

AFAR



The Comprehensive Insider's Guide to Orange County

Marché Moderne

It's not an overstatement to say chef Florent Marneau has spent more than half his life perfecting his coq au vin. Enrolled in cooking school in his native France at age 13, and classically trained for years, he then brought his talents to Orange County. His bistro, Marché Moderne, opened in 2008, and gained instant unparalleled attention not just from locals but from critics nationally as well. (It was nominated for James Beard Awards for Best New Restaurant, Best Chef, and Outstanding Service.) In 2017, Marneau moved to a fresh, expansive location close to the beach in Newport. Bifold doors open to a casual patio, allowing a sea breeze through the dining room, and a Cruvinet holding boutique French and California wines is the showpiece behind a quartzite bar. Dinner guests can savor steak frites or foie gras and chestnut ravioli, finished with a tableside pour of poulet jus. Marneau's wife, Amelia—an acclaimed pastry chef who also trained in France—creates the delicate sweets that punctuate every meal. Off-menu specials often include chef favorites like black truffle-stuffed chicken or cuttlefish flown in from France. Locals' tip: Make a reservation for Monday night, when the three-course Spontané menu is \$38 (add a carafe of wine for \$18).