

4 Reasons You Should Revisit The Big Four In SF Now

By [Fran Endicott Miller](#) | Published on September 3, 2015

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The Big Four, a Nob Hill mainstay since 1976, might not be the most au courant of San Francisco spots, but its traditional, clubby atmosphere could be just what the hipsters ordered. As any trend-follower and trendsetter knows, anything old eventually becomes new again, and thus, perhaps it's time to revisit the spot named for San Francisco's original haute crew: **C.P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins** and **Charles Crocker**. Here are four perfectly good reasons to return:

- 1) The perfect martini. As cocktail glasses have ballooned to fishbowl size over the past several years, Big Four bartender Ty keeps it real by pouring a classic four-ounce martini. The smaller the glass, the colder each sip; no one likes a lukewarm martini. Ty has been mixing cocktails here for 25 years, and judging by the crowd on a recent Saturday night, his skill with spirits is greatly admired. It takes only three simple ingredients to achieve perfection: gin, vermouth, and lots of ice, but it's all about the ratios.
- 2) Great food without too much information. Sometimes you just want a steak or a salad without knowing its origins. Executive Chef **Kevin Scott** is using the same seasonal and locally sourced ingredients as trendier spots in town, but he keeps it on the down low. While you won't find wordy descriptions on the menu of an item's derivation, you will find familiar comfort food dishes with contemporary sophistication that require no grandstanding. Chef Scott has got it going on.



3) A classic piano bar. The Big Four's lounge features a beautiful grand piano and it's not just for looks. From 5:00 p.m. to about 10:00 p.m. nightly, patrons are treated to a range of songs, from Great American Songbook standards to current hits. The restaurant's regular pianists play Porter, Gershwin, and Berlin, and even take a request here and there. There are very few spots left in San Francisco that can match the sophisticated and genial tone at The Big Four.

4) **Ron Henggeler**. Guests lucky to be seated in waiter Henggeler's section not only receive great service, they might get a few history lessons as well. As a 20-year employee of the restaurant, Henggeler has intel on nearly every piece of memorabilia (about \$2 million worth) lining the walls. As a photographer and historian, he has chronicled two decades worth of happenings at The Big Four and its host hotel, the Huntington – now the [Scarlet Huntington](#). History buffs can step back in time with a visit to his personal website, www.ronhenggeler.com. He's also an expert on general San Francisco history.

The Big Four at the Scarlet Huntington Hotel: Nob Hill, 1075 California St., San Francisco