

# Finding Smoke-Free Restaurant Patios

By Ross Porter, Director of Communications American Lung Association in California

San Diego's near-perfect weather encourages outdoor dining year-round, but secondhand smoke on restaurant patios is bad for the health of diners and servers.

The US Surgeon General has found no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke; in 2006 the California Air Resources Board designated secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant.

The Tobacco-Free Communities Coalition offered solutions to those who get second-hand smoke as an unwanted side dish on the dining patio, consisting of an online listing of restaurants and some easy-going tips to use at favorite restaurants when the patio smoke gets to be too much.



"Shouldn't the best seat in the house be smoke-free?" asked Laurie Ohnesorgen of GIO Restaurant in La Mesa, which has voluntarily adopted a smoke-free outdoor dining policy.

All restaurants and bars in San Diego County are smoke-free, indoors – but outside can be a different story. With only a few exceptions such as El Cajon, Chula Vista, National City, and Solana Beach (in the near future), dining patios may still allow smoking.

For those who want smoke-free patios, a new listing of restaurants that have voluntarily committed to smoke-free dining patios is now available at [www.SmokeFreeSanDiego.org](http://www.SmokeFreeSanDiego.org).

"This is our way of saluting restaurants that are voluntarily making their dining patios smoke-free as a service to customers and a safeguard for the health of their employees," said Dannah Hosford, Chair, Tobacco Free Communities Coalition (TFCC). She encouraged restaurants that have policies to go to the site and make sure that they are listed.

She also offered some tips for diners about practical steps for making patio dining more pleasant and healthy for all. "Speak with the restaurant management if the smoke at a nearby table is offensive," she advised.

The TFCC is also offering free "tip cards" to diners who want to suggest to their favorite establishments that the patio go smoke-free. "Leaving a tip card in the bill is an easy, low-impact way to let the restaurant know that you'd appreciate a smoke-free patio," Hosford said.

California voters know that secondhand smoke is harmful and they support less smoking in outdoor areas of

bars and restaurants:

- 88% believe that secondhand smoke is harmful to those who inhale it in outdoor areas.
- 60% have been bothered by secondhand smoke in outdoor dining areas in the past year.
- 56% support restricting smoking in the outdoor areas of bars and restaurants.

Joe Kellejian, the former Mayor and a current council member of Solana Beach, encouraged more cities to adopt smoke-free dining patio policies. "Solana Beach's policy is soon to take effect, and we challenge to other elected officials to do the same thing. Smoke-free environments are more family-friendly and customer-friendly. Solana Beach has shown that smokefree policies are a winner." During his term as Mayor in 2003, Kellejian championed the Solana Beach ordinance that created the first smoke-free public beach on the US mainland.

La Mesa City Council member Ernie Ewin was on hand to welcome the TFCC advocates and their smokefree message.

The Tobacco-Free Communities Coalition (TFCC) works in the San Diego region to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke among San Diego County children, youth, and adults. The TFCC is joined in these efforts by the Tobacco Control Coalition (TCC) and the Tobacco Control Resource Program (TCRP) of the County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency.