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ADVANCE MAN

He's the ultimate location scout for restaurants seeking a historic locale, but Nate Benedetto's services don't end there.

*By Alexandria Abramian
Photography by Tim Melideo*

Call Nate Benedetto the ultimate matchmaker when it comes to marrying restaurants to location. A principal at Next Wave Commercial (nextwavecommercial.com), the Chicago-born real estate agent has presided over some of San Diego's most high-powered unions, such as Herb & Wood, Juniper & Ivy and Born & Raised. For clients like Crack Shack, Benedetto is helping craft a master real estate plan beyond San Diego into Orange County and Los Angeles. "You can't find the exceptional locations from a computer; it's about really getting to know neighborhoods and doing the legwork of getting to know landlords," says the father of two, who calls Bird Rock home. ("It has surfing for me and great schools for the kids.") Earlier this year, Benedetto was hired by UCSD to give the campus a culinary makeover—to fill the retail and restaurant spaces with a more authentic representation of San Diego's restaurants. His first tenant? A new Soda & Swine (founded by UCSD alum and San Diego restaurant bold name Arsalun Tafazoli) that will soon take over the space formerly occupied by Porter's Pub. As for those marquee matchups, Benedetto's work doesn't end at the altar. He also helps clients engage with everyone from builders to interior designers to create one-of-a-kind environments, tapping local design talent such as Paul Basile, Bells & Whistles and Michael Soriano. "Right now, a lot of clients want older buildings that have soul," he says. "To build them out is more expensive and risky, but then they're so special when they're done. They have that 'I've-been-here-for-100-years' look."