

The Crowd: Philharmonic group hosts tea at AnQi

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Bianca Avila, Sergio Avila and Maribel Avila of Avilaâ€™s... (Ann Chatillon)

The elegant gals of the Philharmonic Society of Orange County came together to host a tea at AnQi in South Coast Plaza in advance of the society's upcoming 2012 gala benefit.

They are calling the gala, which will take place in the Samueli Theater at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts on March 9, "A Night of Broadway at the Philharmonic Supper Club."

Gala chairs **Marsha Anderson** and **Marta Bhathal** will transform the Samueli into a fabulous nightclub atmosphere. Guests will begin the evening with a cocktail reception, followed by dinner catered by Patina.

An evening of Broadway entertainment will cap the evening festivities. The Samueli is the perfect venue for this sort of program. The atmosphere is ideal, the acoustics superb. One feels like he might be in a supper club in New York's SoHo or perhaps London's West End.

The gala committee, including stylish gals **Leslie Cancellieri**, **Sally Crockett**, **Marie St. John Gray**, **Nadine Hall**, **Margaret Larkin**, **Betty Potalivo**, **Sharon McNalley**, and **Joan Riach-Gaynor**, came together along with glamorous hostess **Elizabeth An** of AnQi for an Asian fusion explosion of taste temptations. These included a spot of tea served with An's famous crispy chicken wontons, wagyu beef crostinis and — what else — lobster lollipops.

The committee has lined up composer-lyricist **Neil Berg**, responsible for "100 Years of Broadway," to headline the gala review. Berg has produced literally 1,000 Broadway concerts starring such names as Michael Crawford, Betty Buckley, Rita Moreno and Ben Vereen.

The gala should be one of the highlights of the spring social season on the Orange Coast.

For information and reservations, contact **Jean Hsu** at the Philharmonic Society at (949) 553-2422 ext. 232, or go to jean@philharmonicsociety.org.

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The sixth annual Newport Beach Restaurant Week kicked off Wednesday evening in high spirits at a pre-event reception at Corona del Mar's iconic Five Crowns.

There are some new twists to this year's edition of Restaurant Week, which officially began Friday night and runs through Jan. 29.

The event showcasing the Newport restaurant scene's culinary strength is being extended to nine days, and includes a \$5-reduction from last year's price points on three-course prix-fixe lunch and dinner menus at 60 participating restaurants participating.

There is also a "bounce back" incentive to encourage diners to receive a 20% discount at participating restaurants in the six weeks after Restaurant Week. The offer is valid from Jan. 30 through March 16.

Peggy Fort, the marketing consultant for Restaurant Week, greeted the VIP crowd at Five Crowns for cocktails and nibbles on the swank patio.

"Some of the hottest chefs in Southern California will be preparing exceptional gourmet meals at bargain prices," said **Sheri Drewny**, president of the Newport Beach Restaurant Assn.

Some of the participating bistros include A Restaurant, Avila's El Ranchito, Bayside, The Cannery, El Torito Grill, Five Crowns, Il Farro, Modo Mio Cucina Rustica, The Ritz, Roy's, Tamarind of London and Zov's.

For a complete list of participants and to view the 2012 prix-fixe menus, visit <http://www.NewportBeachDining.com>.

THE CROWD runs Thursdays and Saturdays. B.W. Cook is editor of the Bay Window, the official publication of the Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach.

