In fact, President and COO of Meruelo Media Otto Padron makes the analogy of the venue serving as the perfect space for this highly anticipated festival. He states, "The two most exciting things about this year's Powerhouse are ... a focus on new music under 'The Liftoff' brand ... and making its launch pad a very cool festival venue in Irvine."

Whether it's Tyga performing "Taste," O.T. Genasis performing "Bae," G-Eazy performing "West Coast" featuring Blueface, and of course Blueface shutting down the stage with "Thotiana" – which will undoubtedly bring out all the ratchets – May 18 will be a big day for hip-hop fans in SoCal.

Eman, interim VP of programming for Power 106, states, "We are very excited to be bringing our 'Liftoff' concert to the O.C.! May 18 will be a great musical experience with some of the newest and hottest artists out! And you know how Power 106 does ... you'll never know who'll show up on stage!"

Tickets are on sale for \$55.50 and can be purchased on LiveNation.com.



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HOW THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY CAME TO IRVINE

THE FUTURE OF CANNABIS SCIENCE IN THE BIOTECH-FRIENDLY CITY.

BY: JIMI DEVINE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: DIGAMMA CONSULTING

Irvine has always been a tough sell on both sides when it came to the cannabis industry. But now, laboratories that fit right in with the science scene of one of SoCal's most cutting-edge communities are starting to pop up.

Despite legalization, the idea of the cannabis industry taking root in Irvine in any capacity seemed like fantasy not long ago. To get our heads around how

it all went down, we reached out to one of Irvine's newest businesses, BioCann Laboratories, who also played a big part in making it happen.

Founder Sulaiman Masood explained his past in the laboratory space prior to getting BioCann off the ground. His other labs are across the clinical spectrum in areas that include toxicology, biochemistry, pathology and pharmacogenomics. BioCann will be

his third time opening a lab.

"We were brought into the industry because we already knew how to operate. The industry wants people who know how to be professional about it," Masood told Irvine Weekly in a phone interview. "People want to make sure their tests are run by clinical laboratory scientists. They're getting an accurate result, and we're looking out for the safety of the public."

Masood's business partner had previously been approached a few years ago about the idea. At the time, they simply weren't sure. Masood's labs provide services to a lot of folks in the world of substance abuse recovery. He feared the possibility of getting involved with cannabis might give his other projects a black eye in the communities they serve.

Eventually, BioCann's consultant Alex

Mohamed would approach Irvine Mayor Donald P. Wagner to query him on the possibilities of opening the lab. Wagner was quick to say they don't allow cannabis. Irvine, of course, has proven a tough egg to crack. The 15th largest city in the state remains one of the largest where residents don't have access to a legal cannabis storefront locally. Mohamed would end up carrying the ball all the way to the endzone in regards to changing local ordinances and was there the day everything was finalized for BioCann, and its competitors.

Mohamed had originally made a name for himself as a political consultant. In 2011 he worked to help get former Huntington Beach Assemblyman Travis Allen elected. "We pulled off a win for an Assembly seat that was in an incumbent's area. We had no reason to win this race, and we won it by 16,000 votes," Mohamed said. With no money from Sacramento or endorsements, they had pulled it off, and he was now a name in SoCal Republican circles. His continued push to help the party stay as connected as possible to their Orange County voting block helped him network in Sacramento too.

Those Sacramento folks represented various symbiotic relationships for Mohamed as he worked to represent other labs and also waste management and landscaping companies vying for city contracts. This lab opportunity would arise through one of those contacts he'd made in the hazmat space.

That regulator had found himself at a conference where everyone wondered what exactly they were looking for in making sure cannabis was safe to consume. "Residual solvents? Heavy metals? Heavy metals weren't even a topic of conversation at the time," Mohamed said.

"He called me to pick my brain a little bit and asked if I was interested in the industry. The answer was no," said Mohamed, citing his work in the mental health and recovery sectors at other labs. He considered anything that could be construed as promoting weed to be unethical.

Then he saw the numbers being thrown around in the cannabis industry in general and he knew someone was going to make a decent buck testing all that legal marijuana. Mohamed thought to open another lab in a scientifically prestigious city like Irvine,



"a city that doesn't scream weed, but in fact, is saying no weed." That would make everything way more legitimate in his eyes.

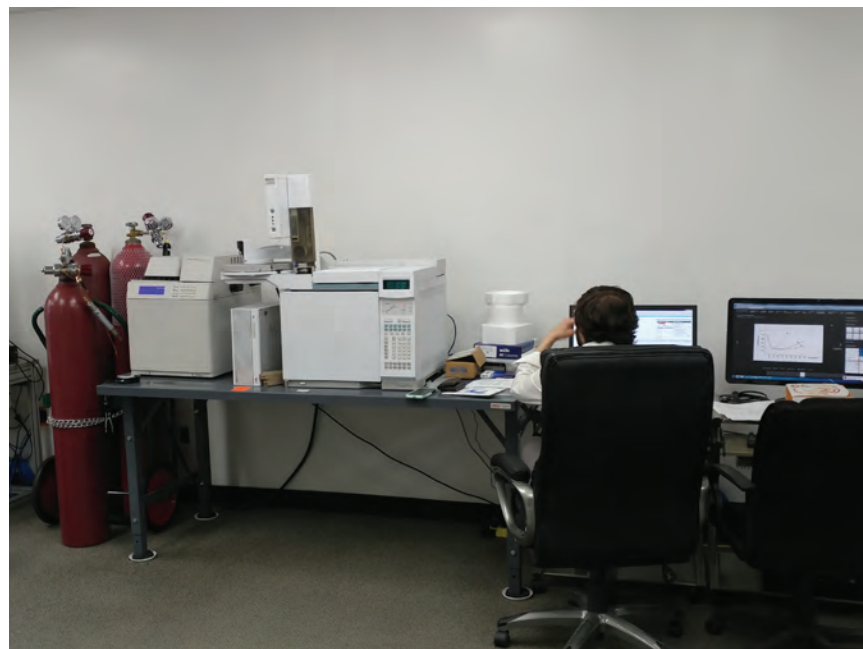
"We approached the city and said we're scientists trying to help this state regulate this industry, not weed guys trying to get their laboratory going. That's exactly what they were looking for. Mayor Wagner had known Mohamed before getting elected, he'd even had bloodwork done at one of the labs he worked with.

"I told him it's the same thing, it's no different from what I'm currently doing. Just change the blood sample for weed. I said we aren't going to have lines, I'm not looking for a green cross outside the door," said Mohamed. He further explained the process and gained the mayor's support. From there, it took about nine months to get the bylaws changed.

Once they got into the building, they were able to complete the state licensing process in about three months. The lab officially opened at the end of March.

We asked the pair for their general take on the state of the vibe around cannabis in Irvine. Where does it go from here?

"Shockingly and very surprisingly, I think we've had some great feedback from South Orange County. These areas I always thought were very



conservative shock me," said Mohamed. Part of the shock on the other side is just the idea there is a regulatory body tracking testing for pesticides he has to comply with.

"I think the consensus is people are becoming a little bit more admissible, I think the guard is down now. If we educate about what cannabis does, and what CBD does, and what CBN does. Everyone knows what THC does," said Mohamed.

No matter the case, Irvine is now a part

of the green rush. But the general aura of scientific progress could prove to be a host for the future of cannabis science. Marco Troiani of Digamma Consulting, the company that helped BioCann establish their methodology, told Irvine Weekly due to the new lax lab permitting in the city, "We've seen a lot of new testing labs trying to get started there, so they are lowering the barrier compared to the San Francisco area."



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GOLDEN STRAWBERRIES • PHOTO BY: DANNY CARROLL

420 HOLIDAY PREPARATION

CELEBRATE WITH THE BEST CANNABIS IRVINE HAS TO OFFER.

BY: JIMI DEVINE

The maximization of the 4/20 experience for the Irvine cannabis enthusiast tends to involve a bit of a road trip be it the day of or in prior preparation for the holiday, but we've got a list of some of the best cannabis in California that's locally available and sure to be worth your travels.

Some might fall back on delivery services, and there is nothing wrong with that. The lack of municipal access

in Irvine makes it a necessity for some to access cannabis in the most convenient way possible be it their age, ailments or a busy lifestyle. But others see the holiday more like Thanksgiving, and nobody would ever consider getting their turkey delivered unless it's a giant block of tofu shaped like a turkey.

Regardless, the cannabis available to you this holiday season will be quite exceptional. You can always presume folks will sit on some great nuggets for

customers for the holiday. But even then, they go super fast. This list includes champions from every major cannabis competition on the west coast: High Times, The Emerald Cup, and a whole bunch of other events where this group of cultivators has cleaned out the trophy case. These kind of accolades aren't just handed out to the highest bidder, despite those who will never have a chance to walk across their stages during awards ceremonies claiming

otherwise.

So in reality, while these strains will likely have a batch available on the actual holiday, it's not going to last long ... any of them. Your best bet is to try and pick some up early. If they try and tell you, "We can't sell that until tomorrow," just think about when Bambi's mom got taken out, get the waterworks going, maybe a light snuffle or two. If that doesn't get you access to the goods, they're heartless.

Here is our list of this year's essential 4/20 strains near Irvine.

Sunset Fig - Fig Farms - Med Men

The newest offering from the amazing farmers at Fig Farms has hit shelves just in time for the holiday. Known for their unique genetics going back to the medical market, this time they've paired their prize Purple Fig with the San Francisco classic Sunset Sherbert. With the past results of their in-house breeding effort ending up in awards ceremonies up and down the state, it's a safe bet the Sunset Fig will follow that path too. But which phenotype will reign supreme in the end? Fig Farms debuted two versions of the Sunset Fig for the holiday, one pheno tastes like gassy grapes and lavender, the other is more of golden raisins with a vanilla taste.

Ridgeline Farms - Green Lantern - Haven in Santa Ana

Southern Humboldt County has had it pretty rough in the age of legal

cannabis with many small farmers having trouble meeting the permitting demands of the times. But through it all, the region is still the heart of the ancestral homeland of top-shelf marijuana, and they got the world title back this fall when Ridgeline Farms won The Emerald Cup, which is essentially the sungrown pot world championship. They had actually been growing the Green Lantern for years, and were still sitting on some, trying to move it, when it won the cup! Needless to say, demand quickly increased for the strain that pairs a fuel and fruit flavor.

Area 41 - Alien Labs - Connected

While there are a lot of options that would be a solid pick on the Connected menu, I constantly find myself looking back to the Area 41 as my favorite of the Gelato crosses that dropped last summer. It features Gelato #41, arguably

the nicest version of the strain ever not from original breeders Jigga and Mr. Sherbinski. Add in Alien Labs longtime hype machine Lemon Fuel OG, and you've obviously got something very special.

Strawberry Valley by Happy Day Farms - Regenerative Farm Award recipient - Haven

For the fans of responsible outdoor cannabis cultivation, look no further than The Emerald Cup's regenerative farming award winners at Happy Day Farms. One of three farms to take home the award in 2018, it is given to cannabis farmers who grow their cannabis as part of a wider symbiotic relationship with the land they look to nurture and protect from more destructive farming practices. Their Strawberry Valley is a blend of their Strawberry OG and a fantastic Chem x SFV Pheno. According to Happy Day Farms, it has

sweet overtones backed by deep gas underskunk. It's strong, but a great time.

From The Earth - Golden Strawberries 710

Originally bred by the team at DNA genetics, the primo cultivators over at 710 Labs propagated over 30 seeds on the hunt for their winner, and you can see the effort in the results. Much of the time when you hear 710 Labs' name, you're probably thinking there are some great concentrates on deck. Nevertheless, their flower game is also on point and has become more prevalent since the legal market opened with this cross of Strawberry Banana and Kosher Kush. You'll get a lot of the flavor that earned Strawberry Banana ton of awards, with a bit of extra kick provided by the Kosher Kush.





"PART OF WATER". PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FILM MAKER

NEWPORT BEACH FILM FESTIVAL GUIDE

IRVINE WEEKLY'S SUGGESTED FILMS TO SEE BASED ON YOUR INTERESTS.

BY: NICK WALKER

Next week, the Newport Beach Film Festival will kick off its 20th annual celebration of the arts and culture in big form. With last year's event bringing more than 50,000 people to Orange County from around the world, this year is sure to be monumental. Everything will kick off Thursday, April 25, with the festival's Opening Night Gala following its opening night film. The 3,000 person event, which will take place in the center of Fashion Island, boasts food prepared by 30 of the top Orange County restaurants, a DJ, a hosted bar by Tito's Vodka and Peroni, and a live performance by Side Deal, the Newport-formed band consisting of members of Train, Sugar Ray and PawnShop kings (plus some special, surprise guests).

The Newport Beach Film Festival is currently the largest film festival in Southern California, with over 120 narrative features and more than 200 short film screenings, plus its wide selection of parties and events. Because of its size and prestige, some locals might view the festival as just another pretentious, Hollywood-centric event that requires a ton of money or industry knowhow just to

get in the door. But the festival's creators want the citizens of Orange County to know that is not the case.

"This is for the entire community. This isn't for the film industry, it's for everyone, throughout Orange County and Southern California, to participate in," said Gregg Schwenk, the festival's founder and CEO. With tickets for some screenings as low as \$16, much of the festival is easily accessible to everyone in the surrounding area. Says Schwenk, "Even if you've never been to a film festival, this is the year to come."

Still, the vast scope of the festival can be enough to make the untrained festival-goer feel lost in a sea of choices. To help you decide where to spend your time, we've compiled a list of some of the top films to see based on your interests. Even if you can only make it to one film screening, being a part of this year's festival is something you will not forget.

Irvine Weekly's Newport Beach Film Festival Guide

* an asterisk notes films made by local O.C. residents or films focused on O.C. subjects.

THE HEADLINERS

The big ones. These films open and close the entire festival, which means they're ones you should not miss.

Opening Night – "Luce" Thursday, April 25, 7:00 p.m.

A former child soldier from Africa, adopted by white parents and naturalized in America, becomes a star athlete and top student in his suburban Virginia high school – only to find his close-knit family life and impeccable academic record challenged by a teacher after she discovers unsettling political views in a homework assignment.

Closing Night – "Part of Water" (World Premiere) *

Thursday, May 2, 8:00 p.m.

When most people think of ocean lifeguards, they think of Baywatch; but that couldn't be further from the truth. "Part of Water" tells the tragic story of fallen lifeguard Ben Carlson, who lost his life in the line of duty while on a rescue during a massive swell in 2014. Through Ben's story, "Part of Water" sheds light on the countless dangers that ocean lifeguards face and helps earn them the respect they've always deserved.

FOR THOSE LOOKING TO LAUGH (AND MAYBE CRY)

These films are some of the major comedies hitting the festival screens.

Of course, with every comedy comes a good amount of heart, and by the end of them you may find yourself feeling a whole range of emotions.

"Babysplitters"

Saturday, April 25, 2:45 p.m.

Wednesday, May 1, 5:30 p.m.

Jeff and Sarah are struggling to come to an agreement about having a baby. Sarah is ready, Jeff is not. Their mutual friends Don and Taylor have the opposite problem – Don wants kids and Taylor doesn't. When the two couples hatch a plan to share one baby between them, it seems like they may have found the perfect compromise – until things spiral out of control.

"Papi Chulo"

Saturday, April 27, 8:00 p.m.

A lonely TV weatherman strikes up an unusual friendship with a middle-aged Latino migrant worker. Starring Matt Bomer.

FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR LOVE

Whether it's a comedy, drama or somewhere in between, these films exemplify a variety of experiences in falling in love.

"The Tomorrow Man"

Friday, April 26, 8:15 p.m.

Ed Hemsler spends his life preparing for a disaster that may never come. Ronnie Meisner spends her life shopping for things she may never use. In a small town somewhere in America, these two people will try to find love while trying not to get lost in each other's stuff. Starring Blythe Danner and John Lithgow.

"Pink Wall"

Friday, April 26, 8:30 p.m.

A modern-day romance following the six year relationship of Jenna and Leon. Intimately told through defining moments along their journey together, the film explores how both friendship and resentments grow as the pressures of adult life confront them.

"Them That Follow"

Saturday, April 27, 8:30 p.m.

Set deep in the hills of Appalachia, members of an isolated community of Pentecostal snake handlers risk their lives to attest themselves before God. The pastor's daughter – whose forbidden relationship forces her to confront the dangerous traditions of her father's church – must hide a secret that has the potential to drive the church to ruin. Starring Academy Award Winner Olivia Colman.

LGBTQ+ Shorts

Sunday, April 28, 4:30 p.m.

Nine fantastic films that showcase the emerging talent and stories that need to be heard from the perspective of the LGBTQ+ community. Not all of these films are love stories, but they are all sure to make you feel something deep in your heart.

FOR SURFERS, SKATEBOARDERS AND ACTION SPORTS FANS

The Newport Beach Film Festival is the largest action sports film presenter in the country. There is a whole selection of films in their line-up to see, but here are a few standouts:

"The Tony Alva Story" *

Saturday, April 27, 8:15 p.m.

61-year-old Tony Alva is considered by many to be the godfather of modern-day skateboarding. Alva's brand of aggression and bravado paved the way for skating as we know it. This film chronicles Tony Alva's humble beginnings on the streets of Santa Monica to his rise to superstardom as part of the legendary Z-Boys, a punk skater subculture. His inevitable implosion and his ultimate rise from the ashes to accept his rightful place as a beacon of hope has given inspiration for generations of

science-fiction to science-not-so-fiction. Here are a couple standout options:

"Human Nature"

Thursday, May 2, 8:00 p.m.

The biggest tech revolution of the 21st century isn't digital, it's biological. A breakthrough called CRISPR gives us unprecedented control over the basic building blocks of life. It opens the door to curing disease, reshaping the biosphere and designing our own children. This film is a provocative exploration of CRISPR's far-reaching implications, through the eyes of the scientists who discovered it, the families it's affecting and the genetic engineers who are testing its limits.

"Auggie"

Sunday, April 28, 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 30, 5:30 p.m.

Forced into early retirement, Felix Greystone's coworkers gift him a pair of augmented reality glasses as a farewell present. When he puts them on for the first time, he begins a friendship with a beautiful young woman named Auggie. Their friendship escalates toward intimacy, creating a blur between virtual and reality; exploring the nature of relationships and the angst of acceptance. Starring Richard Kind.

FOR THE KIDS

The Newport Beach Film Festival is an event for all ages. Here are a few showings that are great to bring the kids to.

"Tarzan" – 20th Anniversary

Screening

Saturday, April 27, 11:00 a.m.

A screening of the classic Disney film to celebrate the film's 20th anniversary. Come experience the animated magic once more on the big screen.

Shorts for Shorties

Saturday, April 27, 11:00 a.m.

Anything is possible in the wonderful world of childhood imagination, and these six films prove that.

Teens & Short Tweens Shorts

Saturday, April 27, 12:30 p.m.

Finding "you" can be a challenging process. Follow these five stories that show how choices can lead to self-discoveries.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCREENINGS

The Newport Beach Film Festival brings in films from around the world. Here are the spotlight films and top picks from several participating countries.

Irish Films

With 20 shorts and 10 features, the festival has the largest selection of Irish

films screening in North America. Here's a top pick:

"Rosie"

Sunday, April 28, 7:00 p.m.

After their landlord sells their rented home, a young mother tries to protect her family from homelessness. Rosie and her partner, John Paul, strive to find somewhere to stay while shielding their young family from the reality of the situation around them - examining how even in times of crises, the love and strength of a family can endure.

Mexican Spotlight

"The Chambermaid"

Monday, April 29, 8:00 p.m.

Eve, a young chambermaid at a luxurious Mexico City hotel, confronts the monotony of long workdays with quiet examinations of forgotten belongings and budding friendships that nourish her newfound and determined dream for a better life.

German Spotlight

"100 Things"

Tuesday, April 30, 8:00 p.m.

Best friends Paul and Toni challenge each other to give up their material possessions for 100 days. As the challenge heats up, they are forced to question everything from how long you can wear

dirty underwear to free will. Enter a funny and warm-hearted look at what we really need.

Japanese Spotlight

"Day and Night"

Wednesday, May 1, 7:45 p.m.

Koji Akashi's father, a whistleblower for a large corporation, commits suicide, leaving his family in ruin. Kenichi Kitamura works at an orphanage and is willing to commit crimes in order to protect the children. After being approached by Kenichi, Koji considers taking revenge for his father.

Chinese Spotlight

"Baby"

Wednesday, May 1, 8:15 p.m.

At the age of 19, starting work as a cleaner in the local children's hospital, Jiang Meng encounters a baby born with the same congenital defects she herself suffered from. Faced with a barrage of high risk operations, the father has decided to refuse treatment and take the baby home with him – condemning his daughter to a certain death. Jiang Meng will stop at nothing to rescue this newborn girl who mirrors so closely who she once was.

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