

Northern California weekend

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A night out in Downtown Oakland

Why go now: As block after block of condos pop up, so do bars, restaurants, and art galleries to entertain the young new locals. **East vs. west:** Think of downtown Oakland as San Francisco's Brooklyn. **Down-town then:** For years, lonely blocks of abandoned storefronts were the rule. **Down-town now:** Tastemakers and artsy types meet up to talk shop. **Why here?** Big-name chefs can't resist a cost of doing business that's about a third of what it is in San Francisco. **Urban pioneer:** Art deco-inspired dinner spot Flora (\$\$\$; closed Sun; 1900 Telegraph Ave.; 510/286-0100) really got the momentum going when it opened with a swanky splash two-plus years ago. **Next up:** Nearby Jack London Square's reinvention, including a marketplace patterned after S.F.'s Ferry Building and Seattle's Pike Place, has been delayed due to the downturn. But the marketplace is on track to open by summer, chain restaurants have been purged from the neighborhood, and the area is already repopulating with drive-worthy eateries.

1. Start your evening right

Raise a glass of bubbly to the elegant backdrop of newcomer **Mimosa Champagne Lounge**. More than 60 sparklers line the bar, and brown leather banquettes under shimmering gold capiz-shell chandeliers are a comfy spot to eye movies—*Saturday Night Fever*, *Beverly Hills Cop*—projected onto a wall. \$\$\$; closed Sun; 2355 Broadway; 510/891-1005.

BY JENNIE NUNN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS J. STORY

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Night out



2. Dig into down-home cooking in high style

Down the street from Mimosa, **Picán** has been a destination since it opened last spring. Snappily dressed diners from all over the Bay Area line up for Southern comfort food like crispy smoked pork belly and roasted chanterelles (pictured), homemade grits with shrimp, and fried chicken with sweet truffle honey. \$\$\$; 2295 Broadway; 510/834-1000.



Getting to downtown Oakland

The most convenient BART station is 19th St. (bart.gov). By car, take the Broadway exit off I-880 or the W. Grand Ave. exit off I-980.



3. Catch a concert in a 1920s landmark

A short walk from Picán is the iconic **Fox Theater**, which reopened last year after a 43-year hiatus. Its original ribbon cutting, in 1928, unveiled one of the era's most lavish movie palaces. Now it's a live-music venue, hosting headliners like the Shins and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. If you arrive early, kick back with a drink in the Den, where TVs let you watch the opening band. 1807 Telegraph Ave.; thefoxoakland.com



4. Keep the night going

Wind down the evening at one of the neighborhood's new late-night hangouts. Choose cocktails in industrial, loft-like **Mua** (pictured; \$\$; 2442 Webster St.; 510/238-1100). Or hit the **Layover** (1517 Franklin St.; 510/834-1517) for a music lounge with a Moroccan casbah look and a speakeasy vibe. If you fall in love with a vintage glass table lamp, you're in luck: Everything's for sale (ask for a price list at the bar).

3 great reasons to show up early

STROLL AROUND THE LAKE

After an \$88 million renovation, **Lake Merritt** has shed its shabbiness. Now the 3.1-mile path along the water's edge is lined with freshly planted trees. Park yourself on a bench and watch rowers glide across the water. From Broadway, walk four blocks east on 20th St.; www.oaklandnet.com/parks

CHECK OUT A NEW OAKLAND CLASSIC

For the best waterfront view in town, grab a barstool at the communal table at the **Lake Chalet's Pump House Bar** in the newly revamped **Lake Merritt Boathouse**. Pair locally brewed ales with oysters, fresh ceviche, or warm hummus and pita. \$\$; happy hour 3 p.m.–6 p.m. Wed–Sun; 1520 Lakeside Dr.; 510/208-5253.

SCOPE OUT THE ART SCENE

For a glimpse of what emerging local artists are doing, hit **Oakland Art Murmur's First Friday** art walk, when about 20 galleries downtown and in the adjacent **Uptown** neighborhood greet (and in some cases pour wine for) a stream of visitors. Next events: Feb 5, Mar 5; oaklandartmurmur.com



SHARE YOUR WEEKEND FINDS. Favorite new restaurant or bar? Email your suggestions to the weekend guide editor at wgeditor@sunset.com