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LOS ANGELES

SPRING 2015

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WAYS TO
EXPERIENCE LA

EXPERTS PICK THE TOP PLACES
TO DINE, SHOP AND EXPLORE

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CENTRAL MARKET**
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COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

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[WELCOME]

Welcome to Los Angeles

The City of Angels tantalizes its visitors and inhabitants with lovely weather year-round, streets artfully lined with palm trees, beautiful beaches, rugged mountain ranges and movie stars. Sprawling over 500 square miles, LA is a combination of cities within cities—each neighborhood distinctive and full of art, fashion, food and, yes, even culture.

Since day one, I have loved this city. And shortly after moving to LA, I was lucky enough to land a position as a concierge. Now, nearly 10 years later, I call The London West Hollywood my home away from home, where I wear my Les Clefs d'Or keys at the desk with pride. A day in the life of a concierge is never the same. Lobbies buzzing with international clientele and a variety of requests thrown my way, this job keeps me on my toes—always learning and discovering something new. Experiencing the city, whether for research or vicariously through my guests, I continuously fall in love with all LA has to offer.

Springtime in LA is a particularly delightful season. After surviving the chaos of awards season, one can enjoy a temporary breather before summer kicks in. The weather is mild, and the city isn't too full of tourists. The night air is full of hopes, dreams and sparkling lights dotting the hills. It's a perfect time for hiking Griffith Park, hitting up theme parks like Universal Studios and catching a basketball game or two (we have both the Lakers and the Clippers). And, if you really want an off-the-beaten-path experience, I suggest wandering along the Venice Canals, combing through vintage wares at the Melrose Trading Post or sampling culinary treats at Grand Central Market (page 36).

So again, I welcome you to The Entertainment Capital of the World, where I hope you, too, fall in love with Los Angeles, whether it be for the first time or the 50th.

Sarah Dandashy

Concierge

The London West Hollywood



Concierge Partners

Bespoke Concierge Magazine recognizes the following concierges for their expertise and contributions to this issue:



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CONCIERGE,
THE LONDON
WEST HOLLYWOOD



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THE PENINSULA
BEVERLY HILLS

ANDREA CIMINI



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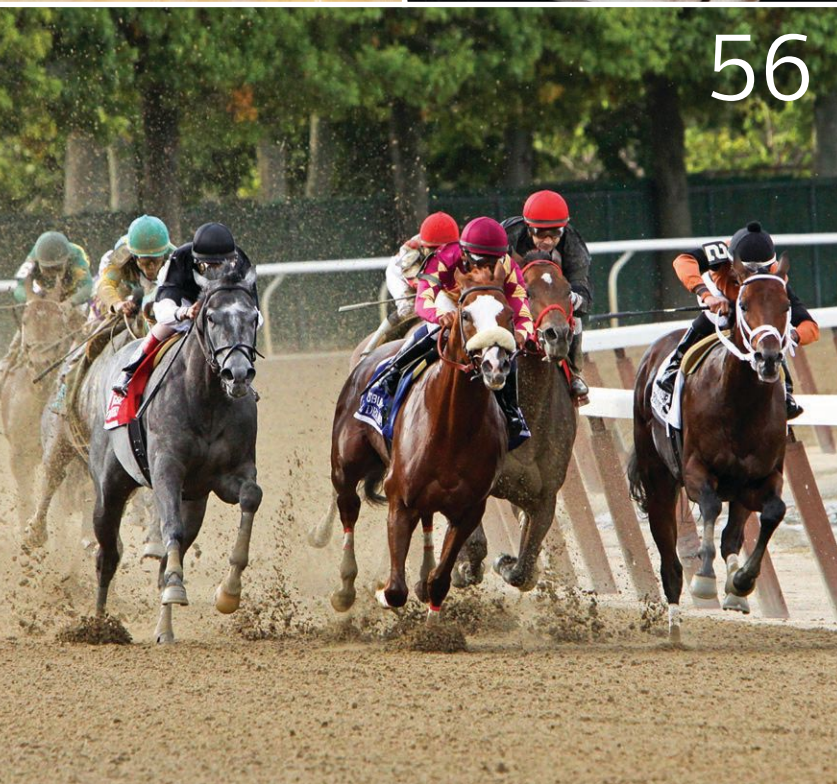


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HOTEL AT
CALIFORNIA PLAZA

ANDREA CIMINI



LORI TRIMBLE
CHEF CONCIERGE,
SLS BEVERLY HILLS



FEATURES

26. Sound Spectrum

Dynamically diverse music abounds in LA this spring, with performances taking place everywhere from intimate landmarks to expansive amphitheaters.

By Peter A. Balaskas

32. Off the Grid

Hidden entrances and guarded passwords are the key to getting into Los Angeles' exclusive nightlife scene.

By Jackie Adams

36. Public Provision

Thriving for almost a century, Grand Central Market tantalizes its customers with epicurean diversity and a sense of community.

By Peter A. Balaskas

40. Tequila Versus Mescal

While one agave-based spirit has been a part of American culture for centuries, its lesser-known cousin has only recently come into the limelight.

By Tiffanie Wen

44. Gallery Gallivanting

Monthly art walks are celebrating creativity with lively events that include food, wine and music.

By Jennifer Pappas Yennie

48. The Culinary Cure

Prosciutto stars in simple, savory and sweet dishes at popular restaurants across the country.

By Tiffanie Wen

52. Destination Shopping

Luxury malls and boutique-filled avenues abound from coast to coast, creating a sartorial experience for any traveler.

By Heather Fish

56. Jewels of the Triple Crown

Enjoy the excitement and must-see festivities of the three most prestigious horse races this season.

By Vicki Hogue-Davies

60. Cooking With Fire

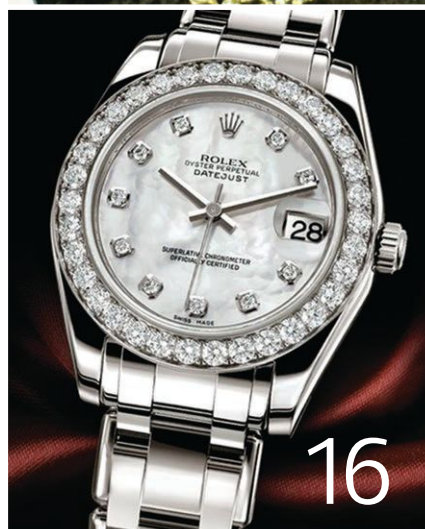
Now with five top-rated restaurants across the United States, Scott Conant may very well be at the height of his career—just don't call him a celebrity chef.

By Tess Eyrich

64. Perspectives

Rebecca Taylor reflects on life, happiness and fashion.

By Kirsti Correa



CONCIERGE

2. Welcome

6. Calendar

Discover the city's best events this season.

8. Radar

Concierges name their No. 1 picks for shops and eateries in Los Angeles that have recently opened to great fanfare.

10. Spotlight

In addition to luxury retailers, Beverly Hills' palm tree-lined streets are brimming with arts, fitness and dining destinations for visitors to discover.

12. Savor

Los Angeles shines with an array of chefs and restaurants that are James Beard favorites—get to know these award-winners and nominees.

16. Shop

The search for a new watch is made easier in the city, where the finest craftsmanship meets a variety of tastes and luxury styles.

20. View

With an unmatched convergence of cultures, Los Angeles is home to many fascinating performances and exhibits that fly under the radar.

22. Itineraries

Three concierges curate distinct itineraries to appeal to any traveler this spring.

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"Dead Sea Scrolls"

ONGOING; CALIFORNIA
SCIENCE CENTER

One of the newest exhibitions to launch at the Exposition Park museum, "Dead Sea Scrolls" features more than 600 artifacts on display that date back approximately 2,000 years. The ancient manuscripts—written on animal skin and papyrus—include parts of the oldest known copies of the Old Testament in the Bible. (323-724-3623; californiasciencecenter.org)

"Switzerland"

THROUGH APRIL 19;
GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

An original Geffen Playhouse commissioned work, this play by Joanna Murray-Smith takes viewers on a psychological thrill ride. Centered on a successful crime novelist, the plot takes several twists and turns as the writer meets a mysterious man who throws her life off course. (310-208-5454; geffenplayhouse.com)

"World War I: War of Images, Images of War"

THROUGH APRIL 19; GETTY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Visitors are offered two contradictory perspectives on the century's first major war in this in-depth exhibition. First, explore how the war was depicted through propaganda, with enemies shown as heartless barbarians; second, see how artists in the early 1900s translated their various wartime experiences to canvas. (310-440-7300; getty.edu)



NASA, 2009

Hubble Space Telescope 25th Anniversary

APRIL 24-27; GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY

The mission of NASA's Hubble Space Telescope began in April 1990 when it was launched into orbit to collect images of deep space. Over the past 25 years, scientists and researchers have used the telescope's observations to better understand the universe, including the planets, stars and galaxies. In honor of the anniversary, Griffith Observatory will celebrate with a weekend of activities for visitors. (213-473-0800; griffithobservatory.org)

"William Pope.L: Trinket"

THROUGH JUNE 28; MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART,
LOS ANGELES

Chicago-based William Pope.L is a noted performance artist, as well as a painter, sculptor and photographer. In this large-scale installation of his new and recent work, the focal point is a custom-made American flag that will fray over the course of three months as industrial fans whip the fabric through the air—a metaphor for the complexities of

public engagement. (213-626-6222; moca.org)

Festival of Books

APRIL 18-19; UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

All ages are welcome at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, which began in 1996. The weekend-long event includes live music, readings, chef demos and on-site artists, in addition to discussion panels and film screenings. (latimes.com/festivalofbooks)

Beethoven and Strauss

MAY 1-2; WALT DISNEY
CONCERT HALL

On two evenings in the beginning of May, audiences will be captivated by Anton Webern's "Im Sommerwind" followed by Strauss' orchestral tone poem "Ein Heldenleben," which was composed in 1898. In between the two performances, French pianist Lise de la Salle will play Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3. (323-850-2000; laphil.com)



SIBBE VAN INEVELD

SFJazz Collective

APRIL 19; WALLIS ANNEBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, BEVERLY HILLS

The Bay Area's all-star jazz ensemble, the SFJazz Collective, makes its debut at The Wallis with a tribute to saxophonist and composer Joe Henderson. The performance, which takes place in the Bram Goldsmith Theater, will cover works that span Henderson's career. (310-746-4000; thewallis.org)

"Drawing in L.A.: The 1960s and 1970s"

MAY 10 - AUG. 2; LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

On the second level of the museum, this exhibition brings together the work of nearly 50 Los Angeles-based artists with diverse takes on artistic media. Charcoal, ink, collage and xerography are all represented, crossing genres from realism to abstraction. (323-857-6010; lacma.org)

LA Wine Fest

MAY 30-31; RALEIGH STUDIOS, HOLLYWOOD

A spirited time awaits at this annual festival. Wine, beer and liquor tastings give attendees the chance to explore and educate themselves while enjoying options from popular local food trucks. (lawinefest.com)

LA Film Fest

JUNE 10-18; VENUES THROUGHOUT THE CITY

The 2015 film festival showcases works ranging from features to Web series and high school shorts. The lineup is announced in early May, with the option to purchase passes or individual tickets; screenings take place at theaters, hotels and museums across the city. (310-432-1200; lafilmfest.com)

"The Phantom of the Opera"

JUNE 11 - AUG. 2; PANTAGES THEATRE

Andrew Lloyd Webber's classic musical gets a revamp—fresh choreography and scenic design add to the allure of special effects and songs like "All I Ask of You" and "Music of the Night." (323-468-1770; hollywoodpantages.com) **C**



"23rd Annual Art of Motion Picture Costume Design"

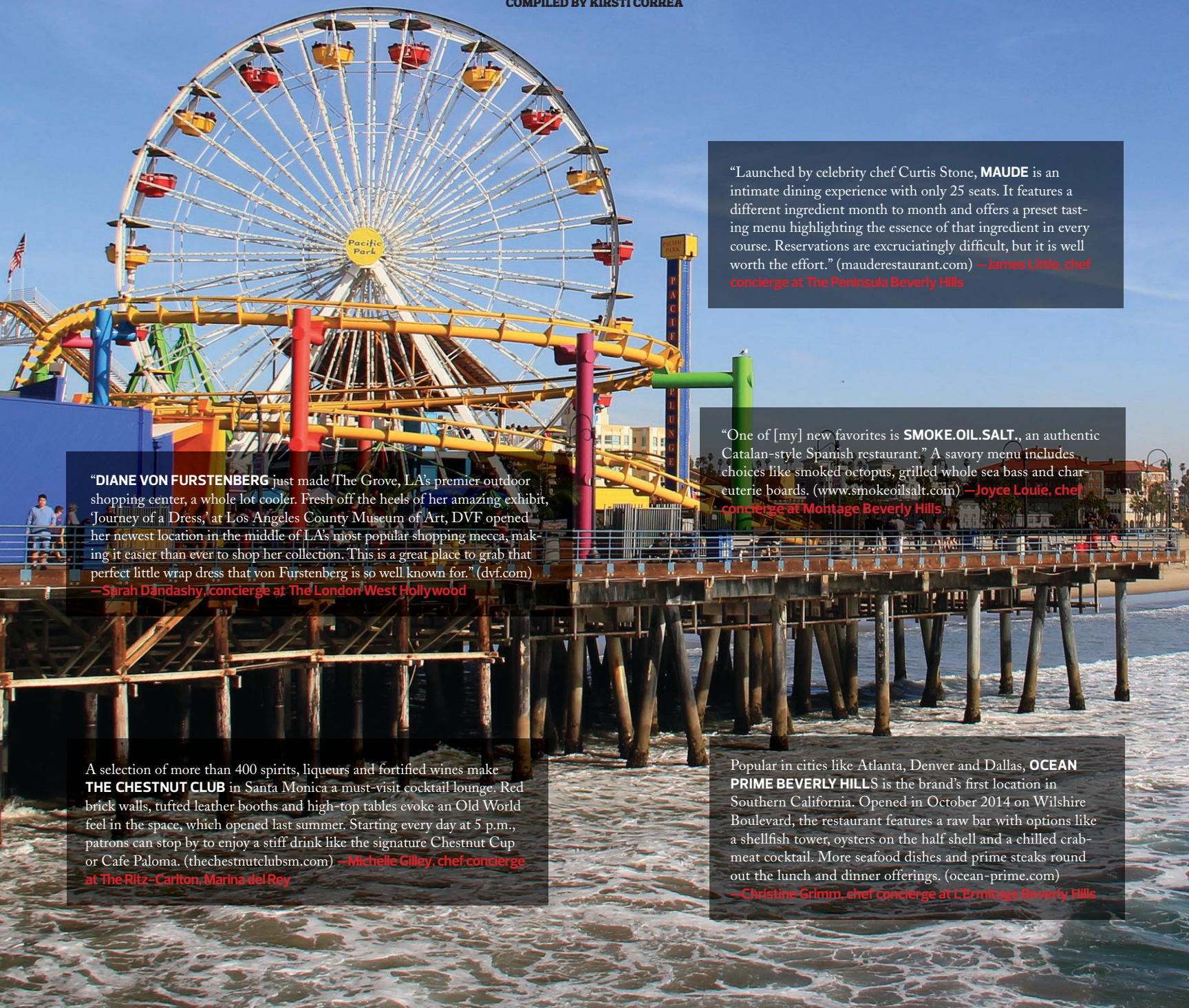
THROUGH APRIL 25; FIDM MUSEUM & GALLERIES

On the museum's second floor, the annual costume exhibition showcases pieces from 20 recent, notable films. Designs from 2013's "The Great Gatsby" and 2014's "Big Eyes," "Jersey Boys" and "Selma" are among the 100 costumes on display. The exhibition, which is free to the public (open Tuesday through Saturday), features designers including Colleen Atwood and Deborah Hopper. (213-623-5821; fidmmuseum.org)

City Debuts

Concierges name their No. 1 picks for shopping and dining locations in Los Angeles that have recently opened to great fanfare.

COMPILED BY KIRSTI CORREA



“DIANE VON FURSTENBERG just made The Grove, LA’s premier outdoor shopping center, a whole lot cooler. Fresh off the heels of her amazing exhibit, ‘Journey of a Dress,’ at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, DVF opened her newest location in the middle of LA’s most popular shopping mecca, making it easier than ever to shop her collection. This is a great place to grab that perfect little wrap dress that von Furstenberg is so well known for.” (dvf.com)
—Sarah Dandashy, concierge at The London West Hollywood

A selection of more than 400 spirits, liqueurs and fortified wines make **THE CHESTNUT CLUB** in Santa Monica a must-visit cocktail lounge. Red brick walls, tufted leather booths and high-top tables evoke an Old World feel in the space, which opened last summer. Starting every day at 5 p.m., patrons can stop by to enjoy a stiff drink like the signature Chestnut Cup or Cafe Paloma. (thechestnutclubsm.com) —Michelle Gilley, chef concierge at The Ritz-Carlton, Marina del Rey

“Launched by celebrity chef Curtis Stone, **MAUDE** is an intimate dining experience with only 25 seats. It features a different ingredient month to month and offers a preset tasting menu highlighting the essence of that ingredient in every course. Reservations are excruciatingly difficult, but it is well worth the effort.” (mauderestaurant.com) —James Little, chef concierge at The Peninsula Beverly Hills

“One of [my] new favorites is **SMOKE.OIL.SALT.**, an authentic Catalan-style Spanish restaurant.” A savory menu includes choices like smoked octopus, grilled whole sea bass and charcuterie boards. (www.smokeoilsalt.com) —Joyce Louie, chef concierge at Montage Beverly Hills

Popular in cities like Atlanta, Denver and Dallas, **OCEAN PRIME BEVERLY HILLS** is the brand’s first location in Southern California. Opened in October 2014 on Wilshire Boulevard, the restaurant features a raw bar with options like a shellfish tower, oysters on the half shell and a chilled crab-meat cocktail. More seafood dishes and prime steaks round out the lunch and dinner offerings. (ocean-prime.com)
—Christine Grimm, chef concierge at L’Ermitage Beverly Hills

THE ARTS DELIVERED. **IN BEVERLY HILLS.**

Located in the heart of Beverly Hills, California, the **Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts** ("The Wallis") brings audiences world-class theater, dance and music, performed by many of the world's most talented and sought-after artists.

With eclectic programming that mirrors the diverse landscape of Los Angeles, and its notability as the entertainment capital of the world, The Wallis offers original and revered works from across the US and around the globe.

For more information visit thewallis.org



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Neighborhood at a Glance

In addition to luxury retailers, Beverly Hills' palm tree-lined streets are brimming with arts, fitness and dining destinations for visitors to discover.

BY KIRSTI CORREA

It can almost be guaranteed that when in Beverly Hills, you'll spot a movie or TV star. The area is known for celebrity sightings, whether they're popping into a high-end boutique or getting in a workout at the popular SoulCycle studio before they begin their workday.

And the neighborhood itself is a star in its own right: From "Beverly Hills, 90210" and "Clueless" in the 1990s to current reality shows based in the city, Beverly Hills has been well represented on the silver screen. "You must see the Beverly Wilshire hotel—'Pretty Woman' sells that hotel," adds Kelvin Jarrett, chef concierge at Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza. The crown jewel of the neighborhood, however,

will always be Rodeo Drive, beckoning visitors from all over to shop the myriad luxury retailers.

Beverly Hills' long-standing reputation as a must-visit destination in Los Angeles is undying, as other areas beyond Rodeo are tempting visitors with new storefronts and eateries. "Canon Drive has evolved in the past year as a vibrant dining destination with several new openings, including ... The Palm, Wally's Vinoteca, Shiki Beverly Hills and Le Mervetty," explains Joyce Louie, chef concierge at Montage Beverly Hills.

Whether you come for the shopping or the fine dining, you're sure to have an experience that's second to none in Beverly Hills.



1. “Active travelers are tired of hotel gyms and running paths. Try one of the innovative barre classes at **PHYSIQUE 57 BEVERLY HILLS**, incorporating cardio, strength training, stretching and recovery to rapidly transform your body.” (320 N. Canon Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-271-0570; physique57.com) —James Little, chef concierge at The Peninsula Beverly Hills



2. “My favorite go-to restaurant in Beverly Hills is **MASTRO'S STEAKHOUSE**. A well-established destination, Mastro's delivers with consistency on every level. Not only do they have amazing steak (a given), but the seafood selection is enormous. Delicious cocktails, side dishes and even a choice from live music on their second floor to the disc jockey spinning tunes at their penthouse level, Mastro's is an ultimate evening destination. Be sure to leave room for one of their fantastic desserts. My personal choice is the butter cake.” (246 N. Canon Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-888-8782; mastrosrestaurants.com) —Sarah Dandashy, concierge at The London West Hollywood



3. “**SPAGHETTINI AND THE DAVE KOZ LOUNGE** ... has a calendar with modern jazz combined with great food and a state-of-the-art lounge. It's not too loud for conversations. ... Cecil Kepner and Stephanie Cisneros are the managers and are very involved in ... offering personalized service; they even bring out a little pedestal table for your purse.” (184 N. Canon Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-424-4600; spaghetтинibh.com) —Christine Grimm, chef concierge at L'Ermitage Beverly Hills



4. “Explore the major department stores and beautiful storefronts along Wilshire Boulevard, including **BARNEYS NEW YORK, NEIMAN MARCUS** and **ST. JOHN**.” (Barneys: 9570 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-276-4400; barneys.com) (Neiman Marcus: 9700 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-550-5900; neimanmarcus.com) (St. John: 9536 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-858-1116; discoverstjohn.com) —Joyce Louie, chef concierge at Montage Beverly Hills

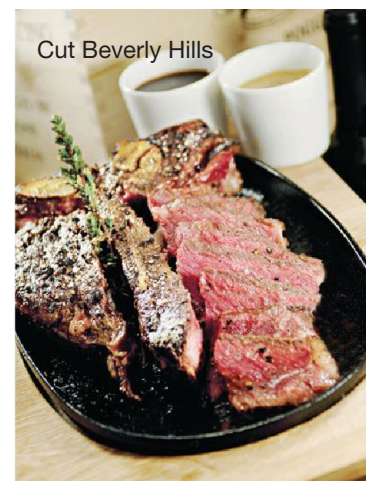
5. “Check out **BODYLINE PILATES FITNESS** by Maria Leone. Our VIP [guests] love this Pilates studio for private and semiprivate sessions.” (9171 Wilshire Blvd, Ste. A, Beverly Hills; 310-274-2716; bodylinela.com) —Christine Grimm, chef concierge at L'Ermitage Beverly Hills

6. “[I] recommend **SCOOP NYC**, as it offers a range of luxury designer brands that are with the current fashion trends.” (265 N. Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-362-6100; scoopnyc.com) —Kristina Martindale, chef concierge at Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills

7. “Although it's nothing unique to Los Angeles, **SOULCYCLE**, which was born and bred in New York City, has made its way to

Los Angeles, and Angelenos are along for the ride. It's trendy, it's hip ... and, if you're looking for a workout outside of your normal routine, it's a must.” (9465 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-675-7685; soul-cycle.com) —Lori Trimble, chef concierge at SLS Beverly Hills

8. “**CUT BEVERLY HILLS** is awesome. It's a steakhouse inside the landmark Beverly Wilshire hotel. It's a Wolfgang Puck restaurant, and it's amazing. The steaks are superb, and the service is the tops. The servers take guests through the menu and describe each meal. It's a very upscale steakhouse.” (9500 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-276-8500; wolfgangpuck.com) —Kelvin Jarrett, chef concierge at Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza



9. “For those seeking something different than the usual shopping spree in Beverly Hills, **THE PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA** is a must. The only museum in downtown Beverly Hills, The Paley Center focuses on the history of media and society while housing an extensive collection of TV and radio programs. So step inside and view an episode of your favorite childhood show—the more obscure, the better.” (465 N. Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-786-1000; paleycenter.org) —Sarah Dandashy, concierge at The London West Hollywood

10. “Let's face it, nothing screams Beverly Hills like **RODEO DRIVE**. Whether you're lunching at 208 Rodeo overlooking the re-creation of the Spanish steps or shopping until you drop with all the major luxury brands, there is no denying the power of the most recognizable and iconic street address in the world.” —James Little, chef concierge at The Peninsula Beverly Hills C



Prized Plates

Los Angeles shines with an array of chefs and restaurants that are James Beard favorites—get to know these award-winners and nominees.

BY BRIA BALLIET



The Ugly Brunch at Providence

Stroll down an LA sidewalk and it's impossible not to notice the number of restaurants that line any given street. From rows of tiny food trucks with queues around the block to Michelin-starred gourmet kitchens, the city has a variety of dishes to satisfy any palate. Adding to LA's reputation as a foodie haven are the myriad eateries helmed by James Beard Award-winning chefs and nominees, as well as places that have been recognized by the foundation for their service, bar program or overall experience.

Each restaurant also has cuisine representing a range of styles. Chef Nancy Silverton's Pizzeria Mozza, which she co-runs with Mario Batali and restaurateur Joe Bastianich, offers the option of casual but still gourmet fare, while others like Lucques restaurant cater to more classic tastes. This is a city where visitors can make the most of their culinary cravings—here, the concierges at some of LA's top hotels recommend their favorite places to dive into prize-winning plates.



“**OSTERIA MOZZA** by James Beard Award-winner Nancy Silverton is one of the best Italian restaurants in the city. You can often find Silverton herself working behind the counter at the Mozzarella Bar preparing dishes and overseeing the restaurant.” Silverton was part of the first class of James Beard Award winners when the foundation started giving awards in 1991. She was honored as Outstanding Pastry Chef for her work at the now-closed Campanile restaurant. And, most recently, she was named the 2014 Outstanding Chef for Osteria Mozza’s sister restaurant, Pizzeria Mozza. (6602 Melrose Ave., Hollywood; 323-297-0100; osteriamozza.com) —James Little, chef concierge at The Peninsula Beverly Hills



“I am a huge fan of the Mozza family, as in ... **PIZZERIA MOZZA**. [It] is like Osteria’s casual sister, specializing in—you guessed it—pizza. Some of the best gourmet pizza in town, some of their best signature [dishes] include their Brussels sprouts pie, the prosciutto di Parma pizza, and their decadent white truffle pizzetta. Reservations are hard to come by, so plan in advance. Or, keep it casual and walk in to dine at their bar.” The eatery, which operates under Silverton’s command, is open every day from noon to midnight. (641 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; 323-297-0101; la.pizzeriamozza.com) —Sarah Dandashy, concierge at The London West Hollywood



Designed to reflect the characteristics of the beach city it calls home, **MANHATTAN BEACH POST** (M.B. Post) boasts reclaimed wood furnishings, exposed rafters and communal tables to harbor a sense of comfort and community. On top of that, chef David LeFevre (a James Beard Award semifinalist for Best Chef in the West in 2014) has crafted menu items meant to encourage sharing and trying new flavors, such as pomegranate cous-cous or the potato, leek and black truffle ravioli. “[It’s] great food in a fun lively atmosphere.” (1142 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach; 310-545-5405; eatmbpost.com) —Michelle Gilley, chef concierge at The Ritz-Carlton, Marina del Rey



Though he may be a household name, Wolfgang Puck's culinary creativity is a treat when it's witnessed in person. Diners in Beverly Hills can enjoy cuisine by Puck—the first recipient of the Chef of the Year designation in 1991 and the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012—at **SPAGO BEVERLY HILLS**, which is the flagship restaurant of the brand. “Spago by Wolfgang Puck is hands down one of my favorite restaurants in Los Angeles. The name itself is as iconic as Beverly Hills, and it's a rare occurrence to not see ... Puck in the restaurant greeting tables.” (176 N. Canon Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-385-0880; wolfgangpuck.com) —Lori Trimble, chef concierge at SLS Beverly Hills



“**ALMA** [is] a hot restaurant downtown—a lot of people don't realize downtown has so many new restaurants.” After opening in 2013, Alma took the Los Angeles restaurant scene by storm with its innovative young chef Ari Taymor (a James Beard Award semifinalist for 2014's Rising Star Chef of the Year). Open for dinner Tuesday through Saturday from 6-9:30 p.m., Alma offers a 10-course, garden-inspired tasting menu, supplemented by beverage pairings. Reservations are recommended and can be made via email or phone. (952 S. Broadway St., Downtown; 213-244-1422; alma-la.com) —Kelvin Jarrett, chef concierge at Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza



Boasting multiple James Beard Award nominations, **PROVIDENCE** has served the highest quality American seafood to Angelenos for more than a decade. Helmed by chef Michael Cimarusti, the eatery uses only sustainable, wild-caught products on its seasonal menu. Patrons will also find a skilled and knowledgeable staff here; the restaurant was a semifinalist for the 2014 award for Outstanding Service. “I would definitely recommend Providence, as [it] provides an extremely unique, superb dining experience.” (5955 Melrose Ave., Hollywood; 323-460-4170; providencela.com) —Kristina Martindale, chef concierge at Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills



“Another famed restaurant with the James Beard distinction is **LUCQUES** on Melrose. ... In a modern, yet comfortable setting, award-winning chef Suzanne Goin delights the senses with seasonally inspired French-Mediterranean cuisine. Each dish is created with unusual, yet sensational ingredients. On Sunday evenings, they offer a Sunday Supper, a special preset menu at \$45 per person. [The] signature dish is braised short ribs, and their desserts never disappoint.” (8474 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood; 323-655-6277; lucques.com) —Sarah Dandashy, concierge at The London West Hollywood



“**THE BAZAAR BY JOSE ANDRÉS** (winner of the James Beard Award for Outstanding Chef in 2011), in my opinion, is so much more than a restaurant. It’s a culinary experience that captivates you from start to finish. I often describe the restaurant to my guests as a ‘dining experience’ that takes your palate on an adventure full of endless surprises.” (465 S. La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-246-5555; sbe.com/thebazaar) —Lori Trimble, chef concierge at SLS Beverly Hills



“**TROIS MEC** is one of my favorites. [It’s] a must for serious foodies. Chef Ludo Lefebvre (a semifinalist for the 2014 Best Chef: West award) is a culinary rebel. ... The Trois Mec dining experience is an epicurean delight. Exciting flavor combinations [are] executed flawlessly without the pretense or bravado.” The restaurant was also a semifinalist for the award for Best New Restaurant in 2014. To dine here, patrons must purchase tickets, which are released online every other Friday morning at 8 a.m.; pricing varies based on the five-course menu for that evening. (716 Highland Ave., Hollywood; troismec.com) —Joyce Louie, chef concierge at Montage Beverly Hills C

Timely Manner

The search for a new watch is made easier in Los Angeles, where the finest craftsmanship meets a variety of tastes and luxury styles.

BY BRIA BALLIET

It seems that everyone in LA is in a hurry to get somewhere. Dashing from morning coffee to nearby shopping destinations to cocktails at the city's newest restaurant makes it easy to lose track of time and arrive late—a big inconvenience when a close parking spot or hard-to-get dinner reservations are on the line. It is essential for visitors to excel in time management in order to experience all the city has to offer.

To help keep everyone on track, the City of Angels boasts a number of shops dedicated to helping customers find the best timepiece to suit their needs. Whether you're a traditionalist who favors a vintage Rolex or a mariner in need of a water-proof option, the following stores have you covered so that you can speed around the city like a local—and never miss that dinner date again.

JODY TONGCO



“FELDMAR WATCH CO. is a family-owned business that has been in operation for [more than] 100 years. Located on Pico Boulevard in Beverly Hills, Feldmar is a certified dealer in all of the brands that they carry—from Bell & Ross to Gucci to Montblanc. They also carry a selection of certified pre-owned watches. No matter your budget or style, there is something for everyone. If it weren't for the fact that there are watches at every turn, you might find yourself lost here for hours.” (9000 W. Pico Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-274-8016; feldmarwatch.com) —Sarah Dandashy, concierge at The London West Hollywood



“**WANNA BUY A WATCH** on Melrose [is] one of the first that comes to mind. I remember learning about this watch store long before I was a concierge. A colleague of mine from my previous hotel was obsessed with watches, and I always remember sitting and talking with him while he would tell me that he popped into WBAW just to check out any new inventory. WBAW is known for being specialists in vintage Rolex watches and—let’s face it—nothing is more decadent arm candy than a vintage Rolex.” (8465 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood; 323-653-0467; wannabuyawatch.com)
—Lori Trimble, chef concierge at SLS Beverly Hills



“This store is built for the watch lover. Featuring major brands from all over the world, **WESTIME SUNSET** also hosts many special events highlighting the art of watchmaking and the strengths of different brands they carry. The most recent addition to the other Southern California locations, the Sunset Plaza store is slick and modern with lots of space to browse.” (8569 W. Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; 310-289-0808; westime.com) —James Little, chef concierge at The Peninsula Beverly Hills



“I recommend **BEVERLY HILLS WATCH CO.** due to their selection and high reputation.” Shoppers who haven’t already decided on a brand or style of watch will find multiple options and expert opinions offered daily at Beverly Hills Watch Co. The shop also stocks an array of fine diamond and gemstone jewelry and accessories such as Montblanc pens. (341 N. Canon Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-275-7700; beverlyhillswatch.com) —Kristina Martindale, chef concierge at Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills



“For a handmade in LA watch, head to **DEEP POCKET JEAN CO.** in Hermosa Beach to check out Weiss Watches.” Those who prefer domestic products will also appreciate the selection of locally made and handcrafted clothing and accessories. The combination clothier and barbershop specializes in hard-to-find, craft clothing such as raw denim for men and women. And the selection of Weiss Watches, which are designed, engineered and finished in America by Swiss-trained watchmakers, are the only ones of their kind. (200 Pier Ave., Hermosa Beach; 310-379-5201; deepocketjeancompany.com) —Michelle Gilley, chef concierge at The Ritz-Carlton, Marina del Rey



“The display cases at L’Ermitage Beverly Hills are reserved for **PORSCHE DESIGN**, and manager Giancarlo [Incalza] brings us their newest collection. We have purses displayed as well as watches, sneakers and briefcases. The boutique is located on Rodeo and offers a Champagne welcome as well as a VIP room.” Timepieces are available in both women’s and men’s styles and range from sleek models in titanium and steel to classic black and gold watches. (236 N. Rodeo Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-205-0095; porsche-design.com) —Christine Grimm, chef concierge at L’Ermitage Beverly Hills



With so much to see and do in the LA basin, many visitors are unaware that some of the best places to shop are just off the beaten path. And though locals are plenty familiar with **THE JEWELRY DISTRICT**, newcomers will surely be floored by the sheer number of fine watch purveyors—as well as the quality of the product. “Downtown in the Jewelry District, there are so many watchmakers. A lot of people don’t realize they don’t have to go to Beverly Hills to buy fine gems. The Jewelry District is awesome, and the watchmakers who have been there for years are excellent.” (Various vendors, Downtown, between Olive and Broadway streets and Sixth and Eighth streets) —Kelvin Jarrett, chef concierge at Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza



“[I] recommend ... **JAEGER-LECOULTRE** in Beverly Hills for their exquisite timepieces. Purchasing a luxury watch is an experience that requires patience, and [the retailer] offers the level of personalized services and expertise that our discerning clientele would come to expect.” (9490 Brighton Way, Beverly Hills; 310-734-0525; jaeger-lecoultre.com) —Joyce Louie, chef concierge at Montage Beverly Hills



“The luxury display vitrines in the L’Ermitage Beverly Hills lobby feature **IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN**, and the boutique manager Johan Gyllenkrok comes in twice a month to feature a new timepiece. ... The physical shop is on Brighton Way, close to Rodeo.” Open Monday through Saturday, the boutique carries a large selection of timepieces, including ones that have been around since the 1930s. (9490 Brighton Way, Ste. C, Beverly Hills; 310-734-0520; iwc.com) —Christine Grimm, chef concierge at L’Ermitage Beverly Hills C



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Exclusive Collections

An Arts Escape

With an unmatched convergence of cultures, Los Angeles is home to many fascinating performances and exhibits that fly under the radar.

BY BRIA BALLIET

Over the years, Los Angeles has developed a solid reputation as an arts capital. As a city known primarily for its dedication to the silver screen, LA also has much to offer in terms of other mediums. Movie making may be its claim to fame, but the streets of Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Pasadena and more are alive with museum exhibits and performances that encompass all manner of fine art—in addition to fun Tinseltown memorabilia.

With so many acclaimed museums and theaters around town worthy of a trip, including the J. Paul Getty Museum, Pantages Theatre and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, it can be tough to venture away from the more popular locales. However, if you heed the recommendations of the concierges at local hotels, stepping off the beaten path and into one of the following hidden gems may prove surprisingly rewarding.

The Hollywood Museum

“One of the best kept secrets in Los Angeles, [The Hollywood Museum] is located in the historic Max Factor building right at the intersection of Hollywood and Highland,” says James Little, chef concierge at The Peninsula Beverly Hills. “It is jam-packed with thousands of pieces of

Hollywood memorabilia from all aspects of the industry. The ‘Dungeon [of Doom]’ is crammed with classic horror movie props and costumes, including the set of Hannibal Lecter’s jail cell from ‘The Silence of the Lambs.’ The upper floors house an extensive collection of vintage photographs and memorabilia of all types.

It’s a permanent exhibition, but is always overlooked by the average traveler.” (1660 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; 323-464-7776; thehollywoodmuseum.com)

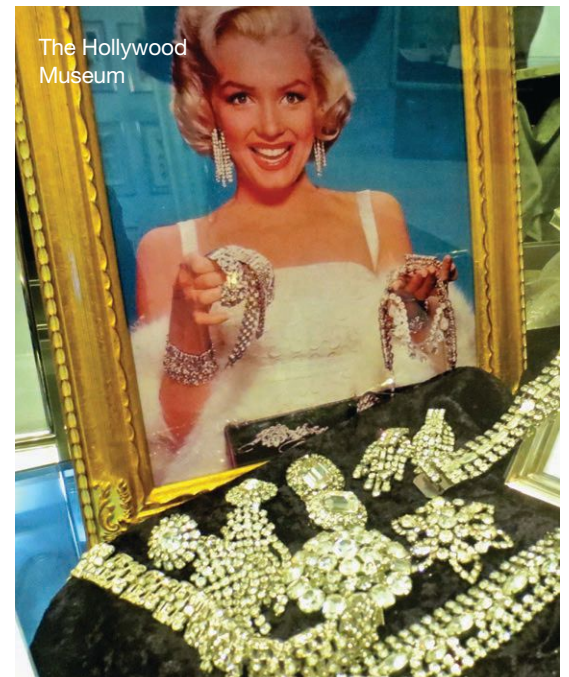
Exclusive Collections

For those who wish to bring their own masterpieces home, Exclusive

Collections Gallery in Beverly Hills, which opened in summer 2014, sells works from up-and-coming as well as established artists. “There are very high-end fine art pieces there,” shares Kelvin Jarrett, chef concierge at Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza. Visitors to the gallery will be able to view works



Wallis Annenberg Center
for the Performing Arts



The Hollywood
Museum

from artists such as contemporary painter Henry Asencio, bronze sculptor Paul B. Lotz and multimedia painter Gloria Lee. In addition, the seasoned art professionals that work there are able to readily answer questions and make suggestions. Throughout the year, the gallery hosts shows dedicated to its artists. This spring's lineup includes Asencio (April 18-19), Lotz (May 30-31) and Daniel Merriam (June 13-14). Tickets can be reserved for each of the shows online or by calling the gallery. (229 S. Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills; 310-278-7117; ecgallery.com)

Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation

"[I] recommend the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, located in a private residence in the affluent neighborhood of Holmby Hills," says Joyce Louie, chef concierge at Montage Beverly Hills. "Focusing primarily on 20th-century art, the Weisman collection spans cutting-edge art from Picasso to Keith Haring. The foundation offers small groups of docent-led tours that are free to the public with advance reservations." During the tours, which are offered weekdays from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., guests learn the history of the 400 pieces on display

from Weisman's personal collection. They will also have a chance to explore the Mediterranean-style villa—a work of art on its own—that was designed in the 1920s by architect Gordon B. Kaufmann and features hand-painted ceilings and other details reminiscent of the era. (265 N. Carolwood Dr., Holmby Hills; 310-277-5321; weismanfoundation.org)

Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

"I would recommend a performance at the new Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills," says Kristina Martindale, chef concierge at Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills. "This past year was the first season." Known to fans simply as "The Wallis," the center hosts world-class productions of theater, dance and music. Upcoming performances for the season include Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal from April 16-18, "Igor Levit: An Evening of Beethoven Sonatas" on April 21 and the Brentano String Quartet on May 9. A complete schedule is available online, where visitors may also purchase performance tickets. 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-246-3800; thewallis.org)



Norton Simon Museum

Norton Simon Museum

"'Tête-à-Tête: Three Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay' will be on display this spring at the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena," says Lori Trimble, chef concierge at SLS Beverly Hills. "While the Norton Simon name is well-known worldwide, his namesake museum in Pasadena is often overshadowed by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art or the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles,

but houses one of the most impressive art collections in Los Angeles County. [Due to] the fact that these three masterpieces reside in Paris, France, this is a rare opportunity for guests and locals alike to view these historic works of art in our own backyard." The exhibition is closed Tuesdays; adult admission tickets are available online for \$13, while children can enter for free. (411 W. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena; 626-449-6840; nortonsimon.org) C

NORTON SIMON ART FOUNDATION

On Schedule

Three concierges curate distinct itineraries to appeal to any traveler this spring.

SECTION BY KIRSTI CORREA

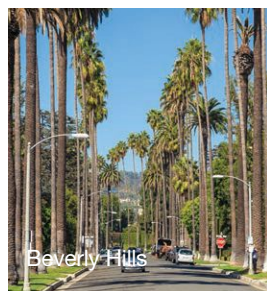


LA IN A DAY

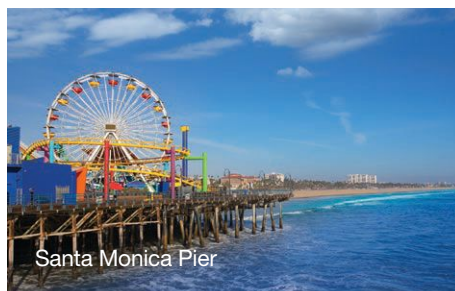
Lori Trimble, chef concierge at SLS Beverly Hills, shares her favorite ways to explore several neighborhoods in less than 24 hours, including the best option to travel from destination to destination, and notable views along the way.



Nobu Malibu



Beverly Hills



Santa Monica Pier

GETTING AROUND

"From downtown to Malibu, one can spend an entire day soaking up the sights of LA from the comfort of their own vehicle," Trimble says. "I would suggest renting a luxury convertible. Nothing screams Angeleno like cruising down the streets of Beverly Hills in an exotic convertible." Beverly Hills Rent-a-Car offers several models for visitors to choose from, including a Ferrari 458 Italia Spider and Bentley Continental GTC. (9732 S. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-274-2669; bhrentacar.com)

MOVIE MAGIC

"Start the day with a Warner Bros. Studios [VIP] Tour," Trimble says. "They offer an amazing two-hour, behind-the-scenes tour of their backlot, [which] begins as early as 8:15 a.m." Visitors will have a chance to walk the set of popular TV shows and films, and browse costumes, scripts and props in the Warner Bros. Museum during the tours. (3400 W. Riverside Dr., Burbank; 877-492-8687; vipstudiotour.warnerbros.com)

POINT OF VIEW

"Afterward, make your way back 'over the hill' and cruise the Sunset Strip," Trimble suggests. "Continue your journey down the winding streets of Sunset Boulevard and gawk at the beautiful mansions in the hills of Beverly, Bel Air and Pacific Palisades until you finally make your way to Malibu. One of the beautiful things about Malibu is driving up the coast and taking in the ocean view. If you keep your eyes peeled, you'll spot Cher's house about halfway up the coast. Hint: It's the one with all the palm trees."

SUSHI SPLENDOR

"You cannot visit LA and not sit near the ocean. You also cannot visit LA and not have sushi," Trimble says. "Knock out two birds with one stone and stop by Nobu Malibu for a light bite and a cocktail." Diners can order signature dishes by Nobu Matsuhisa or try a new item created exclusively for the Malibu eatery by Executive Chef Gregorio Stephenson. (22706 Pacific Coast Hwy., Malibu; 310-317-9140; noburestaurants.com)

GONE TO THE BEACH

"Santa Monica and Venice Beach are just a few miles back down PCH," Trimble explains of the next stop of the day. "Make sure to park and walk the boardwalk in Santa Monica; watch the sunset from the Ferris wheel at the pier; catch a street performer or two in Venice; and then make your way back into Beverly Hills." (Santa Monica Pier: 200 Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica; 310-458-8901; santamonicipier.org) (Venice Beach Boardwalk: 1800 Ocean Front Walk, Venice; laparks.org)

SEEING STARS

"Spend the rest of your evening at The Grove, [an outdoor shopping center]," Trimble says. "If the day's activities have tired you out, eat a casual (but delicious) dinner at Umami Burger and catch the latest blockbuster at ... Pacific Theatres. Make sure you look around—you never know which one of Tinseltown's hottest celebrities are taking in a flick right next to you." (189 The Grove Dr.; 323-900-8080; thegrovela.com)



WORKING THE CITY

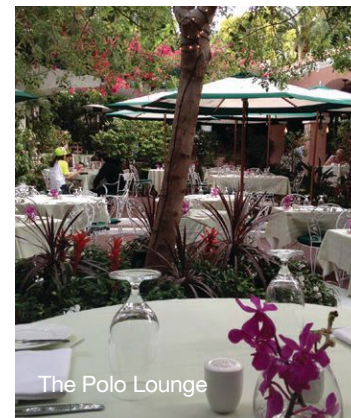
Los Angeles often beckons visitors to the city for work conferences and meetings. Learn how to mix business and pleasure with these recommendations from **Sarah Dandashy**, concierge at The London West Hollywood.



Cecconi's



Bar Marmont



The Polo Lounge

FIRST MEAL

“Los Angeles is a great city to do business in, because you can conduct business meetings nearly anywhere,” Dandashy says. “Breakfast at Cecconi’s is a delicious way to kick off the day. ... This is a perfect location for a breakfast meeting; not too stuffy, but elegant. And the food is amazing—a delicious modern Italian menu. I would suggest asking for a patio seat to enjoy our wonderful weather.” A couple of standout breakfast dishes are the ricotta hotcakes with blueberry compote, and the Brussels sprouts, onion and goat cheese frittata. (8764 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood; 310-432-2000; cecconiswesthollywood.com)

LUNCH BREAK

“Hopefully you’ve had a moment in between meetings—a break for both your mind and stomach. Next on the schedule is the classic power lunch at The Polo Lounge at The Beverly Hills Hotel,” Dandashy says. “Don’t let the pink and green theme fool you; real business is done here. It is not uncommon to see Hollywood heavyweights sitting at the table next to you, such as Mel Brooks, Steven Spielberg or Harvey Weinstein. The history of the hotel and The Polo Lounge is quite

extensive, and any business meetings held here are a recipe for success.” The lunch menu features a range of classic entrees that will please all appetites from fish tacos and lobster salad to sweet corn tortellini, steak frites and Mediterranean sea bass. (9641 Sunset Blvd., Beverly Hills; 310-887-2777; dorchestercollection.com)

AFTERNOON RESPITE

“If you can squeeze in a moment for yourself, I recommend strolling the streets of Beverly Hills,” Dandashy says. “No need to break out the wallet, as window shopping will do just fine. A walk along Rodeo Drive is a great way to relax and enjoy our pleasant sunshine. Think of it as a mini vacation in the middle of your day. If you’ve already done the whole Rodeo experience, then check out Robertson Boulevard. It’s a little smaller, and funky boutiques line the streets. But it still provides a great break in the middle of your day.”

BUSINESS AT THE TABLE

“Dinner should be held at The Tower Bar at the Sunset Tower Hotel,” Dandashy suggests. “It is not just a bar, but an actual restaurant. Again, another destination for a power meal, [as]

the sleek, modern interior doesn’t distract from the business at hand. Be sure to sit inside—an opposite tip from most LA restaurants. VIPs choose to dine indoors rather than on the patio. It’s nice to be in the know.” (8358 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; 323-848-6677; sunsettowerhotel.com)

FINAL TOAST

“Of course you have had a long day, but should you need to fit in one more meeting or just want to enjoy a nightcap solo, head over to Bar Marmont,” Dandashy says of the last stop of the day. “Everyone is vying to get into the restaurant within the hotel of the Chateau Marmont, but the bar (which has a separate entrance) is actually the place to be. With a multitude of rooms, the laid-back, Old Hollywood decor attracts a unique crowd. The drinks are solid, and there is usually great music setting the scene. Break out of your mold, and order one of their classic cocktails [like the Millionaire, which mixes rye whiskey, lemon juice, grenadine and Absente]. Cheers, because you’ve just survived a successful business trip in Los Angeles.” (8171 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; 323-650-0575; chateaumarmont.com)

[ITINERARIES]



URBAN WELLNESS

Despite the hustle and bustle synonymous with city living, it's easy to find a little peace and quiet in Los Angeles—just follow these tips from **Kelvin Jarrett**, chef concierge at Omni Los Angeles Hotel at California Plaza.



BRUNCH BITES

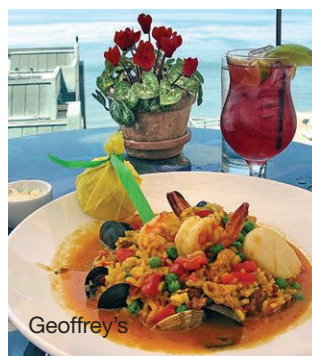
Begin a relaxing weekend at a popular restaurant in downtown called Bottega Louie, Jarrett suggests. “The restaurant is a very trendy Italian place,” he says. “They have a very good brunch.” For a healthy option, try the egg white omelet, which is prepared with egg whites, tofu, black beans, avocado, sweet peppers and tomatoes. (700 S. Grand Ave., Downtown; 213-802-1470; bottegalouie.com)

WALK IN THE PARK

“For fitness, there’s Runyon Canyon, which is closer to Hollywood,” Jarrett explains. “People love the route up there.” The 160-acre park is a popular hiking destination in the Hollywood Hills with trails surrounded by scenic views that stretch all the way to the Pacific. Start at the Fuller Avenue entrance and traverse the trail counter-clockwise for an energetic hike complete with steep slopes that concludes with a gentle descending road back to the car. (2000 N. Fuller Ave., Hollywood Hills; 323-666-5046; laparks.org)

SIT BACK AND RELAX

To escape the city streets even more, Jarrett recommends the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades. Open daily (except Tuesdays) from 10 a.m. to



5 p.m., the Villa allows visitors to meander through four impressive gardens and tranquil spaces decorated with bronze sculptures, reflecting ponds and benches. In addition to the ancient Rome-style gardens and architecture, the Villa displays antiquities that date back to the Roman Empire in its 23 galleries. Through Aug. 17, the exhibition “Ancient Luxury and the Roman Silver Treasure from Berthouville” will reveal a collection of gilt-silver statuettes and vessels dedicated to the Gallo-Roman god Mercury. (17985 Pacific Coast Hwy., Pacific Palisades; 310-440-7300; getty.edu)

FRESH CATCH

“After the Getty Villa, you can [head] over to Geoffrey’s Malibu, which is a restaurant that sits on top of a cliff,” Jarrett says. “It’s very relaxing. The ocean is right at your feet.” It’s only natural that the star of the menu is the seafood. Lunchtime dishes range from simple entrees like a grilled ahi or spicy shrimp salad to more intricate plates such as the herb-crusted salmon, served with an artichoke heart puree, broccolini and roasted tomato beurre blanc. (27400 Pacific Coast Hwy., Malibu; 310-457-1519; geoffreysmalibu.com)



HEALTHY EATS

As you make your way back into the city, Jarrett recommends a stop at Artisan House in downtown for dinner. A rooftop garden supplies the restaurant and bar with herbs and vegetables for its menu items, offering a fresh, guilt-free meal to patrons. Seasonal vegetables find their way into entrees like the organic chicken breast and branzino. For a quick meal, a market also sells deli sandwiches, including a vegan option that stacks kale, grilled eggplant and quinoa pate with a sun-dried tomato pesto between ciabatta bread. (600 S. Main St., Downtown; 213-622-6333; artisanhouse.net)

SWEET FINISH

Stop by Church & State for after-dinner dessert and cocktails. The French bistro is a cozy and inviting spot, according to Jarrett. Tempting desserts like creme brulee and “tarte au poires” (pear tart) can be paired with hot tea and coffee as a perfect way to unwind. The full bar also serves handcrafted cocktails: Try the Teacher’s Pet, a mix of The Famous Grouse scotch with Kronan Swedish Punsch, apple honey syrup, cinnamon and lemon on the rocks. (1850 Industrial St., Ste. 100, Downtown; 213-405-1434; churchandstatebistro.com) C

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Sound Spectrum

Dynamically diverse music abounds in Los Angeles this spring, with performances taking place everywhere from intimate landmarks to expansive amphitheaters.

BY PETER A. BALASKAS

There is a certain rhythmic pulse that throbs deep in the heart of Los Angeles, a kind of beat that resonates throughout the city and especially in its residents. At Walt Disney Concert Hall on Grand Avenue in downtown, the Los Angeles Philharmonic performs Beethoven's timeless Symphony No. 9. Emanating from Hotel Cafe on Cahuenga Boulevard, Grammy and Oscar winner Adele belts out a powerful, lonely ballad. And nestled in a valley off of North Highland Avenue, the Hollywood Bowl hosts Genesis as the group serves harmonious helpings of pop and progressive rock, signaling the band's last tour together.

It's hardly any wonder that the metropolis lives up to its nickname as the City of the Angels. Musical entertainment has been a key component of the city's artistic repertoire, captivating listeners as though each performance was created from angelic divinity. And as Howard Sherman, executive vice president and chief operating officer of The Music Center in downtown, points out, it's the diversity of genre and choice in venues that draw crowds on a nightly basis.

"From rock 'n' roll to jazz to Latin alternative—you name it—LA has some of the best bands and musicians in the country," he says. "This is truly a wonderful city for musicians because not only are there thousands of venues to perform in, but a musician has a pretty good chance of making a living here making music. Between the film scoring industry and the recording industry, there is just so much happening."

And perhaps the best news for music aficionados is they can satisfy their harmonic hunger on any day of the week—each one at a different venue.

SUNDAY

PANTAGES THEATRE

If arts patrons want to catch their favorite Broadway musical in Los Angeles, they need look no further than Pantages Theatre on the famous corner of Hollywood and Vine. Designed with art deco flair by architect B. Marcus Priteca and opened in June 1930, the building was originally owned by Alexander Pantages, who utilized the space to produce vaudeville shows.

During the 1950s, Pantages hosted the Academy Awards ceremonies, and an onslaught of cinematic legends flounced across its stage. Then, in 1977, the Nederlander Organization purchased the movie palace and has been producing musical theater ever since, including "The Phantom of the Opera," "Wicked" and "The Lion King."

The 2,703-seat Hollywood landmark also has presented live bands and singers, such as Foo Fighters, Talking Heads and Mark Knopfler from the Dire Straits. But the foundation of its success is maintaining its timeless tradition of showing the best in musicals. This spring, following Disney's "Newsies" (March 24 to April 19), "Motown: The Musical" (April 28 to June 7) will be showing at Pantages. Catch a Sunday matinee or evening show on May 31 at 1 or 6 p.m. to hear the story of how former featherweight boxer Berry Gordy became a music millionaire by launching Motown. (hollywoodpantages.com)

On Stage: "Motown: The Musical" | April 28 – June 7 | Tickets begin at \$25

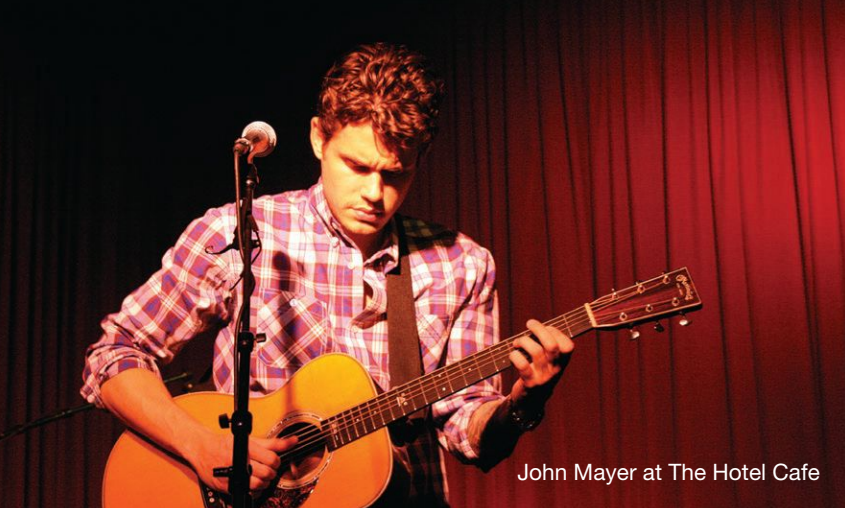
ROBERT MORA



The Cure performs at the Pantages.



Catch the best in musical theater at the Pantages.



John Mayer at The Hotel Cafe

MONDAY

THE HOTEL CAFE

Every singer has to start from somewhere—which usually means in an intimate setting where guests can listen to good tunes while savoring their favorite ale or coffee at a small table. Tucked in an alley on Cahuenga Boulevard, The Hotel Cafe has proved to be a musical springboard for up-and-coming artists.

When co-owners Maximillian Mamikunian and Marko Shafer first opened the cafe in 2000, it began only as a coffee shop. But its popularity as a place for singers/songwriters to test their new work in front of a small audience climbed, resulting in the cafe's expansion into its neighboring space in 2004. Further growth involved the launch of a record label in 2008 with the albums "Live From the Hotel Cafe," which features four songs by Matt Hires, and "Winter Songs," a collection of holiday music by various artists, including Katy Perry, Colbie Caillat, Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson.

The spot, which hosts performances seven nights a week, oftentimes with multiple singers on stage throughout the evening, also has welcomed big-name artists such as Coldplay's Chris Martin and John Mayer. For those seeking a cozy night of live music, the folk trio—band members include Adam Brooks, Andy Fischer-Price and Allie Gonino—will perform at 9 p.m. on Monday, April 20, at the 165-seat venue. (hotelcafe.com)

On Stage: The Good Mad | April 20 | Tickets begin at \$10

WEDNESDAY

WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

The idea to add the 2,200-seat Walt Disney Concert Hall to The Music Center was originally spawned in 1987 by Lillian Disney, the widow of the visionary legend, when she donated \$50 million for its construction. Although the designs by architect Frank Gehry were green-lighted, construction of the hall and its massive garage took 16 years to complete due to a mix of planning, management and budget issues that halted its progress.



Walt Disney Concert Hall

Today, Walt Disney Concert Hall serves as the residence of the Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra and Los Angeles Master Chorale, both of which have given the finest in classical concerts ranging from Bach to Gershwin. And the hall has hosted celebrated musical artists, such as Liza Minnelli, Herbie Hancock, Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys, Willie Nelson and The Manhattan Transfer.

On Wednesday, May 6, Les Arts Florissants, the French vocal and instrumental ensemble, will take the stage at 8 p.m., performing their Walt Disney Concert Hall debut. William Christie, who founded the group in 1979, will lead the musical direction of the evening as the artists perform compositions from Michel Lambert, François Couperin, Joseph Chabanceau De La Barre, Gustave Charpentier and Honoré D'Ambrus on original instruments. (laphil.com)

On Stage: Les Arts Florissants | May 6 | Tickets begin at \$56.50



The Hollywood Bowl

TUESDAY

HOLLYWOOD BOWL

Originally called Daisy Dell when it opened in the early 1920s in a shady canyon, the Hollywood Bowl on North Highland Avenue has since become a symbol of live entertainment, courtesy of the iconic Hollywood sign that sits behind the stage like a watchful guardian.

Over the years, the venue has experienced many extensive renovations. In 1980, fiberglass spheres were designed by Frank Gehry and hung above the stage in a specific arrangement to improve both the acoustics and overall look. And most recently, in 2005, four video screens and towers were placed on either side of the stage, giving patrons sitting in the rear of the approximately 17,000-seat arena a close-up view of the performers.

The Hollywood Bowl has hosted many musical legends, including The Beatles, Peter Dinklage, Elton John, Ella Fitzgerald, The Doors and Billy Joel. Classical concerts also have featured guest artists Philip Glass, Itzhak Perlman, Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti. It was even home to comedy when the British troupe Monty Python filmed famous skits at the Hollywood Bowl in 1982.

Legendary singer Neil Diamond will join the Hollywood Bowl's diverse lineup of musical entertainers as he captivates the audience with classic hits at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, May 19. (hollywoodbowl.com)

On Stage: Neil Diamond | May 19 | Tickets begin at \$45



JAY BELSON GROUP

DEVELOPMENT + INVESTMENTS

TELL US ABOUT THE JAY BELSON GROUP.

We are a luxury development and investment firm specializing in Beverly Hills, Bel Air, Holmby Hills and above the Sunset Strip. Our focus, first and foremost, is a strong ROI for our investors and we carefully vet each deal to institutional standards. With more than thirty years working exclusively in Los Angeles, we have secured a reputation for integrity and honesty among our investor clients as well as our peers and competitors in this fast-paced industry.

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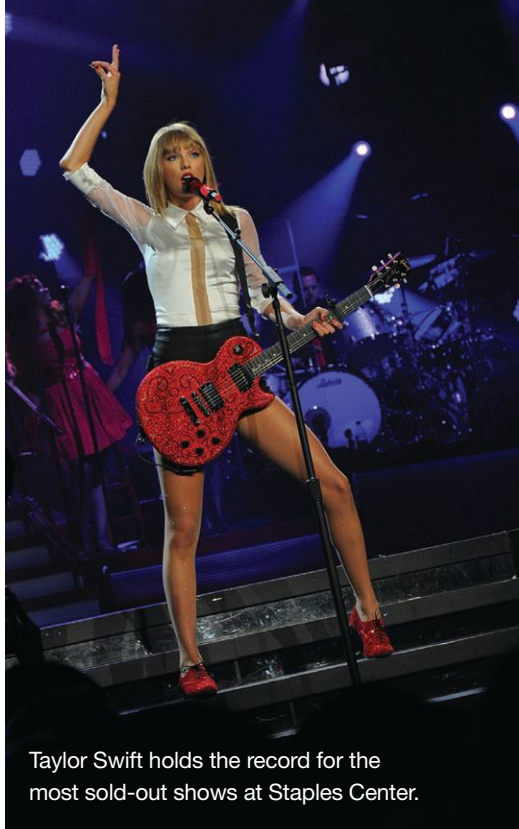
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Taylor Swift holds the record for the most sold-out shows at Staples Center.

THURSDAY

STAPLES CENTER

When Staples Center opened its doors in 1999, its goal was to be the epicenter for all sorts of happenings—and today, it is exactly that with more than 250 events annually. Located downtown on South Figueroa Street, the center is host to the Grammy Awards and is also the home court of the Los Angeles Lakers and Clippers—the only arena to be shared by two NBA teams—and the Los Angeles Kings hockey team.

Aside from professional sports, Staples Center is known for its role as a place to catch the best of the best in the music industry. The center's debut performance starred Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, and other 1999 performances included Cher, The Eagles and The Eurythmics—resulting in an honor by Pollstar Magazine as the Best New Major Concert Venue back in February 2000. Several events at Staples have captured full houses, including concerts by U2, The Rolling Stones and Madonna, who performed a total of seven sellouts there. Taylor Swift currently holds the record for the most sold-out shows by a solo artist at the center and may add to her record when she performs again this August.

Staples' 2015 season proves to be no different when it comes to captivating concerts, including Barry Manilow in April and The Who later in the year. Attend a Thursday night show at 8 p.m. on May 28 when Grammy Award-winning singer Bette Midler will belt memorable ballads from her vast repertoire. (staplescenter.com)

On Stage: Bette Midler | May 28 | Tickets begin at \$42

FRIDAY

GREEK THEATRE

While he lived and thrived during the late 19th to early 20th century, millionaire Griffith J. Griffith donated 3,000 acres in 1896 to the city of Los Angeles, which would soon be Griffith Park. When he died, he included in his will a trust fund for the construction of the Greek Theatre. Designed by architect Samuel Tilden Norton and built in 1929, the approximately 5,900-seat amphitheater, whose stage mimics the facade of a Greek temple, is known for its pitch-perfect acoustics.

Although it was hardly used in the beginning of the Depression and served as barracks during World War II, the space was home to many touring shows during the 1950s through the 1960s. The Greek then became a location for many music legends to record their live concert albums. One such example was Harry Belafonte's 1963 "Belafonte at the Greek Theatre" album, which ranked No. 17 in Billboard's list of top 200 albums in 1964. Neil Diamond's 1972 concert album, "Hot August Night," was also filmed at the Greek—an occurrence that he credits as a pivotal moment in his career.

The Greek Theatre will serve as a perfect Friday night setting on May 15 at 7:30 p.m. when The Piano Guys will play hits that turned the group into an online sensation, as well as music from their latest album, "Wonders." (greektheatrela.com)

On Stage: The Piano Guys | May 15 | Tickets begin at \$50



The Greek Theatre has served as the backdrop for several artists' live concert albums.

TAYLOR SWIFT PHOTO COURTESY OF STAPLES CENTER/BERNSTEIN ASSOCIATES; GREEK THEATRE PHOTO BY JIM DONNELLY

SATURDAY

ORPHEUM THEATRE

Named after the legendary Greek hero of music, Orpheus, the Orpheum Theatre on South Broadway in downtown LA began as a vaudeville venue when it opened its doors in 1926 and has evolved throughout key moments in music history.

Performers during the vaudeville and burlesque eras included Sally Rand, Jack Benny and a young Judy Garland. As the genres of the moment shifted with time, legends such as Lena Horne, Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington graced the stage behind the Beaux Arts facade, which was designed by lauded movie theater architect G. Albert Lansburgh.

Jazz greats segued to rock 'n' roll giants, such as Little Richard, Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder. And throughout all these periods of music, the Mighty Wurlitzer—one of the three great pipe organs remaining in Southern California theaters—still sits mightily in the orchestra pit, a symbol of music culture longevity in Los Angeles.

The venue continues to expand its horizons when it comes to offering musical entertainment. This March, audiences enjoyed a night of psychedelic music as The Pink Floyd Experience performed. Then, on Saturday, May 9, British singer/songwriter Joan Armatrading will strum the guitar as she croons her Grammy-nominated hits. (laorpheum.com) **C**

On Stage: A Very Special Solo Evening with Joan Armatrading | May 9 | Tickets begin at \$40



Orpheum Theatre once hosted legends such as Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington.



Ruth's Recipe:

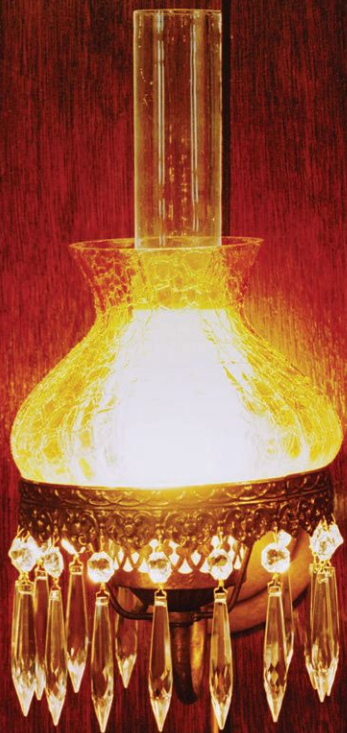
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Off the **GRID**

Hidden entrances and guarded passwords are the key to getting into Los Angeles' exclusive nightlife scene.

BY JACKIE ADAMS

The year is 1928 and a man walks swiftly down the streets of Los Angeles. He looks around briefly, then pushes open an unmarked door and walks down a flight of stairs, entering into the boozy underworld of the Prohibition era. While the streets were dry from 1920 to 1933, alcohol ran heavily beneath the sidewalks, and if you knew the right people, you could get directions to the nearest underground speakeasy—all you needed was a code word and a bit of stealth to get in.

Now, some 80 years later, LA is reveling in the nostalgia of its rebellious years with a host of speakeasy-themed bars around town. "I think because of the craft cocktail trend, speakeasies have kind of gotten a second life," says Eric Spivak, founder of Under Raidar, a company that takes small groups on tours of local speakeasies. "People are finding new ways of doing them and that's really impacting how these are taking off."

From an unmarked door in the back of an operating barbershop to a secret staircase under a bed, the entrances to the hottest bars are usually dark, cramped and hidden. Once inside, the drinks are unforgettable, handcrafted by mixologists and tinged with the thrill of the forbidden. Consider the following pages your guide to these inconspicuous spots, along with the secret phrases needed to get in.



THE VARNISH

DOWNTOWN

A low-key hangout, The Varnish impresses guests with a 1920s aesthetic framed by vintage wooden booths and bartenders clad in vests over rolled up shirtsleeves. The intimate space encourages conversation amongst friends with house rules against loud behavior and an ambience set to the tune of soft jazz music from a live band on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights after 9.

Sasha Petraske, who opened the revered speakeasy-style den Milk & Honey in New York in 2000 without any physical menus, introduced The Varnish to LA in similar fashion. Rather than ordering from a list, just ask for the “Bartender’s Choice,” and rattle off a few of your preferred ingredients in a cocktail. Or let them completely surprise your taste buds with

a concoction made of ginger syrup, fresh-squeezed grapefruit juice and egg whites.



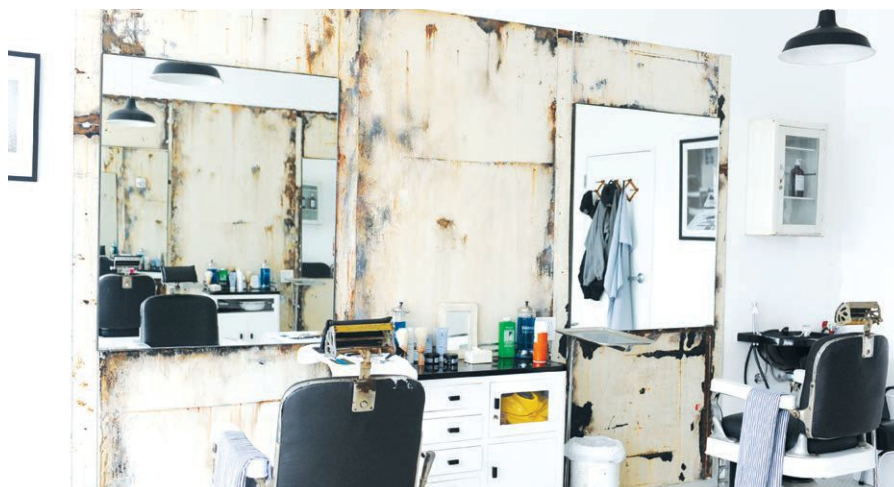
HOW TO GET IN: Enter through Cole’s restaurant on Sixth Street, then look for a door with an etching of a cocktail in the back that appears to lead to a storage closet—which it once was before The Varnish opened.

BLIND BARBER

CULVER CITY

On the surface, Blind Barber is just what its name implies—a place for men to get their hair trimmed by a barber who ignores passersby searching for a stiff drink in the back. A cocktail bar is kept hidden by a door with a coat rack and opens to guests toward the end of the working day at 6 p.m.

Traditional black-and-white tile is carried throughout the entire space, but the flickering wall-mounted candles and dark panels set the tone for the backroom bar. Here, award-winning mixologists stir daring cocktails as well as classic sips like an Old-Fashioned. To sate an appetite, there is an innovative comfort food menu with items like gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches, pastrami tacos and truffle popcorn. Live disc jockeys animate the room on Friday and Saturday evenings, but it’s a much more mellow affair earlier in the week.



HOW TO GET IN: Follow the checkered floor to the back of the barbershop, where a door opens up to the bar.



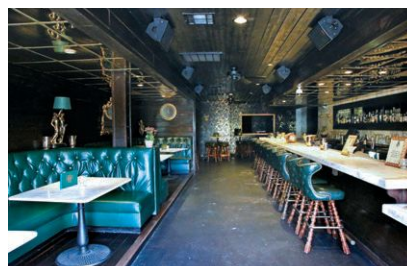
LOCK & KEY

KOREATOWN

A nondescript door appears to be an entrance to just another dive bar, but inside you'll find a classy venue in the style of "The Great Gatsby." The hardest part, however, is finding your way inside. The first room behind the red door is full of antique doorknobs from floor to ceiling. A bouncer waits patiently as guests try all of the knobs, offering small hints as to which is the correct one.

As for the drinks, Jeremy Allen, a mixologist at Lock & Key, recommends ordering the Old Money, a scotch cocktail with fresh ginger, bitters and simple syrup. Other favorites are the negroni and the barrel-aged cocktail of the day. On chilly spring nights, guests can enjoy the outdoor patio surrounded

by heat lamps for a simple yet thrilling evening out.



HOW TO GET IN: Get past the red door on Vermont Street, then find the doorknob that reveals the bar.

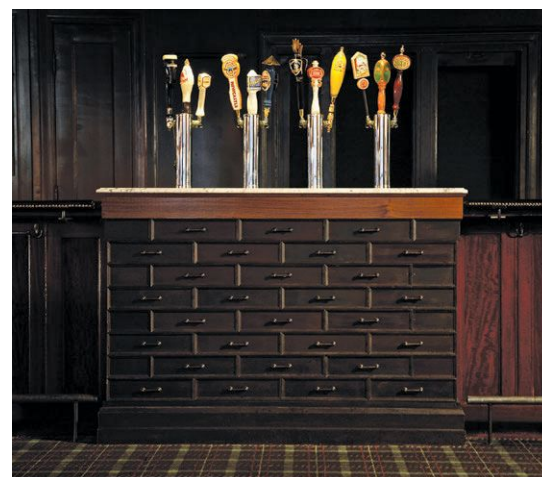
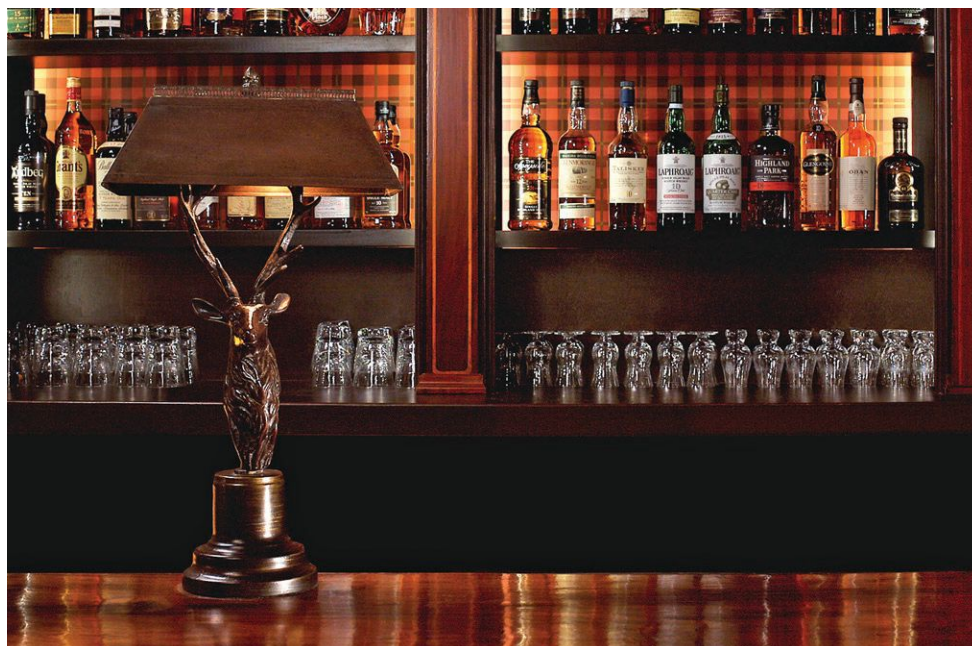
JACKALOPE

DOWNTOWN

Jackalope is a whiskey lover's heaven. Behind the wall of whiskey at Seven Grand, there is yet another premium selection to explore at a second bar—this one not as obvious to the naked eye. Even if you're let inside, there's only space for 18 people; a hostess will take your name and send a text when there's room.

For more exclusivity, only three mixed drinks are served here: the Old-Fashioned, Manhattan and Highball. Serious sippers can also use the locker program, which stores their personal stash in a cabinet and includes a private cart with ice, glassware and mixers. Guests can choose from more than 120 types, including rare brands of Japanese whiskey alongside American bourbon, rye and scotch. Knowledgeable bartenders are also available to offer tailored suggestions and prepare whiskey flights.

HOW TO GET IN: Look for a door in the back of Seven Grand without a knob. Ring the doorbell to be let inside.





R BAR

KOREATOWN

The letter “R” sprawled in Old English across the building at Eighth and Irolo streets in Koreatown isn’t graffiti; it signifies the discreet and password-protected R Bar. Uttering a code word—which can be found on social media channels—to the bartender behind the giant wooden doors grants entry to the bar, which is spacious for a standard speakeasy. A full bar and kitchen serves craft beers and cocktails to accompany dinner items like sandwiches and burgers as well as small plates, such as the specialty feta fries, a crispy snack doused with spicy feta cheese, Kalamata olives and pepper.

There is always music playing, either from the jukebox, a DJ or singers who belt out the lyrics of famous hits during karaoke nights. And on other evenings, R Bar plays host to trivia sessions, stand-up comedy acts and movie screenings.

HOW TO GET IN: You will need to know the password, which is found on R Bar’s Facebook or Twitter pages.



NO VACANCY

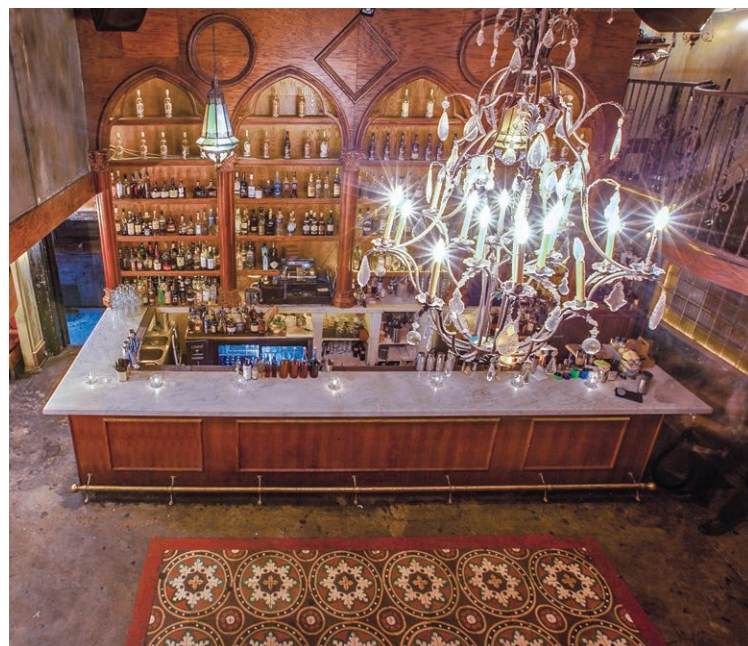
HOLLYWOOD

A small side street off Hollywood Boulevard, North Hudson Avenue, is occupied by a 19th century, three-story Victorian house with a buried bar. The former hotel and brothel maintains its past life—and derived its current title—from the neon “No Vacancy” sign outside.

Entry is first blocked by a doorman, who directs visitors up a flight of stairs and into a narrow hallway that dead-ends at three doors. Only one is unlocked and opens up to a room, where a woman in lingerie sitting on the bed greets arrivals and explains the house rules, after which the bed slides open, revealing a secret set of stairs.

The indoor and outdoor space combined makes No Vacancy one of the largest speakeasies in LA. Even more impressive, inventive drinks like the popular China Doll and The Professor are complemented by nightly entertainment, including tighrope walkers and burlesque shows.

HOW TO GET IN: Make your way past the doorman, up a flight of stairs and into a bedroom, where the bed slides out of the way to reveal a staircase.



LA DESCARGA

HOLLYWOOD

Havana, Cuba, circa 1950, is recreated in Los Angeles at La Descarga. The themed nightclub offers approximately 70 varieties of rum from around the world as well as a lounge for puffing on cigars, and admittance to the space is a mysterious process.

Reservations are crucial, but it’s still not as easy as stating your name and walking inside. A doorman escorts guests up the stairs to an office with a receptionist who confirms the reservation and motions toward an armoire packed with Cuban garb. After pushing the clothes aside, a hallway reveals the hideaway decorated with old pictures and trinkets from Cuba. Lively salsa music from a band results in a crowded dance floor, and burlesque performances also occur throughout the evening for added amusement. **C**



HOW TO GET IN: Make a reservation online and check in at the door upon arrival. Someone will escort you up a flight of stairs and through a closet door.



Grand Central Market circa 1957

Public PROVISION

Thriving for almost a century, Grand Central Market tantalizes its customers with epicurean diversity and a sense of community.

BY PETER A. BALASKAS



At the market, longtime vendors like China Cafe mingle alongside newer favorites such as Belcampo Meat Co. and EggsLut.

Downtown Los Angeles has always been the nucleus for the city's historical foundation and diverse cultural heritage. The artistic, multivenued Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County—also known as The Music Center—presents award-winning plays, musicals, concerts and operas year-round. The ethnic microcosms of Little Tokyo and Chinatown and the Latino-flavored neighborhood of El Pueblo offer both residents and visitors the finest in international cuisine. Meanwhile, the buildings in the Civic Center—such as City Hall, LA Law Library and the criminal

and federal courthouses—loom over Broadway Avenue as though they were keepers of the city's secrets.

And there's also downtown's historical district, home to the Grand Central Market (GCM), the largest and oldest public market in the city. Since 1917, the market has been home to a multitude of food vendors and merchants whose cultural roots have served as the lifeblood to the community. And, according to Kevin West, creative director for the market, the venue shows no signs of slowing down after maintaining its presence for nearly 100 years.

"GCM has been a landmark in downtown Los Angeles, and over the

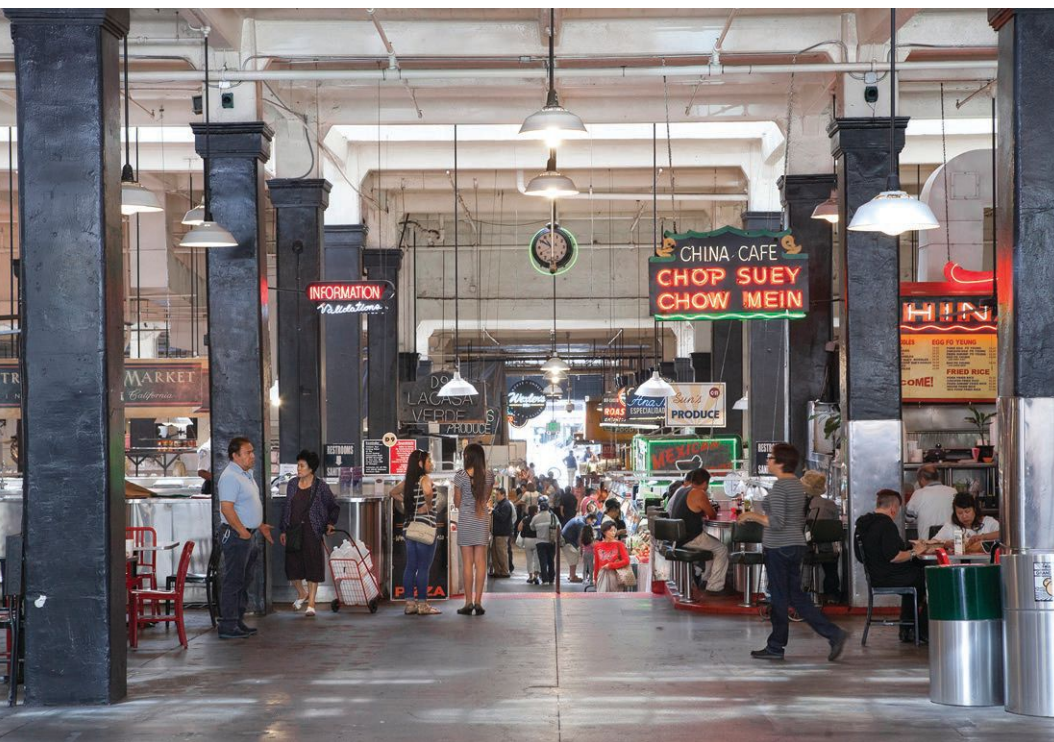
decades, the place has continually changed to reflect the changing face of the city," West explains. "What's the secret to that longevity? In one sense, it's hard to say; what makes something a classic? But I think the common theme during the market's best eras, including its 1920s peak and its current amazing resurgence, is great vendors who give the people what they want."

SNAPSHOT OF THE PAST

The origins of the Grand Central Market date back to the late 19th century, when retired entrepreneur Homer Laughlin hired architect John B. Parkinson to construct his

eponymous six-story building on South Broadway Avenue, the city's first structure that was fireproofed and steel-reinforced. As time allowed for more space, architect Harrison Albright designed the building's 1905 expansion to Hill Street. It was during this construction that it became the first to have a reinforced concrete foundation—somewhat of a harbinger to its forthcoming legacy.

Although the first tenant was the Ville de Paris department store, it was soon replaced by the Grand Central Market in 1917. Within the first decade of opening, the market grew to around 90 stalls occupied



Clockwise from far left: crowds navigating Grand Central Market; Las Morelianas; Eggslut's bacon, egg and cheese sandwich

by fishmongers, delis and miscellaneous merchants. Along with the grocers that sold fresh fruits and vegetables—such as a dozen oranges for just 50 cents—there were eateries like Morgan Oyster Co., which at the time dominated the oyster market from its base up north, and Langford's Ice Cream Parlor, where one could order a milkshake in exchange for a nickel.

At first, the market beckoned the wealthy residents who lived at the top of Bunker Hill in Victorian mansions, and eventually it became a gathering place for newly arrived immigrants from Germany, Italy and Russia. But what prompted the public's accessibility to the market during these inaugural years was not only its proximity to the Angels Flight railway and its central downtown location, but also the surrounding landmarks. The various sites added to the overall experience by creating a destination for visitors to explore in addition to shop.

"In the early decades of the 20th century, Broadway [Avenue] was the spine of the city," West says. "And the architecture ... is some of the most beautiful and historically significant from that era—from the landmark Bradbury Building (seen in

many films including 'Blade Runner' ... and 'The Artist') to the Million Dollar Theatre, which was opened in 1918 by Sid Grauman as the first of the downtown movie 'palaces.'"

Grand Central Market has consistently served the culinary needs of the Los Angeles community and, in doing so, has adapted quite well to a considerable number of renovations, most notably in 1984 when developer Ira Yellin purchased the market and adjacent properties, including the Million Dollar Theatre. During the 1990s, Yellin hired architect Brenda Levin to restore the existing architecture of the central building and the market, and to also add residential units, thereby tapping into the property's full potential as a living area, food emporium and tourist capital of Los Angeles.

MODERN DAY MARVEL

Although the Grand Central Market's longevity into the 21st century has been strong—especially with the influx of Latino and Asian vendors from the 1950s to 1980s, such as Roast To Go and Silva's Fiesta Meats, the largest butcher shop that mostly appealed to Latino customers—it did face its biggest challenge when the 2008 recession

crippled millions of small businesses across the country. The market was not immune to the financial upheaval as it lost a considerable percentage of its vendors.

Since Ira Yellin had passed away in 2002, his wife, Adele, was determined to keep the market alive through simple willpower, the dedication of her staff and the retailers who were willing and able to persist during the economic challenges as well as difficulties from outside competition. And as the demographic of the neighborhood shifted, she envisioned a modernized market—one intermixed with upscale spots to attract a new generation of clientele.

"By the time Adele began the current revitalization in 2012, it was clear that the market needed to take steps to shore up its legacy tenants, establish new tenants and dramatically increase the customer base," West says. "I'm happy to say that the market has succeeded dramatically on all counts, thanks to Adele's savvy vision—and especially thanks to the amazing food served by all our tenants, old and new."

Among the batch of newcomers to the market is Sticky Rice, a Thai food place that opened in March

2013 with an apparent dedication to organic and locally sourced ingredients. Owner David Tewasart believes that being among the best in culturally diverse cuisine has been instrumental in his business' success. "The exposure we get from how high-profile the market is has been immense," Tewasart says. "For someone from out of town to say [that] they read about us in Food & Wine [magazine] and had to try Sticky Rice is really hard to describe."

In addition to being honored with a 2014 Eater award, (So Hot Right Now) and being granted a place on Bon Appetit's hot 10 restaurants list of 2014, Grand Central Market's other new vendors have been recognized by various media outlets and industry experts. At Wexler's Deli, which opened to great fanfare last February, local chef Micah Wexler serves the finest in Jewish cuisine. Offerings not only include the trademark smoked fish on a bagel smeared with cream cheese, Wexler's also uses premium kosher meats; the deli earned a No. 1 spot on LA Weekly's roundup of the city's best pastrami sandwiches in summer 2014.

Another standout is Belcampo Meat Co.—famous for the highest quality of organic meat, courtesy of



Clockwise from top left: Roast To Go; spices at Valeria's; Belcampo burger; pastrami sandwich at Wexler's Deli; Sticky Rice's grilled chicken

the ethical and humane treatment of cattle and other livestock at the eatery's ranch near Mount Shasta, Calif. Other favorites include Eggslut, whose egg-based dishes like the bacon, egg and cheese sandwich have attracted long lunch lines during the weekdays since opening in late 2013. And nearby is the Santa Barbara-based McConnell's Fine Ice Cream parlor, where interesting flavors—such as dark coffee chip and crisp peppermint stick—are made fresh daily and shipped directly to the market.

While the new spots are crowd-pleasers, long-standing vendors are just as famed at the market. For instance, Las Morelianas, whose specialty is the delectable carnitas, continues to have a loyal following in the community and tempts palates with traditional tacos, burritos and tortas packed with the savory meat. For more Latin tastes, visitors have perused dried chilies, fresh moles and other spices at Valeria's Latin grocery mall since its early days a few decades ago when it was called Bardovi & Kazan. Diners also have frequented China Cafe, which is well known for serving chop suey and wonton soup out of a neon-lit stall. The eatery set up shop in 1959 and

continues to maintain the original convivial ambience of the market.

The variety of places to grab a bite is overflowing at the market, but the greatest appeal about the selections is the embracement of all nationalities. West recalls how he visited the market one day and the cultures represented—from Latin America to Asia to the Middle East to Europe—seemed to capture the essence of Los Angeles. "The crowd at Grand Central Market looked to me a lot like LA, and I would argue that GCM is the most socially and economically integrated public space in the city," he says.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

When it comes to the future plans for the Grand Central Market, West shares the team will continue to think outside of the box in terms of the center's growth and outreach. "Over the next year, you will see more new openings, as well as lots of programming and events, and a push toward more nighttime hours to develop the market's dinner business," he says. "Part of the excitement of GCM is that it's always changing and developing, and you never know what you'll find on your next visit."

One such popular program was Yarn-o-polis, an artistic movement created and curated by Yarn Bombing LA, where dozens of customers had the opportunity to crochet and knit yarn products to be displayed at the market this past winter. A number of the stone foundation pillars near the Hill Street entrance are completely covered with creative yarn designs of

local institutions.

Whatever is in store for the Grand Central Market, its caretakers—especially Adele Yellen—will continue to harness their entrepreneurial passion in making this venue the most significant, multipurpose historical landmark that symbolizes the multifaceted landscape that is Los Angeles. **C**

Game Night

There is more to do at the Grand Central Market than eat, browse and socialize. Every Thursday from 6–9 p.m., a weekly game night is held throughout the space, bringing more people from the Los Angeles community together to play a variety of entertaining activities, such as pingpong, cornhole, Jenga, Cards Against Humanity, Uno, Scrabble and strategic board games like Settlers of Catan.

According to Christophe Farber, director of business development at the market, the weekly entertainment event was created in July as part of a late-night initiative when the market started staying open until 9 p.m. on Thursdays through Saturdays.

"Game night is a part of the goal of having Grand Central Market serve as a community gathering place where people can come together for all kinds of food, cultural and social experiences," he explains. "It's been great to see how people have embraced game night—making it a regular spot for meet-ups and even bringing down their own games to invite others to play."

Not quite a year old, the event has proven to be a success, resulting in the market's ever-evolving reputation as the place to go in historic downtown Los Angeles.

TEQUILA

Versus

MESCAL

While one agave-based spirit has been a part of American culture for centuries, its lesser-known cousin has only recently come into the limelight.

BY TIFFANIE WEN

Americans are undoubtedly familiar with tequila. The distilled Mexican spirit is widely advertised and has inspired popular culture with songs like “Tequila Sunrise” and “Margaritaville.” The United States is also the largest consumer of tequila—more than three-quarters of the exports from Mexico are headed north of the border with Germany and Spain trailing in a far second and third place, respectively.

Mescal, on the other hand, is still shrouded in mystery, though that is quickly changing. A close cousin of tequila, mescal is becoming more popular to a sophisticated set in Mexico and the United States as expert mixologists use the spirit to create innovative drinks across the continent. Although it has quietly appeared at authentic Mexican establishments, high-end bars and restaurants are now getting in on the action, stocking a variety of bottles, offering tastings and featuring extensive menus of these agave-based spirits.

“In Mexico City, it is the fanciest bars that are now serving mescal and cocktails made from

mescal,” says Harry Kohlmann, CEO of Miami-based Park Street, an outfit that imports and distributes tequila and mescal across the country. “And we are seeing the same trend in cities in the United States.”

Though tequila and mescal are both distilled liquors made from the fermented juice of agave plants, tequila has been a designated drink since the 1970s, with strict rules directing its production. “Similar to the way that Champagne is a type of sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is Champagne, all tequila is a type of mescal, while not all mescal is considered tequila,” Kohlmann explains.

But just because mescal is not considered tequila doesn’t mean that it is lacking in quality. In 1995, mescal warranted its own designation of origin in Mexico, and Kohlmann says that, for the last several years, discerning drinkers have flocked to mescal for its variety and unique taste. There’s also the element of tradition that can only be associated with something that is made in small batches by “mescaleros” who have practiced the custom for generations.





La Biblioteca margarita

Tequila Hot Spots

Try the finest tequilas at these top restaurants in cities across the country.

Los Angeles

Rivera restaurant and bar in downtown LA serves pan-Latin cuisine alongside its extensive menu of tequilas. Rivera is even producing its own brand of the spirit in Mexico, which will be available in personalized bottles for guests to store in lockers. (riverarestaurant.com)

Miami

The Cypress Room offers New American fare—from duck to frog legs, lamb tartare, pheasant and filet mignon—by James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Schwartz. And a huge “beverage book” includes a wide range of tequilas to enjoy. (thecypressroom.com)

New York City

Housed in the basement of Zengo restaurant, La Biblioteca lounge specializes in agave-based spirits, with 400 bottles from small-batch and artisanal producers. Tequila tastings are held every Tuesday evening, and there are lockers for patrons to store their own bottles. (richardsandoval.com)

TEQUILA:

THE CHAMPAGNE OF MEXICO

The demand for tequila saw a spike in the United States during the two world wars, as spirits from Europe were hard to come by, and Prohibition, when it was smuggled across the border. Its origins in Mexico, however, date back much further. It’s believed that the distilled spirit was introduced around the start of the 16th century by the Spanish who invaded Mexico. The drink assumed many names until it was eventually shortened to “tequila,” after a town of the same name in Jalisco, the state in western Mexico that still serves as the heart of production today along with a few other neighboring states.

Mescal can be derived from a variety of agave species, but tequila must be made from the blue agave (a succulent related to the lily), typically grown from eight to 10 years before it’s harvested. A large, sugary bulb called the pina is then cooked, and its juices are left to ferment prior to being distilled.

By law, 100 percent agave tequilas require the use of agave sugars. Purists won’t even drink a margarita made with a lesser level “mixto.” Another major difference between tequilas is how long it’s aged in an oak cask, a process that mellows out the tequila and infuses it with subtle flavors. Unaged tequilas are “blancos” (white or silver), tequilas that are aged two to 12 months are considered “reposado” (rested) and tequilas that are aged for at least a year are labeled “anejo” (aged or vintage).



Agave plants are grown for eight to 10 years before being harvested.



Mayahuel's Oaxacan Old Fashion features mescal and reposado tequila.

According to Robert Day, national beverage coordinator for Richard Sandoval Restaurants, which stocks several types of tequila and mescal in its eateries across the country, the type of oak cask used can largely affect the final product’s flavor. “Most producers use American white oak or French oak. Both offer two totally different styles of spirits,” he says. “The American white oak gives off more of a spicier note in the tequila while French oak imparts more of a softer spirit, almost an elegant style.”

Day adds that the varying taste has

led to a trend of tequila flights. “Most of our guests get very excited to know they will experience the same spirit but with different barrel-aging levels,” he says. For tasting, Day recommends using a tulip shaped glass. “This way you will have the bouquet of the spirit leading directly to your nose,” he explains. “When sipping a tequila or a mescal in a glass with a wide-open rim, you can easily lose the bouquet.”

Tequila is also being paired carefully with cuisine, and when done correctly, it complements all parts of the meal. Day suggests coupling the more peppery tequilas with spicier cuisine. Finer tequilas, on the other hand, like those aged in French oak with a more delicate taste, pair well with desserts and can be used as an after-dinner palate cleanser.

Since the early 2000s, consumption of tequila—particularly super-premium brands—has increased enormously, both in Mexico and the United States. Kohlmann says smaller artisanal tequila producers are experiencing a boom, as part of a wider movement toward craft products. Overall, tequila enjoys a \$2 billion market share, which is huge, especially when compared to its cousin, the more humble mescal.



Mezcal is more potent than tequila.

MESCAL: OUT OF TEQUILA'S SHADOW

“Ron Cooper, the founder of Del Maguey [a producer of mezcal], says it best: ‘You don’t find mezcal, mezcal finds you.’ I am truly living proof,” says Justin Shapiro, co-owner and general manager of New York restaurant Mayahuel, which offers several varieties of mezcal to an enthusiastic clientele. Shapiro says he fell in love with the spirit after traveling to Oaxaca, Mexico, the birthplace and epicenter of mezcal production. “To say the trip changed me would be a drastic understatement, and to say that mezcal comes from the most

amazing place on earth would barely do it justice.”

Unlike tequila, with its infusion of millions of marketing dollars and huge industrial facilities, mezcal is only made by small producers and is still relatively difficult to find. The Mexican government requires that anything labeled mezcal must be produced and bottled in Mexico and cannot be exported in large batches.

Still, Kohlmann adds that some of the brands he imports have seen a 400 percent increase in sales in the United States in the last few months alone—which means it’s not necessary to travel to Oaxaca to experience mezcal. Bartenders and mixologists who have discovered the drink are introducing it to consumers in the restaurants and bars that are savvy enough to stock it.

According to experts, drinkers appreciate the boutique taste of mezcal that stems from a production process that’s been passed down through the generations and includes roasting the pinas in pit ovens. “We’ve noticed people love to gravitate more toward cocktails and spirits that are using artisanal premium products and, therefore, mezcal comes into play,” Day says.

“The primary difference found in mezcal (as compared to tequila) is its distinctive smokiness, both in aroma and flavor,” Shapiro adds. “In addition, mezcal is more potent—mezcal is usually distilled to between 48 and 49 percent alcohol by volume while

tequila is normally distilled to 40 percent alcohol by volume.”

When embarking on a mezcal tasting, Day recommends trying no more than three types, beginning with the youngest (blanco) and progressing to the aged mezcals (reposado and anejo). “The type of glassware used to taste should also take a heavy role,” he says, recommending a tulip style of glass like a brandy snifter. “In order to understand the spirit, you need to ‘nose’ the spirit.”

According to Kohlmann, producers are beginning to make mezcal without the traditional smokiness by steaming the pinas, which he believes is contributing to its growing popularity. “Because mezcal can be made with several types of agave, you have more room to create different flavor types than you do with tequila,” he says. “... If you’re an innovative and skilled mixologist, it’s an opportunity to take a product—something no one has heard about—and create a completely new sensation.”

At Mayahuel, for instance, Shapiro says one of the most popular cocktails is the Ron’s Dodge Charger. The drink uses a mezcal infused with “chile de arbol” (tree chili peppers) and mixes it with pineapple, lime, agave nectar and smoked salt for a thrilling taste.

Of course, as much as observers love to discuss the differences between tequila and mezcal—perhaps over a flight of either one—it’s no secret that they are sometimes

Mescal on the Menu

Metropolitan bars and eateries showcase this emerging spirit in a big way.

Los Angeles

La Cueva features a unique collection of more than 50 types of mezcal and inspired cocktails while also hosting live jazz and disc jockeys. (lacuevitabar.com)

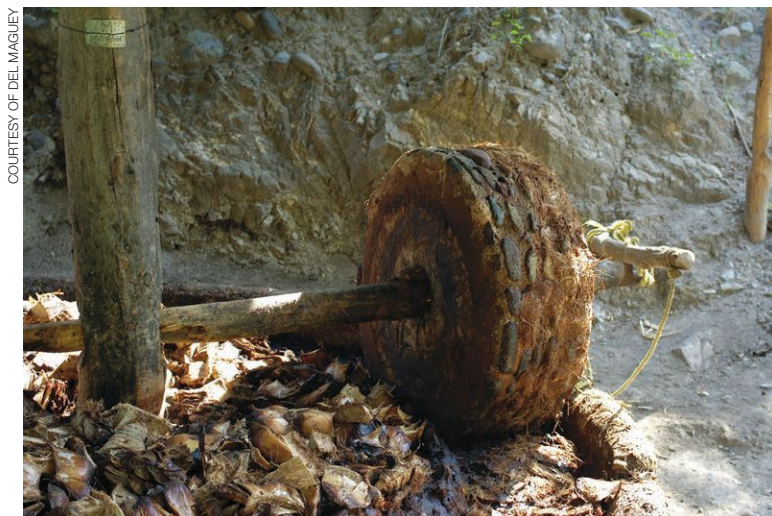
Miami

Inside the InterContinental Miami hotel, Toro Toro steakhouse utilizes Latin American flavors in entrees and small plates, and features craft cocktails made with mezcal. (torotoromiami.com)

New York City

Mayahuel restaurant and bar stocks more than 40 types of mezcal, and specializes in cocktails using both mezcal and tequila, like the Oaxacan Old Fashion. (mayahuelny.com)

best enjoyed together. A staple cocktail at Mayahuel is the Oaxacan Old Fashion, which is made of mezcal, reposado tequila, agave nectar and Angostura bitters. According to Shapiro, “The right amount of spice and citrus pair incredibly well with both tequila and mezcal.” **C**



The mezcal-making process involves crushing and roasting the pina.



Mezcal can be made from several types of agave, using the sugary pina.

COURTESY OF DEL MAGUEY

ANDREW HOKLING

Gallery Gallivanting

From coast to coast, monthly art walks are celebrating creativity with food, wine and music.

BY JENNIFER PAPPAS YENNIE



LOS ANGELES: IF YOU GO

Grab a bite at Peking Tavern, which is known for its Chinese dumplings, or any of the various food trucks that line the streets. When seeking a mid-walk cocktail, stop by The Varnish or The Association. Locals also flock to Pete's Cafe & Bar, Wood Spoon and Los Angeles Brewing Co. for small plates and libations.

Taking over the ocean-side galleries of Miami and the urban lofts of New York, art walks are expanding in cultural hot spots across the country. Quirky incarnations like Brewery Art Walk in Los Angeles and Walktober Weird Art Walk in Portland, Ore., are also gaining attention in cities large

and small. The type of work varies as much as the locales, where established masters mingle with up-and-comers. In many places, local wineries, restaurants and specialty boutiques join in the monthly celebrations by staying open late, offering food and drink, and adding to the overall effect of a community united by art.

The Last Bookstore in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES

Given its near-perfect weather and flourishing contemporary art scene, Los Angeles is the ideal spot for an art walk. Held the second Thursday of every month from 6-10 p.m., the downtown event includes 50 participating galleries. Located predominantly on Spring and Main

streets between Fourth and Seventh streets, the art walk—which started in 2004—attracts upward of 25,000 monthly guests.

The Hive Gallery, an active member for the past decade, is also one of the oldest standing galleries on the row. Specializing in low-brow or pop surrealism illustrations and paintings, The Hive also rents out studio space to resident artists and groups like Arbrates Agency, a collective that features different Japanese artists on a revolving monthly schedule.

Nathan Cartwright, artist and owner of The Hive, describes the downtown atmosphere as a “celebratory, community vibe” known for attracting visitors from all over the world. Despite the public camaraderie, Cartwright resists putting a label on the art walk as a whole. “Think of it as the United States,” he says. “Every gallery has its own state and each state runs itself the way it wants to.”

Another one of the “states” that shouldn’t be missed during the Thursday event is Spring Arts Tower, which houses a gallery, arts collective, bookstore and ad agency. Here, visitors can peruse the cross-disciplinary CB1 Gallery, studio/gallery retail shops like Robin McGeough’s Dove Biscuit Studios or Liz Huston’s Art and Curiosities, and the anchor of the tower: The Last Bookstore. As if you needed an added incentive to visit, fashion shows and poetry readings are not uncommon.



Stop by The Hive Gallery in Los Angeles during the city’s art walk to view pop surrealism illustrations.

NEW YORK CITY

Boasting hundreds of galleries across the five boroughs, New York City is arguably the art capital of the country. However, the city proper lacks a free monthly event. For a true art walk experience, hop on a ferry to Staten Island for Second Saturday, a grassroots operation that started in 2010.

Second Saturday takes place across the island’s north shore, with approximately 10 core venues (the number changes from month to month) and additional pop-up spaces. Artwork ranges from traditional, formalist expression to more transgressive, underground art. One of the staples of the walk, for instance, is Day de Dada, a spontaneous and experimental performance art group.

Melissa West, organizing director for Second Saturday, recommends visitors check out places that offer something unique to the event in addition to displaying artwork. “Stapleton has a super-cool Artist Market where visitors can buy local art after a brief and scenic walk from the Staten Island Railroad,” she says. “There’s also MakerSpace, which has workshops in all sorts of disciplines including sewing, welding and making electronic instruments.”

On Bay Street, one of the main stretches of the walk, Every Thing Goes Book Cafe offers fair trade snacks, teas and coffee, live performances and an array of used books and records. In Livingston, the Snug Harbor Cultural Center

& Botanical Garden is an 83-acre park-like campus housing several gallery spaces including Art Lab, the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, the Staten Island Museum and the Noble Maritime Collection. Around the corner, the Creative Photographers’ Guild Gallery hosts monthly photography installations. On the return trip back to the city, make one last stop at the Staten Island Arts’ Culture Lounge, a gallery and market located in the St. George ferry terminal.

NEW YORK CITY: IF YOU GO

To get to Second Saturday, take the 1 or R train to South Ferry, then board the free ferry to St. George. From there, you are in walking distance of the participating galleries and venues. Walking and biking are encouraged to reach other stops along the way such as Honor Wines, Adobe Blues and 120 Bay Cafe for refreshments.

JOSEPH PENTANGELO



ThingNY performs at Art Lab as part of Second Saturday on Staten Island.



Take the ferry to get to Staten Island.



The Wynwood Walls, on Northwest Second Avenue between 25th and 26th streets, feature murals by famed street artists.



Gallery Diet is a must-see during Second Saturday Art Walk in Miami.

MIAMI: IF YOU GO

There are several impressive eateries within the Wynwood area. You can't go wrong at any of the restaurants and bars, but a couple of stand-outs are Wynwood Kitchen & Bar, an indoor-outdoor space surrounded by contemporary urban art, and Joey's Italian Cafe, which serves traditional pizzas and pastas using sustainable ingredients.

MIAMI

Thanks to the popularity of Art Basel over the past decade and the renaissance of all things creative throughout the city, Miami has easily become the spot to view, discuss and enjoy modern and contemporary fine art. On Second Saturday Art Walk, roughly 60 galleries in the Wynwood Arts District throw open their doors for the inevitable droves from 6-10 p.m.

"The vibe is overwhelmingly positive," says Patrick Walsh, executive director of the Wynwood Arts District Association (WADA). "There's always an element of surprise since there are new gallery

openings, installations and productions each month—not to mention all the new businesses opening in the neighborhood."

For the most part, Wynwood galleries exhibit a range of works from pieces by local emerging artists to well-established blue chip collections. The street art represents talent from around the world and changes regularly, most drastically each year before and during Art Basel, the first week of December. The Wynwood Walls, abandoned warehouses on Northwest Second Avenue between 25th and 26th streets, has featured the work of more than 50 artists from 16 countries since its inception in 2009 to transform the district.

Given the sheer number of galleries and innovative spaces in this area's art walk, it's a good idea to plan ahead when participating in Second Saturday. Walsh's personal favorites include Gallery Diet, Gregg Shienbaum Fine Art and Robert Fontaine Gallery. Other must-sees are The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse and the Rubell Family Collection, which both feature contemporary art.

CHICAGO

Spanning several contiguous blocks, the Chicago Arts District is somewhat of a newbie in the national art scene. The district was established in 2002 by the third generation of the Podmajersky family, which first settled in the East Pilsen neighborhood in 1914 and ran a successful dairy before buying up property that housed and employed many immigrants.

In the 1950s, John Podmajersky Jr. and his wife helped revitalize the community by converting dilapidated buildings into artists' lofts centered around urban gardens made from reclaimed alleyways. Then, around 13 years ago, John Podmajersky III formed the district to further boost the economy and create an arts destination. Centered around South Halsted and West 18th streets, Second Fridays now showcases 30-plus creative spaces in a posh nucleus of galleries, lofts and studios from 6-10 p.m.

This particular walk provides an up-close look at the artwork. Open houses allow the public to mingle in the intimacy of the artists' own studios and homes, while organized



CHICAGO: IF YOU GO

Chocolate fans shouldn't leave without a stop at Choclat Uzma Sharif. Meanwhile, book lovers will appreciate Open Books, an indie bookstore that moonlights as "a nonprofit social venture" that also provides literacy experiences for children throughout Chicago. At dinnertime, check out establishments such as Nightwood and Del Toro.

discussions are both educational and enlightening, often offering an inside glimpse of the inspiration and creative process behind the artists' pieces.

Sandra Zhong, marketing and administrative assistant for the Chicago Arts District, suggests guests streamline their experience by starting at the information center,

where friendly staff members hand out maps and answer questions to help visitors navigate through the self-guided art walk. Community favorites include Bryan Sperry Studio, Artprentry, Studio Oh! and NYCH Gallery.

"There are no limitations to what visitors may see in the Chicago Arts



COURTESY OF INSIGHT GALLERY

InSight Gallery is among 14 galleries in Fredericksburg, Texas, that participate in First Friday Art Walk.

District," Zhong says. "In our community, we have artists that specialize in installations, paintings, sculptures, photography, mixed media, performing arts and much, much more."

AUSTIN, TEXAS

While many young Austinites gather for the raucous block party of First Thursday on South Congress Avenue (predominantly arts and crafts), fine art lovers know to head to Fredericksburg. A little over an hour outside Austin city limits, Fredericksburg has garnered a reputation for producing the best wine and fine art galleries in the region.

First Friday Art Walk consists of 14 galleries open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., the majority of which are located on Main Street between Orange and Washington streets. With each gallery serving local food and vino from nearby award-winning

wineries Becker Vineyards, Grape Creek Vineyards and Torre de Pietra, Fredericksburg offers something that most art walks do not: a full day of visual and physical sustenance.

"A stroll through the streets of our very Norman Rockwell-esque town is always beautiful, and art walk evenings are no different," says Elizabeth Harris, gallery associate and special events coordinator at InSight Gallery. "Drifts of live music and conversations pour out of gallery doors up and down Main Street until at least 8 p.m., but often later, as the doors are open until the last patron leaves."

Long referred to as an antiques town with strong German heritage, Fredericksburg has only recently established itself as a hotbed of fine art. With roughly 1.5 million visitors each year, "this little jewel of a town," as Harris calls it, is definitely putting itself on the map. **C**



Galleries like NYCH Gallery (top left) stay open late during Chicago's art walk.



COURTESY OF INSIGHT GALLERY

Paintings abound at InSight Gallery.

AUSTIN, TEXAS: IF YOU GO

Situated in the heart of the Texas Hill Country, Fredericksburg is just a one-hour drive from Austin. Unparalleled cuisine and Texas wines are on the menu at Cabernet Grill. Farm Haus Bistro also offers ever-changing dishes served in a dining room that overlooks the property's gardens.



Cesare Casella, executive chef and partner at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto in New York

The Culinary Cure

Prosciutto stars in simple, savory and sweet dishes at popular restaurants across the country.

BY TIFFANIE WEN

When it comes to gastronomy, Italy has contributed much to the epicurean landscape, most notably pasta, gelato and cheese. Luckily for charcuterie fans, the region's cured meats—especially prosciutto—are stealing the spotlight in the United States. Imports of this specialty item are at an all-time high; rare types

(like those from Tuscany) are available stateside for the first time due to new Food and Drug Administration approvals; and the ingredient is innovatively incorporated into restaurant dishes.

Prosciutto (which translates simply to ham in Italian), or, more correctly, “prosciutto crudo” (the preserved, uncooked type we usually think of), is a protected designation

in Italy, similar to appellations of wine. Largely produced in the central and northern regions, the ham—which is the hind leg or thigh meat—is hand-rubbed with salt and sometimes herbs or chili for a rustic taste, then rinsed and hung to dry in a cool, well-ventilated space for more than a year during the curing process. One of the most popular and well-known types, prosciutto di Parma,

which comes from the same region as Parmesan cheese, can take up to three years to make. By the time the drying process is complete, the ham has lost more than a quarter of its weight in moisture, which concentrates the flavor in the meat.

According to Fabrizio Concordati, sommelier and in-house prosciutto expert at the Boccondivino restaurant in Milan,



COURTESY OF HOG & ROCKS

Cured meat is featured heavily on the menu at Hog & Rocks in San Francisco.

curing pork in Italy originated as far back as the Roman times. A surgery school that was located in a town called Alta Val Nerina in central Italy, with close proximity to the pigs raised for the cured ham, helped establish the practice of slicing it very thin.

Of course, other countries have become experts of its production, including Spain, France and the United States. At Coalfire Pizza in Chicago, owner Dave Bonomi sources everything domestically, including La Quercia prosciutto from Iowa. "Some people say Parma is more buttery," he says. "But La Quercia is arguably the best prosciutto made in the United States, and I think it's better than what you can get in Naples. You don't have to go to Europe to get the ingredient necessarily."

Perhaps being less purist about the delicacy is also the reason American chefs are able to be so innovative, cooking it in ways that Italians might be hesitant to. "In Italy, you can incorporate prosciutto everywhere in your dinner," Concordati says. "As an appetizer, we eat it plainly sliced or on bread. ... As a main course, we eat it in pasta like stuffed tortellini, and on

pizza, and there's even a chef making prosciutto ice cream here. In the United States, chefs are using it with vegetables, protein and even more so with sweets. ... Probably because they know that a good prosciutto will improve any dish."

TO START

As an appetizer, it's difficult to think of anything that will get mouths watering better than a thinly sliced, salty piece of meat. Restaurants are no stranger to the concept, and offer everything from classic charcuterie boards to innovative starters like stuffed rolls, as well as fruit, vegetables and seafood wrapped in thin slices.

Some chefs are capitalizing on the emerging trend and are devoted almost exclusively to cured meat, like Hog & Rocks in the Mission District of San Francisco, which serves various hams and oysters alongside expertly made cocktails. Owner and Executive Chef Scott Youkilis recommends pairing it with Lambrusco wine and other high-acid, lighter-bodied reds. "Traditionally, it's perfect for prosciutto and other cured meats," he says.

At Vintage Enoteca in Los Angeles, the wrapped Medjool dates



COURTESY OF VINTAGE ENOTECA

Prosciutto-wrapped Medjool dates at Vintage Enoteca in Los Angeles

are one of the most popular items on the menu. The fruit is packed with a mix of Fresno pepper and manchego and goat cheeses before being swathed in meaty layers then baked. "For prosciutto lovers, it's the combination of salty and sweet that's appealing in the dish," says co-owner Jennifer Moore. "When it's cooked, the two flavors highlight each other and balance each other, while the pepper gives it a little bit of a kick." She says that lately customers prefer to start their meal with a decadent

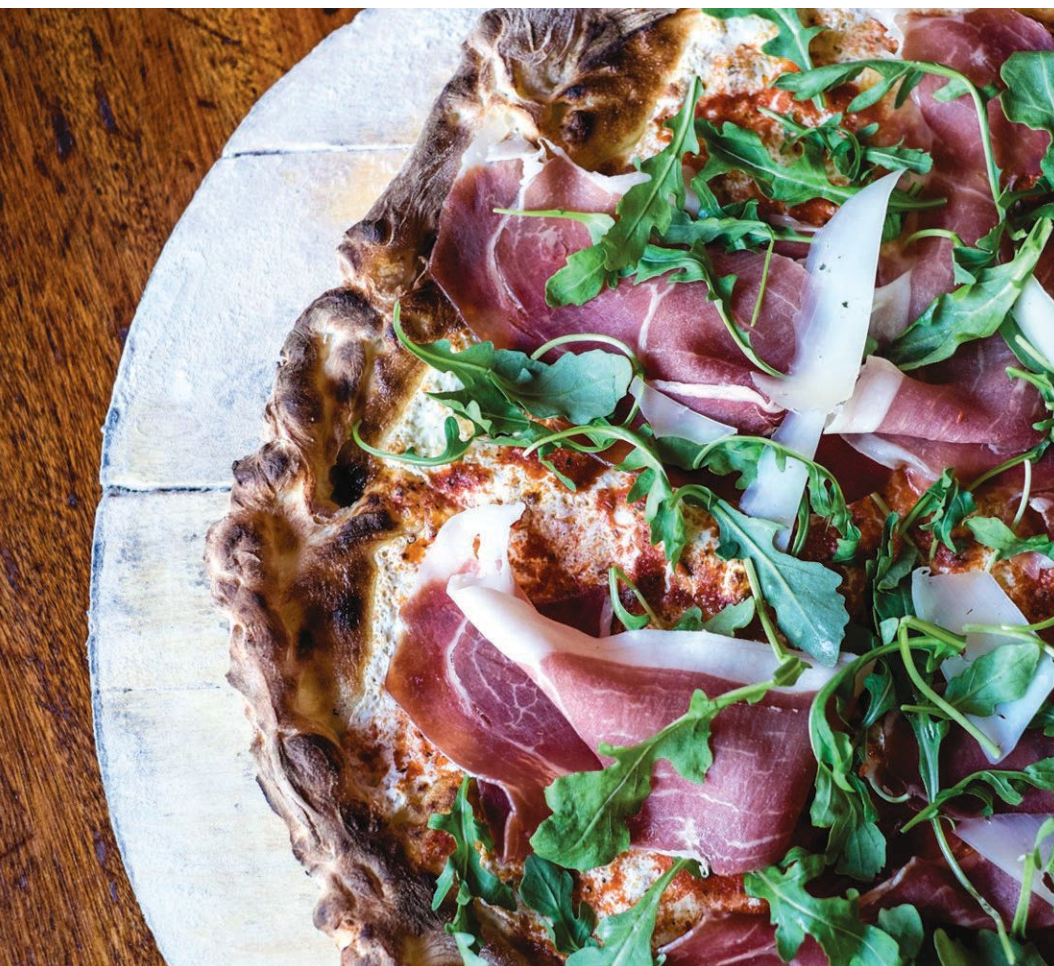
dish and seem to be drawn to cultural foods more than ever before.

The ham is also served raw, or sometimes fried, as a topping on soups and salads. Cesare Casella, executive chef and partner at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto in New York, says an easy way to incorporate it into starter dishes like a salad is by crisping the meat and crumbling it into small pieces instead of using bacon bits for a salty crunch. Casella's soups also experiment with the meat: The carbonara comes with an organic



TINY URBAN KITCHEN

Brussels sprouts with pancetta and prosciutto at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto



Prosciutto is incorporated into entrees like pizza at Coalfire Pizza in Chicago (left), pasta all'Amatriciana at Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto (top right) and breakfast paninis at Vintage Enoteca (bottom right).



Zen Sai at the Essex House Hotel in Miami specializes in Asian fusion foods, including a prosciutto roll with goat cheese, shiitake mushrooms, asparagus and bell peppers wrapped in thin slices of the cured meat.

egg poached in a chicken Grana Padano broth, served with croutons, chives and a prosciutto chip.

TO SAVOR

Though Italians will tell you they could easily eat prosciutto as is for an entire meal, in the United States, it is part of the ingredient list for a plethora of main dishes, including pasta, pizza, other meats and seafood, and in breakfast items in lieu of smoked salmon.

In Miami, it's prepared with a Japanese twist. At Zen Sai, an Asian fusion restaurant in the Essex House Hotel, the prosciutto roll has been on the menu since the opening in July 2012. According to Executive Chef Chris Wong, seasoned sushi rice is spread on seaweed, then layered with goat cheese, crispy shiitake mushrooms, asparagus and thin-sliced bell peppers. The ingredients are rolled

together, wrapped with sliced prosciutto, topped with caviar and plated with a garnish of white truffle oil and balsamic vinegar glaze. Combining prosciutto and truffle pays homage to the pigs who help find this treasured fungi in the wild. "It's a pork-truffle love story," Wong says.

While some chefs are creative in their usage, it's more commonly served raw on pizza or added to pasta toward the end of cooking so the flavor isn't drastically altered. At Coalfire Pizza, the prosciutto combo was so popular that Bonomi took it off the menu. Now it's offered as an extra topping that customers can add, which they do in droves. Thinly sliced pieces are piled high after the pizza is baked, keeping the ingredient raw.

"We never cook it; if you talk to my relatives, they'll tell you it's a sin to cook prosciutto. It's a delicate and

Prosciutto ice cream at Humphry Slocombe in San Francisco



beautiful meat just the way it is,” Bonomi explains, adding that he’s also excited that chefs are using the ingredient in new ways. “I like that people cook it. It’s become fashionable in the last year, and chefs know how to use it. It’s also a great way to get a bacon-like flavor without the smoke.”

Prosciutto is also finding its way into morning meals. Vintage Enoteca incorporates it with eggs in paninis, or as an alternative to smoked salmon on eggs Benedict. Casella goes one step further with his prosciutto puff, which is essentially a beignet with the meat stuffed inside that can be eaten on its own or used as the basis for a sandwich.

Casella also uses it in his all’Amatriciana sauce and Brussels sprouts recipe. “For me, it’s the complex flavor of prosciutto that can make a dish so much better,” Casella says, noting that he also appreciates its

raw texture. “But if you use it too much, it can hurt your dish.”

TO DELIGHT

It’s common to find the cured meat as an accompaniment in many dishes, but perhaps nothing is as surprising as the desserts with this savory addition. People have been covering melon with the ham for years—a combination that has found its way into the bottom of cocktails—but several new treats are emerging on the after-dinner scene.

Humphry Slocombe is one of the few places in the country that offers it as an ice cream flavor. According to co-owner Sean Vahey, the idea came about when celebrity chef Chris Cosentino brought in prosciutto bones and asked if the company was interested in trying it out. “Initially, the perception was most likely that we were trying

prosciutto-flavored ice cream for the sake of being weird until people tried it,” Vahey says, adding that the meat’s versatility is one reason for its increased popularity. “[However,] once people tried it, they realized that it made sense and is delicious.” Others certainly agree—lines for his ice cream in San Francisco can stretch for what seem like miles.

Casella is another chef who uses it on the dessert menu, with his brittle that is part of the semifreddo selection, served with a parfait and fruit. The meat is sautéed until crispy, then added to caramelized sugar for a tantalizing taste. Regardless of how much prosciutto is loved, it’s important not to overdo it, especially when it comes to dessert. Casella suggests the best way to use it is by capitalizing on its aroma, like a perfume. And what a pleasant perfume it is. **C**

Passion for Prosciutto

To taste some standout dishes incorporating this popular cured ham, discover the following eateries on the must-visit list.

Humphry Slocombe, San Francisco

This famous ice cream shop offers an array of inventive flavors—from ancho chocolate to foie gras and even prosciutto—to indulge brave and curious dessert seekers. (humphryslocombe.com)

Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto, New York

At this salumeria, crispy prosciutto is combined with caramelized sugar to form brittle, which is part of the semifreddo dessert that includes a Parmigiano-Reggiano parfait and seasonal fruit. (salumeriarosi.com)

Vintage Enoteca, Los Angeles

This wine bar serves Italian-inspired small plates including a salty-sweet combination of dates stuffed with Fresno pepper, and manchego and goat cheeses, all held together by layers of the cured meat. (vintageenoteca.com)

Zen Sai, Miami Beach

Located in the Essex House Hotel, Zen Sai offers sharing plates of Asian fusion cuisine, including the prosciutto roll, which incorporates goat cheese, mushrooms, asparagus and bell peppers, all wrapped up in the specialty meat, topped with caviar and garnished with truffle oil and balsamic vinegar. (zensaisobe.com)

Destination Shopping

Luxury malls and boutique-filled avenues abound from coast to coast, creating a sartorial experience for any traveler.

BY HEATHER FISH

When traveling to a new place, part of the thrill is finding a special something to bring home. And with world-renowned malls and fashion districts in many of the country's top cities, shopping becomes a must-do part of the itinerary. From major retailers and high-end luxury brands to clever vintage boutiques, there's something for everyone. Add a distinctive setting that captivates the senses with inspired cuisine at restaurants tucked among the shops and attractions worth more than a passing glance, and you have all the elements that come together to create a perfect destination.

ADAM LERNER



Some of the world's most high-end boutiques can be found along Madison Avenue in New York City.



Brooks
Brothers



EAST COAST ALLURE

The intrigue of shopping Manhattan's Upper East Side is not only due to a long, rich history of the finest luxury fashion houses found there—like Prada at 70th Street and Christian Louboutin between 75th and 76th streets—but also its distinct air of elegance.

Madison Avenue, which takes its moniker from Madison Square (named after former President James Madison), is the foremost shopping destination for any fashionable lady or gentleman while in New York. One of the oldest American brands found on Madison Avenue is Brooks Brothers. Approaching its 200th anniversary, the company is known for its loyal customers, which include U.S. presidents from Abraham Lincoln to Barack Obama.

Today, the flagship store at 44th Street and Madison Avenue appeals to the Wall Street elite and those of Ivy League pedigree. "People that come to Madison Avenue to shop are 'dressed to the nines,' but it's not just for the elite blue bloods anymore as it was in the early days," says Tom Davis, a salesman who started with the company 47 years ago and was responsible for selling John F. Kennedy Jr. his first prep school uniform. He adds that many people come to the Upper East Side to watch for trends in fashion, and he also admits to being a fan of people watching on the avenue.

Just a short walk away is Fifth Avenue, where the sole Bergdorf Goodman department store is found. Housed between 57th and 58th streets, Bergdorf provides an impressive shopping and dining experience. Through its doors are fashion's finest runway looks, paired with impeccable service to ensure fit and satisfaction. Meanwhile, BG Restaurant—on Bergdorf's seventh floor—is convenient for the famished shopper, but doesn't lack in sophistication or culinary expertise. With sweeping views of Central Park, it's a popular lunch or early dinner destination.

NEW YORK CITY: Flagship Shopping

Fabergé's New York flagship boutique is a treasure chest of intricate pieces of jewelry, including the new Fabergé Charms collection. Miniature versions of the egg pendants can be affixed to a chain bracelet. (694 Madison Ave.; 646-559-8848; faberge.com)



Chicago's Magnificent Mile boasts more than 400 shops.

A MIDWEST MILE

A stretch of road in Chicago dedicated to fashion fanfare, premier wine and food from around the world is best known as the Magnificent Mile, transformed from an American Indian trading post in the early 1900s and inspired by the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Running along North Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Oak Street (the district covers a square mile), there are approximately 460 stores, 275 restaurants and 60 hotels—enough to accommodate any traveler's shopping and entertainment desires.

The diversity found along the street is incomparable. Chicago's conservative elite appreciate the custom-fitted suits made of fine European fabrics from the likes of J. Toor. Other favorites include a vast selection of brands with worldly origins, such as New Zealand's Icebreaker Merino, Munich's OSKA, England's Barbour and Topshop, and Cop. Copine of Paris—all with wares reflecting their country's typical motif. The Magnificent Mile is also home to the popular classics Burberry, Louis Vuitton and Gucci.



CHICAGO: Flagship Shopping

Burberry's store on the Magnificent Mile boasts five floors of retail space, filled with exclusive collections as well as classic pieces like the iconic trenchcoat. The facade features the brand's signature tartan pattern; inside, digital walls display live events and fashion shows. (633 N. Michigan Ave.; 312-787-2500; burberry.com)



Miami's open-air Bal Harbour Shops

MIAMI HEAT

Just a stone's throw from Miami's sultry shores, the 50-year-old, open-air Bal Harbour Shops provides a welcome alternative to quintessential beach activities like sunbathing. Known for its lush landscaping with koi ponds surrounded by exotic tropical greenery, the luxury mall maintains a sense of serenity amid the fashion fury.

Built on former World War II barracks, the development quickly became an exclusive shopping center thanks to owner Stanley Whitman. He successfully persuaded Neiman Marcus to choose Bal Harbour for its first department store outside of Texas, and attracted boutiques previously only found in Paris or New York City.

The first to boast Chanel and Saint Laurent's latest U.S. concept stores, and a stunning newly designed two-story Ferragamo flagship, Bal Harbour is also known for its selection of the finest boutiques for fashion trailblazers and smart shoppers seeking the next big trend. For instance, Bal Harbour's Charlotte Olympia boutique, one of only three in the U.S., carries the full collection of Kitty & Co. flats. The coveted shoes by designer Charlotte Olympia make the shop one of the most popular shopping destinations in Miami. Patterned after a chic velvet slipper, these stylish yet comfortable shoes are embroidered with a different cat personality that gives them a distinct and clever look.

MIAMI: Flagship Shopping

Vilebrequin has opened its global flagship store at Bal Harbour Shops, offering swimsuits in vibrant prints and ready-to-wear pieces for men, women and children. (9700 Collins Ave.; 305-861-4022; vilebrequin.com)



TOPSHOP PHOTO BY TURUNGATO/SHUTTERSTOCK; MAGNIFICENT MILE PHOTO BY DENNIS LEE



South Coast Plaza in Orange County, Calif., attracts millions of shoppers annually.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHARM

Located in the heart of sunny Orange County, Calif., is South Coast Plaza. The high-end mall houses more than 250 luxury brands—including favorite fashion brands ranging from Chloe and Prada to Valentino, as well as the only West Coast Assouline, which offers a selection of sophisticated coffee table books. Also reflecting a high level of prestige, the mall features nearly 30 exclusive jewelry and timepiece shops such as Jaeger-LeCoultre, IWC Schaffhausen, Chopard and Cartier, an unprecedented lineup under one roof.

Shoppers who work up an appetite will find that South Coast Plaza has restaurants as remarkable as its upscale boutiques. The famed AnQi by House of An features a gourmet bistro, noodle bar and thick glass catwalk running through the dining room for the many fashion shows hosted there throughout the year.

Catering to more than 22 million diverse visitors per year, the mall is known for taking guest service to a whole new level, from foreign language assistance and currency exchange to a shuttle that transports guests to and from surrounding hotels. Additionally, the private, invitation-only Access suite accommodates shoppers with separate rooms for relaxing in between purchases. A carousel and oversized bright-colored balloons ensure that young visitors will be able to experience memorable moments. All of this combines for a personal touch that allows shoppers to feel like cherished guests.

ORANGE COUNTY, CALIF.: Flagship Shopping

World-famous watch manufacturer Rolex sells its exquisite timepieces at its U.S. flagship location at South Coast Plaza. Knowledgeable employees are on hand to walk customers through the features of the Swiss-made models. (3333 Bristol St.; 714-241-8088; rolex.com)



Melrose Avenue brings together exclusive brands and vintage shops in Los Angeles.



LA LIVING

Many people often wonder where movie and television stars shop for their chic clothes. The answer is usually along Los Angeles' Melrose Avenue, where celebrities can be spotted flitting in and out of their favorite boutiques.

With an eclectic mix of current fashion, rare vintage finds and punk rock-inspired attire, the typical Melrose shopper is a trendy youngster in search of a look recently worn on TV. Rarely disappointed with high-end offerings like Marc Jacobs and Alexander McQueen located west of Fairfax Avenue, shoppers then venture east for more daring designs at Joyrich, which carries cool 1980s graphic tees, or Posers, known for stocking every style of Dr. Martens combat boots imaginable. Stores like these make it easy to understand why shoppers travel hundreds—or even thousands—of miles to visit the Melrose boutiques.

Vintage lovers will also be pleased on Melrose: Decades, specializing in designer couture from the past, is one of the best places to find these yesteryear looks. Owners Cameron Silver and Christos Garkinos pride themselves on having created a retail haven enjoyed by celebrities and fashionistas from all over the world, including Charlize Theron and Selma Blair. "Back in the '80s and early '90s, the east part of Melrose was the place to shop for unique fashion," says Garkinos, a former star of Bravo TV's "Dukes of Melrose" series based on his store. "... The show 'Melrose Place' cemented its pop culture lore." **C**

LOS ANGELES: Flagship Shopping

The Southern California flagship of rag & bone has loyal fans who stop by for its chic creations. The two-story space sells both men's and women's apparel and accessories. (8533 Melrose Ave.; 424-245-4816; rag-bone.com)



New York's Belmont Stakes, on June 6 this year, is the longest test of speed and endurance for horses.



Jewels of the **TRIPLE CROWN**

Enjoy the excitement and must-see festivities of the three most prestigious horse races this season.

BY VICKI HOGUE-DAVIES

Last spring, a chestnut colt named California Chrome caught the world's attention in a quest to become the 12th horse in history to win the esteemed Triple Crown, a group of the sport's most important events and its most sought-after prize. After galloping to victory in the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness Stakes, he tied for fourth in the Belmont Stakes and another year passed without a horse claiming all three jewels in the crown. This year, the excitement begins again May 2, when the Kentucky Derby kicks off the racing series for 3-year-old thoroughbreds. The Derby will be followed by the Preakness Stakes on May 16 and the Belmont Stakes on June 6.

The last horse to win the Triple Crown was Affirmed, when he beat his nemesis Alydar by a nose in the Belmont in 1978. Sir Barton was the first horse to win it, in 1919. It is the dream of every thoroughbred horse owner and trainer to take the coveted title, and while that possibility greatly fuels the popularity of the races, each individual race claims its own majesty and excitement, whether there is a Triple Crown contender in the mix or not.

But long before post time for each race, the celebrations begin. Socialites consider the best places to see and be seen. The fashion-conscious bring out their fanciest hats, a staple at the races, and their best spring clothes. Cocktail recipes are perfected in anticipation of race parties. And it all kicks off with the countdown to the Kentucky Derby.

RUNNING FOR THE ROSES

The most famous race in the crown, the 1.25-mile Kentucky Derby, is run at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., the first Saturday in May each year. Its nicknames include the "greatest two minutes in sports" and the "run for the roses," an allusion to the traditional garland of red roses that is placed across the winning horse's back. There are numerous other customs that surround the race; one of the more notable is for attendees to sip on mint juleps. More than 120,000 of the bourbon-based cocktails are enjoyed at Churchill Downs during the two-day race celebration, which includes the running of the popular Kentucky Oaks the day before the Derby.

Another standard event outside the race is the Kentucky Derby Festival, which



Kentucky Derby mint juleps

JULIE WADDER

CHERYL ANN QUIGLEY



JESSICA KRISH

The Kentucky Derby takes place at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky.



COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES

Preakness Stakes (pictured above and below)



The Black-Eyed Susan is the official drink of the Preakness Stakes.



The Taste of Derby presents wine and gourmet cuisine on April 30.



Jockeys sign autographs during Preakness Stakes festivities.

attracts more than 1.5 million people annually. This year, the festival runs from April 18 through May 1.

"The Kentucky Derby Festival is the community-side, civic celebration of the Kentucky Derby," says Mike Berry, president and CEO of the nonprofit Kentucky Derby Festival. "It is really the opportunity for locals to come out and celebrate springtime in Kentucky. From its opening event, Thunder over Louisville, to the final event, the Republic Bank Pegasus Parade—held the Thursday before Derby—we have taken a two-minute race and turned it into a two-week-long celebration."

Thunder Over Louisville, the festival's most popular attraction, features an air show and one of the country's largest fireworks displays. Last year during the show, audiences witnessed the Blue Angels performing their incredible aerial acrobatics. Meanwhile, the Pegasus Parade takes place April 30 in the heart of the city, showcasing equestrian units, bands and floats.

Marking its 60th anniversary this year, the parade will impress guests with a Best of Louisville theme.

Some of the festival's other activities include a marathon, wine and beer tastings, a farm-to-table dinner and Celebrity Day at the Downs on the track's Millionaire's Row—which turns out fairly large crowds. "Access to Churchill Downs is not always easy during Derby week," Berry says. "Not only does the day give access to the track during a very busy time, but it also features celebrities who are in town for festival events."

Separate from the festival, visitors also may mingle with horse racing's celebrities at the Taste of Derby presented April 30 by Stella Artois, with fine wines and gourmet cuisine at the Kentucky Exposition Center.

A CELEBRATION OF BLACK-EYED SUSANS

Like the Derby, Baltimore's Preakness Stakes, which is celebrating its 140th

anniversary this year, boasts its own special flower, the black-eyed Susan. Approximately 120,000 people will be on hand at Pimlico Race Course on the third Saturday in May to share in the excitement as one horse from the field of racing's best young thoroughbreds enters the winner's circle to have the wreath made of Maryland's state flower placed around its neck. Also named after the flower, the official drink of the race (made with a blend of vodka and three juices) is served at dining establishments throughout Charm City, adding further spirit to the race celebrations.

"The whole city is buzzing on race day," says Tom Noonan, president and CEO of Visit Baltimore. "The race is the city's longest-running and most iconic tourism event. All the restaurants are doing really well. Everybody has their hats on, and it's a big fashion moment for the city. You have people looking for that special tie they want to wear

and bringing out the summer suits. Women are bringing out their best dresses and hats. It is one of those big Baltimore showy times of year."

Some must-see events in the week leading up to race day include the Sunrise at Old Hilltop tour, featuring an inside look at the Preakness Stakes barn and the opportunity to watch Preakness contenders during their morning workouts. On Friday before the Preakness, a pinnacle happening is Black-Eyed Susan Day at Pimlico, a full day of racing culminating with the Black-Eyed Susan, a stakes race for fillies (young female horses) that has been run since 1919. The day also includes concerts, celebrity jockey autograph signings and events related to women's issues and health—last year featured the Susan G. Komen foundation to raise awareness and support research to end breast cancer.

On race day, watch the action from the four-star Terrace Dining Room or other premium seating choices, such

THE TASTE OF DERBY PHOTO BY KIRBY ADAMS; JOCKEY AUTOGRAPH AND BLACK-EYED SUSAN PHOTOS BY JIM MOULDER/MARYLAND JOCKEY CLUB; PREAKNESS STAKES PHOTO (BOTTOM RIGHT) BY AARON HAUPTMAN

Off the Track

When not cheering at these top horse races or partaking in the associated festivities, there are plenty of ways to enjoy each city, including luxurious places to rest your head afterward.

Kentucky Derby

What to do: Visit the Kentucky Derby Museum, which attracts more than 200,000 annual visitors, to soak in years of racing history. Kentucky is also famous for its bourbon, and there are several distilleries in the area with tours and tastings including Jim Beam's American Stillhouse. (Kentucky Derby Museum: derbymuseum.org) (Jim Beam's American Stillhouse: americanstillhouse.com)

Where to stay: The official hotel of the Derby is the riverfront Galt House Hotel, a centrally located lodging with 1,300 guest rooms and multiple restaurants. Or, near the airport and minutes from Churchill Downs is the 588-room Crowne Plaza Louisville Hotel. (Galt House: galthouse.com) (Crowne Plaza Louisville: cplouisville.com)

The Preakness Stakes

What to do: While in Baltimore, spend some time exploring Inner Harbor attractions such as the Maryland Science Center and the National Aquarium. Literature buffs will enjoy the Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum where the famed author lived before moving to Richmond, Va. (Maryland Science Center: mdsci.org) (National Aquarium: aqua.org) (Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum: poeinbaltimore.org)

Where to stay: Four Seasons Hotel Baltimore has waterfront views and sumptuous dining at Michael Mina's Wit & Wisdom tavern. There's also Hotel Monaco Baltimore, which is located in a Beaux Arts building that was once a railroad headquarters. (Four Seasons Hotel Baltimore: fourseasons.com/baltimore) (Hotel Monaco Baltimore: monaco-baltimore.com)

The Belmont Stakes

What to do: Long Island boasts many natural outdoor wonders that are perfect for strolling in late spring, including Freeport Nautical Mile, which offers waterside dining and views of fishing boats returning with their latest catches, and Jones Beach State Park with its boardwalk. (Jones Beach State Park: nysparks.com)

Where to stay: The Garden City Hotel—which boasts an Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spa—just minutes from Belmont Park, is a popular spot to stay when visiting for the race. A little farther away, but still only 7 miles from the track, is the Inn at Great Neck, a boutique luxury hotel with 85 rooms. (Garden City Hotel: gardencityhotel.com) (Inn at Great Neck: innatgreatneck.com)



Dressing up is part of the fun at the Belmont (left) and Preakness (right) races.

as the Turfside Terrace or Preakness Village. There are also on-field festivities at the Preakness InfieldFest where live music and activities take place prior to the race. Grammy Award winner Lorde headlined the event last year and previous performers have included the Counting Crows, Goo Goo Dolls and other well-known acts.

AN ENDURANCE TEST

First run in 1867, New York's Belmont Stakes is the oldest of the races. Each year, it takes place three weeks after the Preakness. At 1.5 miles, the race at Belmont Park in Elmont on Long Island also marks the longest test of speed and endurance for horses. Racing buffs may remember the great Secretariat, who in 1973 cemented his place in history at the Belmont by running

it in 2:24—a record that has never been broken—and taking the race by an incredible 31 horse lengths to win the Triple Crown. Secretariat's owner, like all other Belmont winners since 1926, received the August Belmont Memorial Cup, a solid silver trophy designed by Tiffany & Co. in 1897. Winning owners keep the trophy for one year, until the crowning of the race's next winner.

"[The Belmont Stakes] is an amazing race," says Kristen Matejka, director of marketing and communications for the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau and Sports Commission. "The number of people who come from all over the world to see a Triple Crown race is unprecedented in terms of Long Island; in 2014, we got about 120,000 people. They come from

Europe, Dubai, all over. Even when it is not a Triple Crown, people just love the excitement of it."

The merriment begins with Belmont Stakes Festival Week, which includes a parade through Elmont and a charity run. The night before the race, don't miss the Belmont Festival in Garden City, featuring live music, food and family-friendly activities. And throughout Long Island and New York's other boroughs, Belmont Stakes parties are happening at pubs, bars and restaurants leading up to as well as after the big race.

On race day, top entertainment at the track encourages a good time for

all attendees. Last year, LL Cool J, musicians from West Point military academy and a star from Broadway's "Wicked" performed. And as the horses headed for the post, Frank Sinatra Jr. crooned the lyrics to his father's classic "New York, New York."

To ensure a premium spot to watch the actual race, make reservations for coveted box seats and upscale dining at the Champagne Room or Turf & Field Club early. No matter where you sit, have the signature race drink, the Belmont Jewel, a combination of bourbon, lemonade and pomegranate juice, at the ready to toast the winner and a day of celebration. **C**



The 1.25-mile Kentucky Derby is called the "greatest two minutes in sports."

Cooking With **Fire**

Now with five top-rated restaurants across the United States, Scott Conant may very well be at the height of his career—just don't call him a celebrity chef.

BY TESS EYRICH

Scott Conant is taking a second to catch his breath. In preparation for the opening of his latest restaurant, Corsair, at Turnberry Isle Miami resort this past December, the 44-year-old chef has been consumed with last-minute details for the brand-new eatery—think media tours, interviews, and design and menu adjustments—and is only now able to see the benefits of his work filter through in the form of glowingly positive reviews.

But this isn't Conant's first time going through the manic roller coaster ride that is launching a new restaurant—far from it, in fact. His experience opening restaurants and revamping flailing ones dates back to the late 1990s, and he debuted the first piece of his Conant-owned empire, the award-winning Italian eatery Scarpetta, in 2008. Something of an overachiever (though he'll be quick to tell you otherwise), the chef also has written several cookbooks, appeared as a judge on multiple seasons of the Food Network's "Chopped," and is the father of two daughters. The concept of juggling it all, he admits, is still something of a work in progress, but if you know anything about Conant, it's that he's always up for a challenge.



Scott Conant on Food Network's "Chopped"

MAKING THE CUT

Born and raised in suburban Connecticut, Conant grew up in the kind of Italian family whose home life revolved around the dinner table. He took his first cooking class when he was 11, but didn't necessarily consider making a long-term career out of his hobby until years later when he was in high school. "I went to a vocational school, and we had to choose which classes we wanted to take," he says. "My first choice was plumbing, because plumbers made more money than cooks. It was the mid-1980s, and what exists now in the restaurant world didn't necessarily exist then; the opportunities just hadn't opened up."

A serendipitous twist of fate—the plumbing class filled up before Conant could join—forced him into the culinary track, and he hasn't looked back since. After finishing high school, he headed to New York to attend The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in Hyde





"Chopped" judges Scott Conant, Alex Guarnaschelli and Marcus Samuelsson



Spaghetti with tomato sauce at Scarpetta

Park, a move that he describes as "everything" in terms of its effect on his worldview and experience as a cook.

While there, he landed an internship at Manhattan hot spot San Domenico and, after graduating from the CIA, he decamped for Munich to cook at the legendary Hotel Bayerischer Hof for a year. "It was an interesting time because the [Berlin] Wall had just come down in 1989, and so a lot of foreigners were starting to feed into West Germany [from the east] and throughout Europe," he says of the experience overseas. "At the same time, it was like a time capsule—no changes in infrastructure."

Upon returning to New York, Conant logged time at a variety of ultrahip Italian eateries, from San Domenico (again) and Il Toscanaccio to Chianti and Barolo, where he was named executive chef at just 25 years old. It was at these restaurants that Conant refined his craft, developing a cooking style he characterizes as "sprezzatura," which loosely translates to nonchalance and connotes an ability to make the elegant look easy. "I have a pretty solid foundation

in Italian principle," he says. "But I think that's the goal with everything I do—easy, elegant, rustic food."

Within just a few years, that toned-down style would have the attention of a serious chunk of Manhattan. In 2002, Conant opened the James Beard Award-winning L'Impero, and later, a Northern Italian concept called Alto. Following these launches, he partnered with LDV Hospitality to form Scott Conant Management (now SC Ventures), and the firm launched its first project, Scarpetta, in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood in 2008, kicking off what would be a string of culinary home runs.

TAKING THE HEAT

Fueled by the full-blown success of the first Scarpetta, Conant opened a trio of additional outposts in Beverly Hills, Las Vegas and Miami. He formally ended his relationship with the New York branch in 2014, but maintains close ties with the remaining three along with his Las Vegas wine bar, D.O.C.G. Enoteca, the aforementioned Corsair in Miami, and the SC Culinary Suite in Manhattan, which serves as an

event venue, test kitchen and his company's corporate headquarters.

He has filled the gaps between restaurant openings by penning three Italian cookbooks, releasing his own line of cookware, and joining the cast of the Food Network's "Chopped," on which he famously delivered a tirade against the overuse of raw onions and is remembered as one of the show's most polarizing judges. Still, he refuses to refer to himself as a "celebrity chef," instead reserving that title for icons like Wolfgang Puck, Daniel Boulud and Eric Ripert.

Despite his many triumphs, Conant will be the first to admit that the road to professional acclaim has been far from easy; if anything, he says, life has become more difficult as he has gotten older. "Success is one of those crazy things where people think it all becomes easy at a certain point, but I would have to say that probably nothing is easy," he says. "When you have expectations of yourself and people have expectations of your craft, it's a constant challenge. ... Back then [when I was younger,] I was working for a paycheck, just to pay my rent and

gain experience—hopeful and hungry and ambitious and all of that stuff." And while he still considers himself all of those things, he also acknowledges the fact that his roles, both in the kitchen and at home, have changed.

Becoming a husband and a father, in particular, have had a profound effect on him, and the never-ending balancing act is something he's always trying to improve upon. "After a lot of therapy sessions, I can definitely say that I love my family more than anything, and I would do anything to keep that intact and happy, but I also think that being entrepreneurial is an inherently selfish approach to life," he muses. "I want to spend time with my family, but I also need to do the work that I'm doing. ... Thankfully, my wife knows that."

LETTING IT SIMMER

Nowadays, Conant remains entirely focused on expanding his brand. At the end of last year, he announced his plan to return to Manhattan in 2015 with a new concept, simply called Conant. Though he's hesitant to elaborate on specifics, he expects, as

always, to be heavily involved in the restaurant's design (everything from decor to lighting) as well as its menu and service style.

He confesses to feeling constantly in a state of competition to be and do better, but explains that it's more of an inner struggle than a battle against his fellow chefs. "It's about staying relevant," he says, adding that his version of relevancy is rooted in things like flavor development and creating a sustainable vision for his cooking. Likewise, he's open about taking little satisfaction in his successes, noting that his main source of pride came from having his father, who passed away last year, be able to see some of what he has been working toward for years.

Perhaps because of this unbridled ambition, he finds little time for hobbies, instead preferring to spend his downtime looking at other restaurants' menus and pictures of food online. "I see these other chefs who are in bands or they play the guitar, and I see all of these restaurant people and they're singers or taking acting classes or traveling the world all the time, and I think, 'God,



Conant, who once planned to become a plumber, now has an empire of restaurants in major U.S. cities.

I wish I could do that,' he jokes. "I wish I was that interesting."

He does, however, consider traveling one of his few passions outside of cooking, and calls Tokyo one of the best food cities in the world. In fact,

it's the freedom to travel—to move on impulse, with abandon—that has become one of his greatest goals.

"I always say I'm working toward spontaneity," he explains. "I want to get to a point in my career where I

can be spontaneous, where I can say to my wife and kids, 'Let's jump on a plane and go to Paris for five days. Let's drive to the airport right now and go someplace.' There's something very freeing about that, right?" **C**

Three to Try

If you're in the mood for fresh, understated Italian food, one of these three Scott Conant restaurants should do the trick.



CORSAIR: The newest eatery in Conant's stable, Corsair at Turnberry Isle Miami resort is already earning rave reviews for its blend of Mediterranean and farmhouse-style cuisines. The design here is warm and sophisticated, combining beachy tiling with pops of gold and sage. Likewise, the menu spotlights classic surf-and-turf dishes like grilled snapper, lobster ravioli and porcini-braised veal, all made with locally sourced ingredients whenever possible. (turnberryislemiami.com)



D.O.C.G. ENOTECA: One of two Conant restaurants at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas hotel (the other being Scarpetta), D.O.C.G. Enoteca is the chef's urban take on a wine bar. The most casual of Conant's restaurants—with a modern yet rustic ambience—it features a menu of small plates such as roasted bone marrow and fried calamari, sandwiches and salads, pizzas and, of course, wines and traditional Italian aperitifs. (cosmopolitanlasvegas.com)



SCARPETTA LOS ANGELES: In true California style, the seasonally inspired food at Scarpetta at Montage Beverly Hills is best eaten on the restaurant's patio, which overlooks the gorgeous Beverly Canon Gardens. Come for knockout dishes like the spaghetti with tomatoes and basil, beef short ribs or pancetta-wrapped duck breast with chanterelle mushrooms. Private dining and tasting menus are also available for a bespoke experience. (montagehotels.com/beverlyhills)



20 Questions With **REBECCA TAYLOR**

BY KIRSTI CORREA

Thumb through the pages of Rebecca Taylor's latest lookbook for spring and you'll instantly desire every piece, each with a clear balance of femininity and modernity. The New Zealand-born fashion designer is always busy curating a new line of styles that all fashion aficionados will love—this May, she's launching her first-ever swim collaboration with the brand Giejo. The swimwear mimics the floral, leopard and vibrant prints found in the dresses and tops of her spring collection, which was inspired by the vintage Indian dresses her mother wore in the 1970s.

Shoppers can peruse her newest creations in boutiques in shopping destinations like Los Angeles, New York and Atlanta; her collections are also available at major departments stores, including Bloomingdale's, Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom. Get to know the woman behind your favorite soft chiffon dress, including quips about her love for clothes and other passions.

What was your first designer purchase?

A vintage Chanel jacket I bought in Paris

What is your favorite outfit to wear?

My Italian army pants and Victorian voile blouse

If you could only wear one color for the rest of your life, what would it be?

I love a pale pink on top; it suits my coloring.

What do you love about fashion?

Everything. I love how it's always evolving and I am constantly feeling inspired.

What do you dislike about fashion?

How it's always evolving

If you could change one thing about your career, what would it be?

Nothing, I really love everything I do.

If you weren't a fashion designer, what would you be?

A makeup artist, if my hands weren't so shaky

What is your most treasured possession?

My children

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Reading my favorite book on a beach, spending quality time with my family and working on a new collection in my studio

When were you the happiest?

There have been so many moments in my life I have felt happiest, but I would say one moment was when the Duchess of Cambridge wore my clothes.

What is your motto?

We are here for a good time, not a long time.

What is your greatest fear?

Spiders

What are your greatest achievements?

Being a mother and building the Rebecca Taylor business to where it is today

What do you still want to accomplish?

So much—there is not enough room to list it all.

What has been a career-defining moment?

When we had our first runway show, I remember having this feeling of having arrived.

Who are your favorite authors?

Jennifer Egan and Daphne Du Maurier

Who is your favorite artist?

Elizabeth Peyton

Where is your favorite vacation spot?


The Caribbean. I have never seen the water quite as beautiful as it is in the Caribbean.

Where is a place you've never been but would like to visit?

India

What is your current state of mind?

Joyous **C**



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