

**YOUR NEXT
WEEKEND ESCAPE**

SEE PAGE 48

**L.A.'S MOST MYTHIC
MUSIC FESTIVAL**

SEE PAGE 80

Los Angeles

**The
Big Read**

**NARCO
THERAPY IN
TECHIE L.A.**

PAGE 76

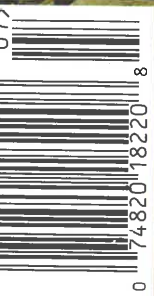
51 Ways To Explore DTLA

**Trendy Blocks.
Delicious Eats.
Killer Coffeehouses.
Must-See Shops.
Splashy New Bars.**

PLUS

**WHERE THE
BIG KIDS PLAY**

\$5.95
JULY 2017
LAMAG.COM





BEST BUDS
Felix's fiori di zucca

NEW RESTAURANTS

A Maestro Returns

AT **FELIX** IN VENICE, EVAN FUNKE ROLLS OUT SUBLIMELY REGIONAL ITALIAN FOOD

YOU'VE PROBABLY HAD *rigatoni all'Amatriciana*, the Roman specialty made with *guanciale*—but have you *understood* the dish before? At Evan Funke's Felix, the fat from the cured pork cheek is evenly rendered so that, when shaken vigorously in the pan with little more than tomato sauce, it creates an emulsion that glazes the ridged tubes of custom-milled wheat. Made this way, the preparation doesn't merely sit; it sings.

Funke is a pasta purist who can slip lessons like that into any meal. He did it first at his Culver City restaurant *Bucato*, and now the 38-year-old chef is back with Felix, which occupies the former home of Joe's on the tidal end of Abbot Kinney Boulevard in Venice. His partner in the venture, Janet Zuccarini, heads Toronto's *Gusto 54* hospitality group, and a professional polish is clear from the moment you enter. A cute bar with turquoise stools leads to a central dining room with banquettes that curve around a glass-enclosed pasta lab. The patio has been turned into a room papered in a floral pattern that's clubby enough for a

Super Tuscan—though one of the affordable Italian country wines is the smarter way to go.

A craftsman at heart, Funke adds ingredients only when necessary. In fact, he's happier when taking one or two of them away. So a crudo of ridgeback prawns requires just great olive oil and a dusting of *pepperoncino*. Fennel parmigiana gets crisped in a wood-burning oven while tiramisu—stripped of the sloshed-on coffee—is transformed into a moist alliance of delicate sponge cake and Sicilian marsala.

But Funke's skill in elevating the familiar is clearest with pastas. The selections are divided by region, and it's easy to feel as if you're twirling them in some distant setting. The *tonnarelli cacio e pepe*, a skein of strands adorned only with cheese and black pepper, nods to Roman shepherds who used the spice to keep warm. The deep indentation holding ricotta and bread crumbs in the orecchiette? He picked up the thumb-pressing technique in the Adriatic port of Bari. Lucky for us, he brought it back home. *1023 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice, felixla.com.* > PATRIC KUH

Tallula's

SANTA MONICA

● JOSH LOEB AND Zoe Nathan have remade the old Marix Mexican restaurant into an irresistibly fun beach spot. Chef Mario Alberto's seasonal menu is filled with such creative dishes as duck *chilaquiles* and favorites like nachos that arrive piled on a baking sheet and begging for a margarita or two. Reservations go fast, but half the tables are held for walk-ins. *118 Entrada Dr., tallulasrestaurant.com.*
> MICHAELNE BUSICO

Woodley Proper

ENCINO

● THE LATEST ESTABLISHMENT from chef Phillip Frankland Lee evokes a stylish living room, where you settle in for a cocktail on comfy sofas and nosh on small plates like a downsized Angus burger or go big with the tower of seafood, charcuterie, and cheese. The cocktails are top-drawer; the large-format Yorkshires (15 pours for \$60), a bargain. *16101 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 242, woodleyproper.com.*
> ANN HEROLD

Luchini Pizzeria & Bar

HOLLYWOOD

● RUN-D.M.C. ALBUM covers hang near the oven and boom boxes are displayed like artifacts by the bar. At this New York-style pizzeria from the Tao Group, the '80s coexist with craft beers. Chopped antipasto is a jumble of roasted vegetables, with *porchetta* a solid add-on. There's nothing but crisp quality to the great \$3 slice. *1607 Cahuenga Blvd., luchinipizzeria.com.* > P.K.

THE
PERFECT
BITEPORK BELLY
WITH FAVA
LEAF MOLE

Mario Alberto has cooked alongside some of the most innovative chefs in L.A., including Ricardo Zarate, Josef Centeno, and Jeremy Fox. But when a friend asked the chef to cook his wedding dinner a few years ago, Alberto decided to replicate his mother's green mole. "She's from Durango, in Central Mexico, and she would make it with chicken," he recalls. "But I couldn't get it right. I got so frustrated." On impulse Alberto threw in a handful of fava leaves, and their intense flavor—like favas raised to the tenth power—jolted the sauce to life.

Now the fava leaf mole is in full force at Tallula's in Santa Monica, where Alberto is executive chef: A tender chunk of braised pork belly is set atop a pool of the grass green sauce and finished with ribbons of anise-y fennel, sweet red onion, and sour kumquat. The contrasting flavors and textures—crisp pork crust, falling-apart tender meat, complex sauce, and zingy toppings—make a rich combination taste surprisingly subtle. Another surprise: The mole isn't a cooked sauce. It's more of a raw salsa, its long list of ingredients whizzed together in a Vitamix and lightly heated before serving.

"It's very intuitive and personal," Alberto says of the dish. "Is it Mexican food? Probably not. But in spirit and inspiration, it is." 118 Entrada Dr., Santa Monica, tallulasrestaurant.com. > M.B.



sandwich on a squid ink-dyed bun all benefit from the setting. 3709 W. Sunset Blvd. (323-641-3709 or sawyerlosangeles.com). D nightly; brunch Sat.-Sun. Full bar.

Trois Familia

SILVER LAKE » French-Mexican \$

The supergroup of Ludo Lefebvre, Jon Shook, and Vinny Dotolo has made a thing of dropping destination restaurants into strip malls. Trois Familia brings the formula to Silver Lake. Pinto bean burritos with garlic brown butter are offered alongside chicken *milanese* crowned with cucumber curls. Double-decker potato tacos are what might happen when Lefebvre reimagines Taco Bell's Cheesy Gordita Crunch. 3510 W. Sunset Blvd. (323-725-7800 or troisfamilia.com). B-L daily. No alcohol.

Tsubaki

ECHO PARK » Japanese \$\$

Izakaya food is meant for drinking, but there's a subtlety to some of Tsubaki's dishes—*chawanmushi* egg custard with Dungeness crab, raw Tasmanian ocean trout with salmon roe—that might be lost after the first few pours. For more serious swilling there's a Southern spin on *karage*, or fried chicken, that's soaked in buttermilk and served with honey vinegar. 1356 Allison Ave. (213-900-4900 or tsubakila.com). D Tue.-Sun. Beer, wine, and sake.

Union

PASADENA » Italian \$\$

Bruce Kalman's produce-forward Italian cooking is all balance and ease. He parries the cured intensity of prosciutto with peaches and pairs browned garlic with Fresno chiles in the *spaghetti alla chitarra*. The *giardiniera* is a signature: pickled florets riding the tang of house-cultured butter. Kalman butchers a whole hog each week, rolling the loin in belly fat and roasting the *porchetta* until the skin crackles. 37 E. Union St. (626-795-5841 or unionpasadena.com). D nightly. Beer and wine.

Winsome

ECHO PARK » New American \$\$

Angelenos love eating small, grain-heavy seasonal dishes with jolts of texture and acid, and Winsome has this as-yet-unnamed genre under control. The shaved cauliflower salad is all delightful crunch, spiked with lime, parmesan, and Bragg's Nutritional Yeast Seasoning. Snap peas, kohlrabi, and broccoli *spigarello* are tossed with a lemongrass dressing that stars the sour Turkish pepper *urfa biber*. 1115 Sunset Blvd. (213-415-1818 or eatwinsome.com). B-L-D daily. Full bar.

THE VALLEY

The Bellwether

STUDIO CITY » New American \$\$

Ted Hopson's tuna crudo is fanned out above a node of Calabrian chiles. His skin-on French fries? They are the culmination of a three-day process that leaves them stupendously crisp and moist. That taste you can't quite put your finger on in the roasted vegetables is the *schmaltz* that the chef skims off his chicken stock. 13251 Ventura Blvd. (818-285-8184 or thebellwetherla.com). D nightly; brunch Sat.-Sun. Full bar.

Black Market Liquor Bar

STUDIO CITY » New American \$\$

Most nights it seems as if half the Valley is here, huddled at the bar for a peaty scotch cocktail or squeezed into a booth for a bowl of fennel-perfumed mussels. *Top Chef* graduate Antonia Lofaso understands the complex art of drinking food, but her Italian chops are visible in the buxom *ricotta gnudi* with brown butter and pistachios. The deep-fried fluffernutter sandwich is a reminder that food, like life, should not be taken too seriously. 11915 Ventura Blvd. (818-446-2533 or blackmarketliquorbar.com). D nightly; brunch Sat.-Sun. Full bar.

The Arthur J

MANHATTAN BEACH » Steak House \$\$\$

David Lefebvre's take on the American steak house is so midcentury plush, it's an excuse to splurge. Whether that means ordering the top-grade Wagyu at \$32 an ounce or the reasonable \$30 flatiron steak, wet aged and darkened on the pulley grill, is up to you. For those opposed to large primal cuts of cow, consider the sea bream, which is cleverly deboned yet served whole with charred halves of lemon and orange that beg to be given a liberal squeeze. 903 Manhattan Ave. (310-878-9620 or thearthurj.com). D nightly. Full bar.

Fishing with Dynamite

MANHATTAN BEACH » Seafood \$\$\$

A premium raw bar near the beach shouldn't be unusual, but it is. The same goes for velvety clam chowder. Here it achieves smoky richness—you can thank the Neuske's bacon for that—without any floury glop. Crab cakes, too, are unsullied by bread crumbs, letting the pure crustacean essence shine. On the raw bar menu you'll find several kinds of oysters, Peruvian scallops, and Alaskan king crab legs. 1148 Manhattan Ave. (310-893-6299 or eatfwd.com). L-D daily; brunch Sat.-Sun. Full bar.

Little Sister

MANHATTAN BEACH » Asian Fusion \$\$\$

Chef and co-owner Tin Vuong deftly translates the flavors of his native Vietnam for the casual Manhattan Beach drinking scene. Start with crispy tendon chips dusted with red curry spice. Soft-shell crab fills a loose interpretation of *banh mi*. Digging for pork belly inside a *bánh xèo* crepe becomes a delicious treasure hunt. 1131 Manhattan Ave. (310-545-2096 or littlesistermb.com). L Fri.-Sun.; D nightly. Beer, wine, and sake. Also at 523 W. 7th St., downtown (213-628-3146 or littlesisterla.com). B-L-D daily.

Love & Salt

MANHATTAN BEACH » Italian \$\$-\$\$\$

Influenced by his Italian-American heritage and his time at resorts like the Greenbrier in West Virginia, Michael Fiorelli creates a confident version of pasta-centric coastal cuisine. The venture is formal enough that a waiter scoops bone marrow over the *cavatappi* yet lighthearted enough that English muffins with house-cultured butter aren't out of place. Don't miss desserts as comforting as warm Italian doughnuts with lemon curd and Nutella. 317 Manhattan Beach Blvd. (310-545-5252 or loveandsalta.com). L Fri.; D nightly; brunch Sat.-Sun. Full bar.

M.B. Post

MANHATTAN BEACH » New American \$\$

David LeFevre (the Arthur J, Fishing with Dynamite) cuts a swath through genres and latitudes with the gusto of someone who's clearly pleased to be at the stove. A cooked-down Basque *piperade* bathes ricotta-stuffed squash blossoms. He grills squid to a pearly transparency, reinterpreting fish-and-chips with lightly battered halibut cheeks. 1142 Manhattan Ave. (310-545-5405 or eatmbpost.com). D nightly; brunch Sat.-Sun. Full bar.

Steak & Whisky

HERMOSA BEACH » Steak House \$\$\$\$

This pier-adjacent chophouse is Tin Vuong's (Little Sister) most regal project yet. Still, it might be the only steak joint where board shorts don't get a second glance. *Comté*-topped tureens of onion soup are fortified with oxtail and brandy. Waiters gush over bona fide Japanese Wagyu. 117 Pier Ave. (310-318-5555 or steakandwhisky.com). L Mon.-Fri.; D nightly; brunch Sat.-Sun. Full bar.

» WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS. PLEASE E-MAIL US AT LETTERS@LAMAG.COM.