

# San Jose Mercury News

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## 5 best San Francisco restaurants near the big theaters

Grabbing dinner before the big show? You can't go wrong with these recs.



San Francisco's Tratto, a trattoria inside The Marker Hotel, is a great option for dinner before the theater (or drinks after). (The Marker Hotel)

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Temperatures may take a noticeable dip in the fall, but that's when San Francisco's arts and theater scene is just heating up. If you have tickets to any of the major venues in the theater district, you're in luck: There are several fabulous places to eat within walking distance of BART and the Curran, Orpheum, ACT's Geary, The Strand and Golden Gate Theatre, as well as the opera and symphony.

We suggest planning ahead and making a reservation at fine-dining restaurants. And if you want to eat great food on the run, we have several suggestions — and they're all under one roof! — leaving you with time and money to indulge in dessert or drinks after the show.



Birdsong is a Pacific Northwest-inspired restaurant led by chef Christopher Bleidorn, formerly of Saison and Atelier Crenn. (Photo courtesy of Birdsong)

## Birdsong

Extra-special night? Consider this polished, year-old restaurant inspired by the cuisine and ingredients of the Pacific Northwest. Located in the former AQ space just a short walk from the Orpheum, Birdsong is the brainchild of chef Christopher Bleidorn, former chef de cuisine at Atelier Crenn and veteran of Saison. Bleidorn offers two tasting menus: (Discovery, only Tues-Thurs) and Journey (every night of service) and a pastry program brimming with micro-seasonal fruit. Open Tuesday-Saturday at 1085 Mission St.; [www.birdsongsf.com](http://www.birdsongsf.com)

## Pläj

Scandinavian small plates and housemade aquavit are the focus at this cozy spot located inside the Inn at the Opera, just steps from the San Francisco War Memorial Opera House. Run by Scandinavian-born chef Roberth Sundell and wife and co-owner Andrea Sundell, Pläj offers such unique dishes as beet-cured gravlax, herring three ways, grilled elk and Swedish meatballs. Don't miss the impressive vegan tasting menu. Closed Aug. 26-Sept. 2; normally open daily at 333 Fulton St.; <https://plajrestaurant.com>



The organic fried chicken sandwich is a popular staple at Organic Coup, one of several restaurants in The Market. (Organic Coup)

## The Market

This 50,000-square-foot [gourmet food hall](#) at the base of the Twitter building offers six fast-casual spots, including the Organic Coup, Manila Bowl, Poke Bar, Slice House by Tony Gemignani and — our favorite — Azalina’s, a Malaysian eatery frequented by Lin-Manuel Miranda during San Francisco’s first run of “Hamilton.” Did we mention there’s also the deluxe Sandwich Bar open until 8 p.m. on weeknights? Open daily at 1355 Market St., Suite 100; [www.visitthemarket.com](http://www.visitthemarket.com).

## Cala

Reservations are a must at Gabriela Camara’s Civic Center hot spot located a third of a mile from Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. The focus is on high-brow Mexican seafood dishes, and you’ll want to try everything, from the abalone tostadas and kampachi ceviche to the sopas with grilled lingcod and a sweet potato dish with bone-marrow salsa. Don’t forget the mezcal margarita. Open daily for dinner at 149 Fell St.; [www.calarestaurant.com](http://www.calarestaurant.com)



Tratto is located near the Curran Theatre and specializes in housemade pastas and other rustic Italian cuisine.(Photo courtesy of Tratto)

## Tratto

This rustic-chic trattoria is known for its modern Italian cuisine, casual vibe and sensational cocktails, including a housemade limoncello program and boozy Italian sodas. Go for the small-plate antipasti, housemade pastas and blistered pizzas. Don't miss the fried chicken thighs with crispy prosciutto and lemon. Tratto, which is open daily, is adjacent to The Marker hotel at 501 Geary St; [www.tratto-sf.com](http://www.tratto-sf.com).