

LIFE

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THEY MEAN BUSINESS

We're talking serious money and the menu to back it up at these power lunch spots.

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RESTAURANT CRITIC

If bankers and lawyers can teach us anything at all, it's how and where to have a proper two-martini lunch. Yes, the old-fashioned power lunch is alive and well. Impressions are everything when you're trying to close the deal. So is good food. Most of these places are in the banking and financial corridor between Irvine and Costa Mesa, as that's where much of the county's wheeling and dealing take place. With that in mind, these are the 10 restaurants that Orange County's power players would really like to keep to themselves, at least during lunchtime.

1. BISTANGO

Bistango has been around forever, but there's a new chef in the kitchen, Timothy Doolittle, who spent much of the past decade working with Emeril Lagasse and Wolfgang Puck. To be quite honest, the nighttime scene here can get pretty dull, even with live music in the bar (which, incidentally is some of the most appropriate restaurant music in O.C.). But at lunch? You better have a reservation. And you might want to wear a suit, not because it's required but because you might otherwise feel out of place among the hedge fund crowd. Where to sit: under an umbrella in the atrium. Power move: rack of lamb and a dirty martini. 1900 Von Karman Ave., Irvine; 949-752-5222, bistango.com



NICK AGRO, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The staff typically deals with a full house at lunchtime at well-heeled Bistango.



CINDY YAMANAKA, FILE PHOTO

New kid on the block Vaca and its celeb chef have made an impression speedily.



PAUL RODRIGUEZ, FILE PHOTO

Chef Franco Barone, second from left, of Il Barone chats with his guests.



H. LORREN AU, JR., FILE PHOTO

The atmosphere at Marche Moderne is subdued and tranquil, conducive to the sort of conversation where numbers and details are being juggled.



BRAD A. JOHNSON, STAFF

Grilled prawns at Prego in Irvine.



NICK AGRO, FILE PHOTO

The view from The Cannery in Newport Beach.



CINDY YAMANAKA, FILE PHOTO

The Golden Truffle's wall of wine.

4. IL BARONE

It wouldn't be out of the ordinary to see Catholic Church bigwigs in perfectly tailored white cassocks having lunch with generous patrons here. Nor is it unusual to overhear negotiations for the sale of a new yacht, although some folks do come here simply because they like the pizza. Where to sit: first row of tables along the window. Power move: veal Milanese and the ultimate Negrone. 4251 Martingale Way, Newport Beach; 949-955-2755, [ilbaroneristorante.com](https://www.ilbaroneristorante.com)

5. MARCHÉ MODERNE

Of all the big power lunch spots, Marché is the most subdued. The dealmakers are sometimes outnumbered by the power shoppers and

daytime romantics. This extraordinary French bistro is a favorite haunt of big philanthropists. Where to sit: patio. Power move: three-course prix fixe lunch and Champagne. 3333 Bristol St., No. 3001 Costa Mesa; 714-434-7900, [marchemoderne.net](https://www.marchemoderne.net)

6. PREGO

There's always a steady stream of Ubers, Escalades and limos pulling up to the front steps at lunchtime, although most of the daytime crowd just takes the elevator down from the bank towers that rise up directly behind this business-oriented Italian spot. Where to sit: freestanding tables in the center dining room. Power move: grilled freshwater prawns and a bottle of Prosecco. 18420 Von Karman Ave.; Ir-

vine, 949-558-8333, [prego-ristoranti.com](https://www.prego-ristoranti.com)

7. THE CANNERY

If recent overheard conversations are any indication, this seafood restaurant on the harbor is a popular spot for closing, or at least discussing, big real estate deals. It's also a favorite for event planners and charity organizers. Where to sit: on the patio, in full shade under the awning. Power move: lobster roll and a chardonnay. 3090 Lafayette Road, Newport Beach; 949-566-0060, [cannerynewport.com](https://www.cannerynewport.com)

8. ANDREI'S

Like some of the others on this list, Andrei's can often feel sleepy at night. But at the stroke of noon each weekday, this place turns in-

to a high-powered, high-energy lunchroom for lawyers, financial advisers and the like who are artfully shepherded to their regular tables by savvy General Manager Shannon Jones. Where to sit: elevated booths near the bar. Power move: quail ravioli and a glass of malbec. 2907 Main St., Irvine; 949-387-8887, [andreisrestaurant.com](https://www.andreisrestaurant.com)

9. GOLDEN TRUFFLE

The Golden Truffle is a glorious little time capsule with a split personality. If the chef is not there, which happens a lot at night, the regulars know to stay away. That said, the chef is almost always there at lunchtime, which is when this place really comes alive. Where to sit: the first table inside the door. Power move: The wine list is superb, so first pick the wine you want to drink, then let the chef decide what every-

one should eat. 1767 Newport Blvd., Costa Mesa; 949-645-9858, [goldentruffle.com](https://www.goldentruffle.com)

10. SPAGHETTINI

While Spaghettini is a popular jazz club at night, it's also a very serious restaurant come lunchtime, thanks in no small part to the front-of-house staff - hostesses, servers, busboys, managers - who take ownership of every little moment as if they, too, have a stake in the outcome of your meeting. That's something that obviously hasn't gone unnoticed by the business folk who routinely dine here. Where to sit: window tables toward the back. Power move: bone-in rib-eye and 18-year-old scotch. 3006 Old Ranch Parkway, Seal Beach; 562-596-2199, [spaghetтинi.com](https://www.spaghetтинi.com)

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