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# Newport Beach businesses won't pass on the holidays this year with first-ever Holiday Pass



Eilish and Fiona Zachary, from left, hold the Kris Kringle Balboa Bar and frozen banana, which are offered as part of the Newport Beach Holiday Pass, a campaign meant to encourage business at local restaurants and shops throughout Newport Beach. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)



All businesses want for Christmas is — well, business.

Starting this month, residents and visitors to town will be able to help with that through Visit Newport Beach's first-ever Holiday Pass. The pass aggregates information on all the holiday celebrations in the city and includes promotions from participating restaurants and retailers. It also provides deals on rooms at hotels. More than 50 businesses are currently participating with more expected to join.

Planning for the monthlong campaign started in spring, but the idea of the Holiday Pass has been a long time coming.

“Newport Beach has a lot of holiday assets outside of [the \[Christmas\] parade](#),” — which was canceled last month — “We have the Ring of Lights. We have the trees over at the Newport Dunes, Fashion Island and a lot of other activities that people can see and experience,” said Gary Sherwin, president and chief executive officer of Newport Beach and Co. in an interview on Wednesday.

“If we're really doing Christmas as well as historically we have, we need to do a better job of pulling all those assets together. We need to put it in a one-stop, easy to access source, which is Holiday Pass,” Sherwin said. “I want to go to a restaurant. I want to go look at lights. I want to do some outdoor activities — all in that seasonal flavor.

“Where can I do it?” Sherwin said.

This is the first time all those assets have been pulled together into one place. Sherwin said creating an app like the Holiday Pass has been a longstanding dream,

and that this year it might even be more important to have everything in one place.

“Without the parade ... we still have a lot of things to do in Newport Beach, and here’s how you can access those,” Sherwin said.

Interested parties can sign up for the Holiday Pass online at [visitnewportbeach.com/holiday](https://visitnewportbeach.com/holiday).

The pass will be directly delivered by text and email for use. Special offers will be accessible as users arrive at businesses and “check-in.” Every check-in counts as an entry to a giveaway.



Buddha’s Favorite, a Japanese cuisine restaurant, is participating in the Holiday Pass, offering a free salted or garlic edamame as part of the campaign. Above, Sandra Le holds a sushi combo plate with an assortment of fish and California roll at the eatery in Newport Beach on Wednesday. (Raul Roa / Staff Photographer)

One of the special deals being offered is at Buddha's Favorite. Customers will get a free garlic or salted edamame. The restaurant also donated a gift card to the Holiday Pass giveaway.

"Dine Newport has been fabulous to me and to our restaurant," owner Nicole Paskerian said. "I think [the Holiday Pass] brings awareness to my own restaurant and other local restaurants and businesses in the community. This thing has been going on for so long. It helps keep it fresh in people's minds that we all still need local help."

Paskerian said that Buddha's Favorite is unique in that it actually has a large patio space. She said that the restaurant did well with takeout and with outdoor dining, but the sushi bar will be hurt by the oncoming winter and rains. The restaurant doesn't have a large parking lot to put up a tent, and its patio is not fully covered.

She said the seating will be tremendously affected if indoor dining is not permitted as California heads into the next few seasons.



Buddha's Favorite is offering a free salted (shown here) or garlic edamame as part of the Holiday Pass campaign. (Raul Roa / Staff Photographer)

“I do think that [the Holiday Pass] will help the local economy, bringing everybody in it. It’s not just us. You look at these little boutiques, and there was a local cleaner that’s been here ever since I came to Newport Beach and they’re gone now,” said Paskerian, adding that she understood the severity of the pandemic.

“It’s a huge trickle-down,” Paskerian said.

The owners of Sugar ‘n Spice, Courtney and Will Aloviz, said their ice cream shop on Marine Avenue isn’t too affected by the change in tiers and the restrictions.

The pair [participated in Restaurant Month](#), which Sherwin said helped test the platform that currently hosts the Holiday Pass. The Alovises said participation in the

campaign in September was successful and they received good feedback on the banana flights they offered as a promotion.



Eilish Zachary holds the classic Balboa Bar rolled in crushed Oreos and candy cane called the “Kris Kringle,” as part of the Newport Beach Holiday Pass. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)

This month, the shop will offer Kris Kringle Balboa Bars, which are vanilla ice cream bars dipped in chocolate and rolled in crushed Oreos and candy canes. Along with the purchase of a Kris Kringle bar, people will get a frozen banana of their choice at half price.

“No Christmas in my memory have we ever needed more to bring some smiles and joy around and to bring the community together safely,” Will Aloviss said.

The Alovises said that they were fortunate in the fact that Sugar ‘n Spice is set up as a walk-up window and that, when they shut down the shop for a few months in spring, they reconfigured the space and switched to cashless payments to make it safer for both their employees and customers.

“It lets the community know and the surrounding communities know that we’re all open for business. Even with all the changing tides, we’re still here,” Will Alovise said. “We’re still here. We’re still offering great things to our visitors and our customers.”



Eilish and Fiona Zachary, from left, hold the Kris Kringle Balboa Bar and frozen banana, which are offered as part of the Newport Beach Holiday Pass. (Don Leach / Staff Photographer)

Alovise said that though Sugar ‘n Spice is a little different than other restaurants, it could use some love from the community like the others. He said he hoped that

people would consider both Balboa Island and Newport Beach as a destination where visitors could come down and have some holiday cheer while supporting small and local businesses.

“Retail and restaurants have taken devastating hits and we’re in for another at least three to four months of challenging conditions until the vaccines kick in, hopefully, in March or April,” Sherwin said.

“We want to make sure we can get these businesses over the finish line so that they can still be here when that does happen and to let people know that we’re more than just the [Christmas] boat parade,” Sherwin said. “There’s a lot of things that they can see and enjoy here even if we’re not going to have our usual major holiday event.”

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