

# LOOK WHO'S TALKING

BY GILLIAN FLYNN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ETHAN PINES



Maria Hunt at a favorite haunt, Nine-Ten in La Jolla.

## WHO'S THAT GIRL? *Food writer Maria Hunt dishes on the S.D. gourmet scene and a book deal that might just land her that Food Network dream job*

Maria Hunt is not in disguise. No wig. No fake moustache. As the restaurant critic and food writer for the *Union-Tribune* for the past 10 years, Hunt is extremely well known in this town—though she still uses pseudonyms for dinner reservations. "I heard black women all over San Diego get really good service," she laughs. Today, the job is more relevant than ever as San Diego's food scene deftly proves its mettle, farm-to-table ethos included. There is no end to Hunt's foodie knowledge: favorite pizza (Arrivederci), best lobster risotto (Cavaillon), fave Champagne cocktail (the Elderbubble at Laurel) and the baddest boy chef (not telling). Her stamp of approval means a lot in this town. But these days, she's got bigger

fish to fry—and lots of Veuve to drink—with a major book deal she landed with *The Bubbly Girl*. Set to hit shelves next August from publisher Clarkson Potter, the book will focus on cocktails made with Champagne and sparkling wine, complete with history and recipes. "I get up early every weekend and start mixing," she says. Talk about research! Actually, Hunt is busy obtaining her level one sommelier certification while she pens this bubbly homage. And restaurant owners, are you listening? What ruffles this critic's feathers most is inept waitstaff. "They're always serving from the left and clearing from the right." Um, waiter, there's an elbow in my soup. [www.thebubblygirl.com](http://www.thebubblygirl.com). **IB**

**HOTS:** Anything at Nine-Ten in La Jolla, the changing menu at Market in Del Mar, Chino strawberries, female sommeliers, anything with gin, Mama's Lebanese Bakery & Deli, El Salvador Pupuseria in City Heights, conscious eating **NOTS:** Napkin lint, vodka Martinis, flip-flops in restaurants, genetically modified food, seared tuna (there are other fish in the sea), oversized plates, brunch buffets, theme restaurants