



Cloak & Petal makes it springtime year-round

Cherry blossom trees are a fixture at the San Diego restaurant

Spring has sprung across most of the country, but at Cloak & Petal in San Diego, the season blooms year-round.

The izakaya restaurant, which opened in December, features cherry blossom trees in full bloom hanging over the bar.

They're not real, needless to say. Managing partner Cesar Vallin said they were rather ugly olive trees under the previous restaurant's management. When Cloak & Petal took over the space, Vallin and partners tapped the talents of an Australian artist who staged a conversion to cherry blossoms, a signature of Japan.



“He stripped them down and took off all the leaves. He painted the bark and he got a couple of staff members to put every branch on. It took three people about 300 hours,” Vallin said.

Soft lighting adds to the overall effect, making the trees look pretty darn real.

This is the second restaurant for Vallin, who closed his previous restaurant, Prospect Bar & Grill, in San Diego, last year.

For him, the cherry blossoms represent a new beginning. “In Japan, they mean starting a new season, letting go of the old and celebrating the new, coming together with family and friends,” he said. “It’s a reminder to me and my partners. We’ve all gone through ups and downs.”

Cloak & Petal, however, has been well received in San Diego’s Little Italy neighborhood. “We’re moving in the right direction,” he said. “I can’t feel anything less than being blessed.”