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## Laguna Beach Goes L.A. with Katsuya & The Deck Openings

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By Charlie Amter



Summer is heating up south of Los Angeles, just in time for peak beach season. The storied SoCal weather phenomenon known as “June Gloom” is gone and cloudy skies have given way to sunshine. Accordingly, Angelenos are heading south this month to Laguna Beach, especially in the wake of two notable openings in the surfing Mecca turned enclave of the super rich.

Friday evening, L.A.-based hospitality giant SBE’s Katsuya officially opened to the public after several soft-opening events, and the sushi chain, already a hit in L.A. (and soon to be a hit in Miami), is a lock to succeed in Laguna Beach. Just like the multiple L.A. area Katsuya locations, the new Orange County outpost serves up Japanese

cuisine with a decidedly decadent twist, as evidenced by the late night crowds that swarm the bar in Hollywood (Jay-Z is a fan and drops by the Vine Street location nearly every time he's in SoCal).

The first Katsuya outside of L.A. sticks to the formula that has made the mini-chain successful: upscale Japanese fare with California kink (see their immensely popular crispy rice w/ spicy tuna) paired with elaborate cocktails to match (try the Burning Mandarin with Absolut Mandarin - hand-crushed Serrano chili, fresh lemon/orange juice, and a splash of cranberry served in a sugar rimmed glass), all offered up in a sleek Philippe Starck-designed interior. Over the weekend, Orange County residents swooned over the Europe-meets-Asia design theme inside the new nightspot, which also contains a full robata bar, and didn't seem to mind a little bit of Los Angeles glamour now firmly ensconced behind the "Orange Curtain."

Just across the street and down two blocks from Katsuya, a slightly different yet no less notable destination officially opened July 1, inside the Joie De Vivre's smart Pacific Edge hotel. The Deck sits at the foot of the Pacific, with stunning views of the beach (guests are literally on the beach at the restaurant and bar) and might represent the best happy hour location in all of Orange County. Where else do you have the opportunity to see a dolphin casually peek its head above a crashing wave as you sip a guava mango margarita at an upmarket hotel restaurant bar? Chef Michael Ingrino created a menu meant for upscale, yet casual diners (think burgers and paella), and so far, the spot has been a hit with locals, who swarm The Deck to watch the sun set nightly.

But The Deck isn't just crowded at night. Taking a page from popular Las Vegas hotels, Pacific Edge is now offering private cabanas that sit directly adjacent to the Deck, and are priced in the \$450 to \$800 neighborhood. To be sure, cabana culture is nothing new for L.A. or Las Vegas, but for the laid-back surfing culture of Laguna Beach, The Deck will likely provide a valuable "daylife" experience (sans the DJs), for moneyed locals who have cash to burn. The cabanas even come with a "Beach Sherpa" and "Cabana Girl" to assist customers with "everything from setting up your beach chairs and umbrellas, to ordering your food and beverages," per their website.

