



Best Places in Southern California

Suzanne's Cuisine/***

Ojai's roster of exceptional restaurants includes this understated charmer a few blocks from the center of town where every little detail bespeaks a preoccupation with quality. Each ingredient is as fresh and natural as it can be, and these menu offerings—a blending of California cuisine with Italian recipes from chef/owner Suzanne Roll's family—show them off to advantage. Every meal begins with a basket of home-baked rolls served with butter squares, each accented by a single pressed cilantro leaf. Vegetables are al dente, and even the occasional cream sauce tastes light and healthy. A highlight of the lunch menu is the Southwest salad: wild, brown, and jasmine rice tossed with smoked turkey, feta cheese, veggies, and green chiles. At dinner, pepper-and-sesame-crust ed ahi is served either sautéed or seared (your choice). Suzanne's covered outdoor patio should be your first seating choice. Its marble bistro tables are shaded in summer by lush greenery and warmed in winter by a fireplace and strategically placed heat lamps. When it rains, a plastic cover unfurls to keep water out while maintaining an airy garden feel. This is the kind of restaurant that makes you long for three-hour lunches and decadently unhurried dinners; so sit back, enjoy, and—by all means—don't skip dessert!