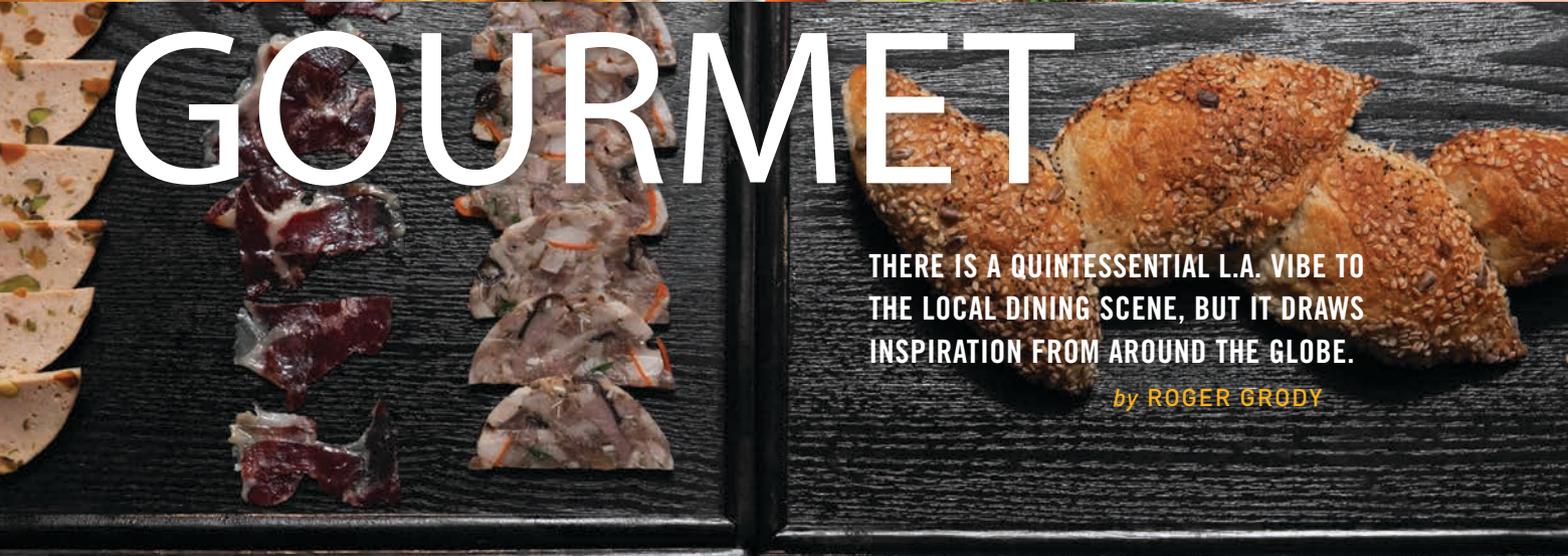




GLOBAL GOURMET

THERE IS A QUINTESSENTIAL L.A. VIBE TO THE LOCAL DINING SCENE, BUT IT DRAWS INSPIRATION FROM AROUND THE GLOBE.

by ROGER GRODY



THE CASE FOR LOS ANGELES BEING THE MOST CULTURALLY DIVERSE metropolis, eclipsing New York or Miami, is compelling, given its location on the threshold of Latin America and its status as a gateway to the Pacific Rim. With the largest Armenian, Korean and Filipino populations in the U.S. and a hundred other significant ethnic communities, the personality of Greater L.A. is shaped by the entire planet. So is the city's cuisine, and the restaurants presented herein offer a trip around the world without driving to the airport.



PARIS, FRANCE

Chef Dave Beran, formerly of Chicago's Michelin three-star Alinea, scored a Michelin star of his own at his first SoCal restaurant, Dialogue, and has followed it up with the much-anticipated **Pasjoli**. Inspired by Parisian markets, the cuisine is a refined take on bistro fare—think turbot *meunière* and the classic dish of pressed duck—all presented with a sense of French artistry. Finales include soufflé or *tarte au citron*. Sophisticated but not stuffy, the open-kitchen dining room represents a new French Revolution in L.A. 2732 Main St., Santa Monica, 424.330.0020, pasjoli.com

AMALFI COAST, ITALY

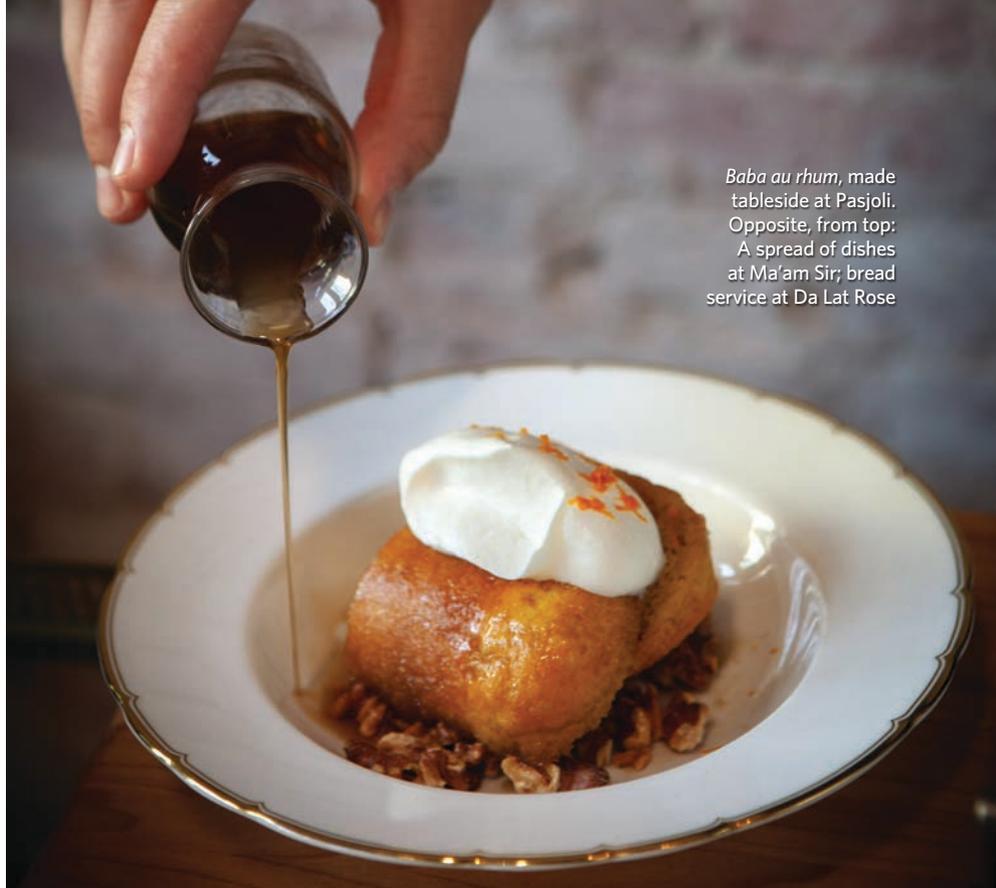
Only in L.A. can restaurants housed in shopping malls be among the best in the city, and **Osteria Cal Mare**—a handsome aqua-accented dining establishment from chefs Michael Mina and Adam Sobel in the newly renovated Beverly Center—attracts serious diners. As the name implies, Cal Mare applies a uniquely Cal-Italian perspective to the bounty of the sea, and even fresh burrata can be topped with caviar. Lobster bucatini is enlivened with Calabrian chile, while squid-ink tagliatelle arrives with mussels and saffron crema. As one might expect from prolific celebrity chef Mina, the wine list here is excellent, showcasing every corner of Italy and beyond. p. 59

VALENCIA, SPAIN

Chef Teresa Montañó is inspired by her love of Valencia, the birthplace of paella, and she brings that passion to her Highland Park restaurant, **Otoño**. Sit at the bar beneath a graffiti mural by Valencia street artists PichiAvo, or huddle at a cozy table to enjoy tapas like *croquetas de jamón*, melt-in-your-mouth hand-cut *jamón ibérico* or refreshing chilled almond soup. The paellas have a bit of *socarrat* (the crispy rice at the bottom of the pan that screams authenticity), and the squid-ink-blackened version with scallops, chorizo and lemon cream is particularly memorable. Wash it down with wines from Rioja, Mallorca or the Canary Islands, then finish with *crema catalana*. 5715 N. Figueroa St., L.A., 323.474.6624, otonorestaurant.com

ATHENS, GREECE

Mediterranean-spirited **Le Grand** is one of the best-looking restaurants in downtown L.A.,



Baba au rhum, made tableside at Pasjoli. Opposite, from top: A spread of dishes at Ma'am Sir; bread service at Da Lat Rose

an indoor-outdoor setting where a laid-back attitude is infused with a healthy splash of glamour. Alex and Chris Manos (executive chef and chef de cuisine, respectively) are Athens natives who love celebrating Greek culinary traditions, but their fine-dining experience results in innovative touches and artful presentations. In addition to traditional items like *spanakopita*, the Manos brothers excel with seafood, so starters like branzino ceviche with Greek yogurt and Santorini-inspired octopus may precede whole smoked and roasted red sea bream or scallops. Meat lovers can find a nice charcuterie board and a tomahawk rib-eye. 707 S. Grand Ave., downtown, 323.303.2535, legrand-restaurant.com

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

A modern approach to Middle Eastern cuisine is currently trending across the country, and **Jaffa**, named after Tel Aviv's oldest neighborhood, delivers that to L.A. diners. Veteran L.A. chef Anne Conness brings her finesse to Israeli/Mediterranean dishes without abandoning their Old World authenticity. Start with classic hummus with varied toppings and house-baked pita bread, or contemporary twists like sweet-potato or avocado-lime hummus. Entrées include fig-glazed salmon with saffron *labneh*, Moroccan-spiced roasted chicken and lamb couscous, which are washed down by Israeli wines or cocktails like

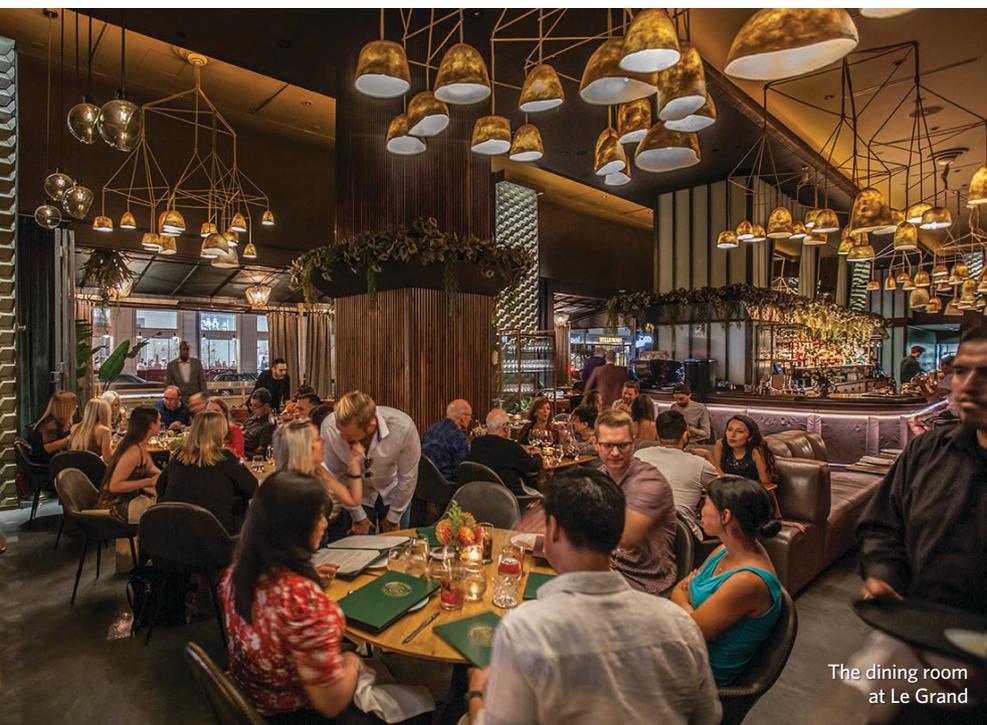
the Dead Sea Mule. The energy of the restaurant's namesake neighborhood is found in a bustling, light-filled space on 3rd Street, while the newer Palms location boasts an expansive patio. 8048 W. 3rd St., L.A., 323.433.4978; 10306 Venice Blvd., L.A., 424.298.8180, jaffa.la

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

Despite L.A.'s massive Filipino community, the food of the Philippines has long been overlooked in favor of other Asian cuisines. Suddenly, however, Filipino cooking is all the rage, and at Silver Lake's **Ma'am Sir**, chef/owner Charles Olalia (former executive chef at Patina) brings refined technique to his native Filipino traditions. The chef elevates *lumpia* (small spring rolls) by filling them with shrimp mousse and *lardo* sausage before topping them with *uni*. He also offers hearty pork-belly *lechón*, *pancit* noodles with crab, and oxtail *kare kare*, accompanied by cocktails infused with Filipino ingredients. 4330 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A., 323.741.8371, maamsirla.com

HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

Helene An, the matriarch of Vietnamese cooking in L.A., has created a new fine-dining venue upstairs from her celebrity-favored Crustacean in Beverly Hills. The intimate **Da Lat Rose** offers an elaborate 12-course tasting menu (\$225) that provides an extra degree of refinement and drama to Vietnamese



The dining room at Le Grand

cooking. A unique bread service at the start of the meal includes pâté, porchetta and pickled vegetables—all the makings of a classic banh mi sandwich. Every dish is personally significant to the renowned chef—the menu is dubbed her “gastrobiography”—and the parade of courses includes king crab *bánh khot* (a small mung bean pancake); a wagyu bò kho tamale; and An’s signature garlic noodles, topped here with *uni*, 24-karat gold and shaved truffles. Spring for the cocktail pairing, a procession of inventive, complementary drinks presented in delightful vessels. 466 N. Bedford Drive, Beverly Hills, 310.998.7919, dalatrosebh.com

BEIJING, CHINA

Culver City’s **Ms Chi Cafe** is a personal project of *Top Chef* runner-up Shirley Chung and husband Jimmy Lee. She was born in Beijing but creates a novel cuisine in which traditional Chinese techniques are applied to familiar American concepts. The chef—who learned the business from the likes of Thomas Keller, Guy Savoy and José Andrés—offers engaging items like cheeseburger pot stickers with tomato-bacon jam, encapsulating the flavors of an all-American burger in a Chinese dumpling. Also available are a pastrami-filled scallion-pancake sandwich and hedgehog-shaped *bao* filled with chocolate. 3829 Main St., Culver City, 424.361.5225, mschicafe.com

TOKYO, JAPAN

While Beverly Hills’ Urasawa still ranks as Greater L.A.’s most expensive sushi bar, Michelin two-star **Sushi Ginza Onodera** is not far behind. The *omakase* experience at the Tokyo import starts at \$300, and the space’s minimalism translates not to austerity but exclusivity. The traditional *edomae* sushi (a Tokyo style in which the fish has been marinated and briefly aged) is made with fish from Tokyo’s Toyosu Fish Market and rice from Japan’s Niigata Prefecture. The procession of edible art presented at Sushi Ginza Onodera’s sanded hinoki bar is likely to include *toro*, *uni chawanmushi* (custard) with caviar, hairy crab, scallops and fresh *uni* from the waters of Hokkaido. 609 La Cienega Blvd., West Hollywood, 323.433.4817, sushiginzaonodera.com

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

After initial success in Santa Monica, Aussie chef/restaurateur Guy Turland has opened a new, more upscale location of his **Bondi Harvest** at Culver City’s Platform development. This new morning-till-night Bondi is casual but cool, a laid-back setting with lots of white marble, blue accents and beachy images. The mostly healthy fare includes items like Parmesan scrambled eggs and Halloumi-avocado toast, as well as barbecued prawns with salsa verde butter and even a 32-ounce Australian wagyu tomahawk steak for splurge-

ing guests. Beverages range from beer and wine to CBD-enhanced smoothies. 8820 Washington Blvd., Culver City, 424.551.3930, bondiharvest.com

TIJUANA, MEXICO

Tijuana has an underappreciated food scene, overshadowed by Oaxaca’s soulfulness, Mexico City’s refinement and the resort cities’ seafood. Like Tijuana, **Tacos 1986** celebrates unpretentious street food, which precisely reflects the establishment’s own origins. Originally a cult-worthy Hollywood taco shack—you can still find it at Smorgasburg—Tacos 1986 has been transformed into a permanent restaurant in DTLA. The TJ-style tacos include simple carne asada, *adobada* (pork marinated in red chile sauce) and chicken, while quesadillas, *mullitas* (a taco-quesadilla hybrid) and *vampiros* (more like a tostada) are also popular. 609 S. Spring St., downtown, tacos1986.com

LIMA, PERU

The indoor-outdoor design of West Hollywood restaurant **Rosaliné** features a galleria-like greenhouse with hanging exotic plants. Shareable small plates from high-flying Peruvian chef Ricardo Zarate include an entire menu from the restaurant’s ceviche bar and fried Amazonian *paiche*. Among larger plates are Zarate’s flavorful take on Peru’s signature dish of *lomo saltado*, whole branzino and *arroz con mariscos* with shrimp, scallops, clams and *uni*. Peruvian cuisine is influenced by a diverse array of cultures, from Portuguese to Japanese, and Zarate succeeds in translating it all into an exciting, contemporary experience. p. 54

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL

Two of Brazil’s greatest imports are the caipirinha (its signature cachaça cocktail) and the *churrascaria*, a steakhouse offering an endless supply of grilled meats carved tableside from sword-like spits. Downtown’s **H&H Brazilian Steakhouse** offers about 15 different meats—think *picanha* (Brazilian sirloin cap), filet mignon, leg of lamb and pork ribs. Caipirinhas and South American wines are on offer, as well as traditional Brazilian desserts like a dulce de leche-filled *pastel* (empanada) or creme de papaya (good for digestion after a big feast). Wood and marble finishes deliver a handsome steakhouse ambiance. 518 W. 7th St., downtown, 213.266.8103, hhsteakhouse.com 🍷