

FIND OUT WHO TAKES THE STING OUT OF 2020

FREE

Santa Barbara

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BEST of

Santa Barbara[®]

READERS' POLL

plus ENDORSEMENTS, NEWS, EVENTS, AND MORE

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2020

BEST of SANTA BARBARA®

FROM BURGERS TO BRACES, HERE ARE THE RESULTS OF OUR ANNUAL READER SURVEY

by Leslie Dinaberg ♦ photos by Daniel Dreifuss ♦ illustrations by Ben Ciccati

In a world that can feel overwhelmingly full of bad news these days, it's awesome to be the bearer of some good news for a change. One of my favorite things about writing this section is how genuinely happy people are to hear from you!

Still, writing the 2020 ode to the Best of Santa Barbara® was somewhat bittersweet. Even the most vibrant business sectors are exhausted from all of the quick pivots necessary and the sheer rush of business coming in, and then everyone else is either effectively shut down or treading water as fast as they can just to survive.

Because of all the turmoil in the world right now, the *Independent's* powers that be did consider hitting the pause button on this annual business celebration. But a survey of advertisers and past winners was overwhelmingly in favor of continuing to offer kudos to our favorite people and places of business. Skipping Best of Santa Barbara®, they said, would eliminate one of their biggest boosts during one of their toughest years ever.

Apparently, our readers were "all in," as well. We had our highest-ever participation this year, with more than 19,000 people (compared to 14,000 in 2019) casting more than 600,000 votes (450,000 in 2019). The results are once again an eclectic mix of nods to our historic and often family-owned businesses and a few beloved chains, as well some newcomers to the list. This includes new categories that sound a bit like a Jeopardy question: Takeout, Parklet, Curbside Pickup, and Cannabis Dispensary. (I'll take "Essential Services in 2020" for \$200, Alex.)

Thanks to your help, we crowdsourced a total of 207 categories of "bests" in the categories of Sporting Life, Looking Good, Eating, Drinking, Out & About, Romance, Little Creatures, Housing, Living Well, Driving, and Media. In a year where supporting hometown businesses is more important to our community than ever, I can't think of a better place to start than this list. ■

BEST of SANTA BARBARA®



EATING

Health Food/ Nutrition Store

Lazy Acres Market

lazyacres.com

Being named the best “makes us proud to be selected by our customers, and, on behalf of my team, we are honored to serve the Santa Barbara community,” said Store Director Bryan Feil. Lazy Acres has been part of the community since 1991. Because of the pandemic, he explained, “Our food bar business had to shut down. With customers cooking more meals at home, the meat, seafood, and produce areas have had modest increases, but we have managed to keep our stock levels very high.”

Runner-Up: Sprouts Farmers Market

Corner Store

Santa Cruz Market

santacruzmarkets.com

“[This year] has been especially challenging for everyone, and grocery stores being named an essential service forced us to work even harder to provide for our community,” said Santa Cruz Market owner Tom Modugno. “We endured some angry, frustrated, and unhinged people needing to blame someone for all this madness. We also witnessed some local samaritans providing for their neighbors anonymously with huge acts of kindness. Being voted Best Corner Store this year means a lot to us, more than ever.”

Runner-Up: Cantwell's Market & Deli

Fresh Fish Market

Santa Barbara Fish Market

sbfish.com

Indy readers' choice for best fresh fish once again, the Santa Barbara Fish Market is on the harbor, about 30

yards from the ocean. It's been a popular spot to buy fresh-off-the-boat seafood since it opened back in 2000. With the pandemic sending many of us into our kitchens more often, they now offer a Santa Barbara Seafood Box, featuring three to four species of the freshest fish available per shipment, with free home delivery within 10 miles.

Runner-Up: Kanaloa Seafood

Produce Stand/ Greengrocer

Santa Barbara Certified Farmers' Market

sbfarmersmarket.org

With so many hitches in the food chain as a result of the pandemic, it's comforting to see our local bounty still going strong. The first farmers' market was held at the Santa Barbara Mission in 1979 and was among one of the first 20 farmers' markets in the State of California. The nonprofit Santa Barbara Certified Farmers' Market Association was founded in 1983, and today the 120 grower members have six markets throughout the county, six days a week.

Runner-Up: Tri-County Produce

Ice Cream Shop

McConnell's Fine Ice Creams

mcconnells.com

“Thank you, thank you, thank you. Your vote is really for the amazing people at this company. Thanks for voting for all of them,” said co-owner/CEO Michael Palmer. “It's challenging. In a business dominated by investor-owned companies, most of whom don't even make their own products, we're a family business who

does, just as we have since 1949.” One of the newest flavors — Honey & Cornbread Cookies — recently won the soft Award, which is like the Oscars for the food industry.

Runner-Up: Rori's Artisanal Creamery

Frozen Yogurt Shop

Yogurtland

yogurt-land.com

With dozens of flavors (Birthday Cupcake Batter, Rocket Pop Sorbet, Iced Coffee NSA, and the new Honey Roasted Peanut are but a few) and a delightful assortment of toppings to choose from, the possible combinations at Yogurtland are endless. They even have a new “froyo it forward” program to donate special treats to frontline workers and everyday heroes. It's no wonder that Yogurtland has been our readers' choice for best frozen yogurt shop for several years running.

Runner-Up: Mission Street Ice Cream

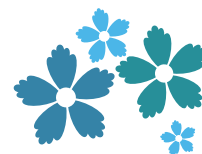
Doughnut Shop

Hook & Press

hookandpressdonuts.com

Co-owners John Burnett and Denisse Salinas were excited to win Best Doughnut Shop for the second year in a row. “Hopefully it means we have succeeded in making our customers feel like family, which is something we always strive for,” said Burnett. “Yes, we make doughnuts and serve coffee, but what we really aim to provide is a welcoming, happy place to enjoy special moments with friends and loved ones.”

Runner-Up: Spudnuts Donuts





Katherine and Jason Lesh

CSA

Farm Cart Organics

farmcartorganics.com

Farm Cart Organics was your pick for top CSA, a new category. "We are super stoked," said owners Katherine and Jason Lesh, who gave props to our farms and businesses that are all pushing and supporting our local agriculture at a deep level. "CSAs are such an important tool for the sustainability of our local food systems, and we are super proud just to be a part of their growth and success, let alone to be named the best one."

Runner-Up: Plow to Porch Organics

Chocolate Company

See's Candies

sees.com

"Getting this recognition in the *Santa Barbara Independent* is so exciting and rewarding for our teams," said CEO Pat Egan. "Our two shop managers from the Santa Barbara stores have been a part of the See's family for a total of 49 years combined and have a loyal customer base. They work hard to be the best, and it's great to see it recognized. We truly appreciate all of our See's fans and could not be more honored to receive this recognition."

Runner-Up: Chocolate Maya

Bakery

Renaud's Patisserie & Bistro

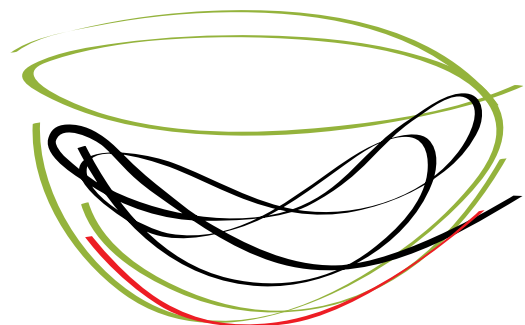
renaudsbistro.com

"I still remember when we first opened, and we had this customer who came in for a chocolate croissant. She left, and then came back to the store 30 seconds later asking for four more. She was super excited and wanted to share this novelty with her friend," said CEO/Executive Pastry Chef Renaud Gonthier. "This is what we are trying to do every day, create an experience."

Runner-Up: Jeannine's Restaurant & Bakery



PHOTO: SILAS FALLSTICH



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