



FOOD & DRINK

THE BEST ITALIAN RESTAURANTS IN ALL OF LA

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ALIMENTO | DYLAN + JENI

We can probably all agree that a hearty plate of spaghetti and meatballs, a quick slice of pizza, and a plate of chicken Parmigiana at a neighborhood spot can be great -- but sometimes, simple won't do. Thankfully, Los Angeles has a few high-end Italian restaurants that actually make us feel like we're in Italy -- which is why these are the best ones in town.



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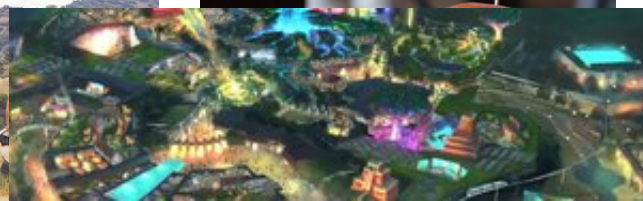


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BESTIA

ARTS DISTRICT

After a recent kitchen fire, Bestia is back up and running. This modern Italian restaurant from chefs Ori Menashe (savory) and Genevieve Gergis (sweet) was a game changer for downtown LA's Arts District. Meat hooks in the dining room might

come across as macabre, but here that accent just made in-house, roasted bone marrow's spooned roasted lamb's neck comes covered with salsa ve including the bread, pastas, wood-fired pizzas, and seven or eight sweets in play, most of them seasoned and fritters.



These Creepy Bleeding Hand Candles Melt To Reveal The Skeleton Inside



DYLAN + JENI

ALIMENTO

SILVER LAKE

The City of Los Angeles refilled the Silver Lake Reservoir earlier this year and the neighborhood's popping with tons of new restaurants, but some things -- like beloved Alimento -- haven't changed (for good reason). Zach Pollack, Sotto's co-founder, traded his previous post's Southern Italian focus for the top half of the boot, but that doesn't mean Pollack is bound by tradition. Far from it at this glass-fronted

restaurant, where soup-stuffed tortellini en brodo resemble xiao long bao, and chicken Milanese forms the backbone of one of LA's best fried chicken sandwiches.

ANGELINI OSTERIA

MID-CITY

Gino Angelini has been a champion for his country's cuisine since emigrating to LA from Italy's Emilia-Romagna region in 1995. He cooked at some of the city's best Italian restaurants before opening Angelini Osteria, where he's mentored many chefs, including Bestia co-founder Ori Menashe. He opened other restaurants, but only his namesake Mid-City restaurant (and its offshoot marketplace Angelini Alimentari, which hawks gelato, sandwiches, and salads) perseveres. Regulars who frequent Angelini Osteria enjoy consistent quality and a sprawling menu that includes a parade of house-made pasta dishes, including his famed lasagna verde, and hearty secondi like veal chop Milanese or Dover sole finished in the wood oven.



CHI SPACCA

HOLLYWOOD

Nancy Silverton, Mario Batali, and Joe Bastianich transformed a kitchen classroom into a salumi bar, and ultimately, LA's most over-the-top monuments to meat, adding even more value to a compound that also includes Pizzeria Mozza and Osteria Mozza. SoCal native Ryan DeNicola now helms the open kitchen, which includes a wood grill that yields massive cuts like bistecca Fiorentina and a fennel pollen dusted tomahawk pork chop that are consistent with the restaurant's cleaver logo. Charcuterie is made in house using exacting standards, with salumi, pate and terrine, and rarely seen culatello all making appearances. The crispy flatbread -- focaccia di Recco -- contains no meat, but it does ooze Stracchino cheese. Mozza Group pastry chef Dahlia Narvaez, a James Beard Award winner, furnishes desserts, though it's tempting to just order the beef cheek and bone marrow pie.

THE FACTORY KITCHEN

ARTS DISTRICT

Chef Angelo Auriana, front-of-house partner Matteo Ferdinandi, and beverage director Francine Diamond-Ferdinandi turned an Arts District back alley into an industrial chic dining destination in 2013. Since then, this tucked-away Italian restaurant has become a popular choice for pastas like handkerchief pasta tossed with Ligurian almond basil pesto. Dinner brings out big guns "from the sea and land" like juicy porchetta or monkfish fillet. The Factory Kitchen also makes its own focaccina di Recco, which is filled with Crescenza cheese and available topped with combos like San Marzano tomatoes, capers, and anchovies or zucchini blossoms and parsley.



SKOTT SNIDER

GUSTO

MID-CITY

Chef Vic Casanova left the hotel restaurant world to open Gusto with wife Jessa in 2011. Earlier this summer, they closed down sister spot Pistola to move Gusto into a larger space -- deserving of its big flavors and a well-deserved reputation for serving premium house-made pastas. Bucatini carbonara is a particular standout, with chewy tubes sticky with pancetta and washed with egg yolk, as well as a tasty linguine with crab, zucchini pickled Fresno chilies, and sea urchin sauce. And though Pistola was better known for its meat dishes, don't sleep on Gusto's meatballs, topped with zesty tomato sugo on a whipped ricotta bed.

JON & VINNY'S

FAIRFAX VILLAGE

Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo transformed a dingy Fairfax Village pizzeria into a ray of edible sunshine. The family-friendly Italian-American restaurant has pretty much everything an adult (or kid) could want, including pizza with crave-worthy crust, house-made pasta dishes, and chocolate budino and Straus soft serve ice cream for dessert. If you wake up early -- a big if -- you'll also find the restaurant makes a killer breakfast pizza and BLT. The duo's front of house partner/beverage director Helen Johannesen also presides over Helen's wine shop in back of the restaurant, with a small but vital selection -- and home delivery.

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COURTESY OF RYAN TANAKA

OFFICINE BRERA

ARTS DISTRICT

Executive chef Angelo Auriana and front-of-house partner Matteo Ferdinandi built on the success of The Factory Kitchen by opening this nearby trattoria with a glass-fronted kitchen. Seasonal pastas and salads get prominent placement on the menu, as do big cuts of meat. Risotto also gets the rare spotlight: chewy carnaroli rice hosts proteins like milk-braised salt cod and bone marrow. Pro tip: Officine Brera also has an off-menu dish at dinner, a delicious chickpea pancake called farinata.

OSTERIA LA BUCA

HOLLYWOOD

Osteria La Buca, located down Melrose from Paramount Studios, has been a neighborhood favorite for over a decade, which has allowed the restaurant to grow

and improve its design. New owners Stephen Sakulsky and John Moezzi made a big score when they hired Chef Cameron Slauch, who previously worked at Manhattan culinary temple Eleven Madison Park. Slauch takes an inspired approach at Osteria La Buca, which is now worth a drive. He makes pastas in-house, pizzas and salads starring seasonal ingredients, and some precisely prepared proteins like fish and a top-flight pork chop.

OSTERIA MOZZA

OSTERIA MOZZA

HOLLYWOOD

Nancy Silverton, Joe Bastianich, and Mario Batali created the Italian Army knife of restaurants with their Osteria, which combines a high-end Italian restaurant with a lively amaro bar and a mozzarella bar where Silverton herself can also be found preparing dishes with mozzarella and burrata. Dahlia Narvaez makes sure seasonal desserts keep pace. The only thing this mozza doesn't have is pizza, but neighboring

Pizzeria Mozza more than covers that territory.



SOTTO

SOTTO

BEVERLYWOOD

Steve Samson and Zach Pollack devoted this subterranean Beverlywood restaurant to soulful Southern Italian cooking -- and even though Pollack is now focused on Alimento, Samson and chef de cuisine Craig Towe ensure that Sotto is still going strong. Stefano Ferrara installed a yellow-tiled, wood-burning oven patterned after the best versions in Naples, which burns oak to produce the city's best pizza. Guanciaie pizza with fennel pollen is a particular standout, as are the house-made pastas, like chewy rigatoni with chicken liver ragu. Grilled pork meatballs and a blistered little gem salad with anchovy dressing are similarly memorable.



COURTESY OF JOSH LURIE

VINCENTI

BRENTWOOD

Brentwood's San Vicente Blvd has become a hotbed for Italian restaurants, but the refurbished restaurant that Maureen Vincenti and Chef Nicola Mastronardi have steered since 1997 still stands out in the crowded field thanks to the level of their food. In summer, they serve a great soft-shell crab with roasted vegetables, and house-made tagliolini with Manila clams and zucchini. Cooler weather calls for richer meat dishes like porchetta. No matter the season, Vincenti also always hosts Monday's popular pizza night.

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ALAN GASTELUM

FELIX

VENICE

If you're lucky enough to snag a reservation at Evan Funke's Felix -- which opened this April and quickly turned into the hottest ticket on Abbot Kinney -- consider fasting before you go. The restaurant, which pays homage to Italy's most beloved culinary regions, boasts a glass-enclosed, temperature-controlled pasta lab where you can

watch Funke himself roll and hand-cut twisty trofie and delicately shaped orecchiette. Though pasta's his specialty (you may remember Funke from Culver City's **now-closed Bucato**), the starters (like stuffed squash blossoms or juicy pork meatballs) and pizzas are no afterthought. The kitchen proudly mixes its dough by hand, which results in thin, slightly charred crusts topped with seasonal ingredients.



SCOPA ITALIAN ROOTS

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VENICE

Top Chef contestant Antonia Lofaso's food reflects her Italian-American heritage, making Scopa one of the Westside's best spots for shareable small plates with an old-school Italian slant. The hot starter offerings are all rich and excellent -- crisp, lemony calamari blackened by squid ink; a fried rice ball stuffed with meat (and yes, you'll want it with an egg); squash blossoms oozing fresh ricotta; and scallops, large, plump, and sitting in brown butter. The salads, pastas, and mains (like whole branzino and

veal chop Milanese) are equally memorable, but you'd be forgiven if you have a hard time getting past the antipasti menu. And since mixologist maestro Pablo Moix has curated a selection of exclusive spirits over the past year, don't leave without sipping on one of Scopa's small-batch bourbons.



ED ANDERSON

ROSSOBLU

FASHION DISTRICT

You can thank chef Steve Samson's mother and grandmother for Rossoblu's Bolognese-inspired menu. There's "Mom's Minestra Nel Sacco": Parmesan dumplings wrapped in cloth and released into a fragrant broth once the dish arrives at your table. Then there's "Nonna's Tagliatelle Al Ragu": pasta made in-house (of course) and mixed with just the right amount of meaty sauce. Even the kitchen, which contains a wood-burning hearth powered by oak coals, is a tribute to Samson's grandfather. Like so many other Downtown spaces converted into restaurants, Rossoblu preserves its

building's industrial feel -- all high ceilings and soaring concrete columns -- but couch-like banquettes and other antique-inspired touches lend a warm familiarity. Which works perfectly, because after all, you're there to enjoy nonna's home cooking.

MACCHERONI REPUBLIC

DOWNTOWN

This charming Downtown trattoria serves up saucy, stick-to-your-bones Italian comfort food, which, at the end of the day, is really the best kind. Start off with pan-fried shrimp cakes and thin-sliced baked eggplant rolls, load up on pumpkin ravioli swimming in cream sauce or trippa dello chef (a tender tripe pasta that's hard to find elsewhere), and end strong on classic Italian sweets -- perhaps a bite of homemade biscotti or the cold-pressed olive cake. You'll leave happy, and so will your wallet, since the dinner bill at Maccheroni almost never strains your budget.



SABIN ORR

DRAGO CENTRO

DOWNTOWN

Hailing from Sicily, chef Celestino Drago helped to pioneer the Italian dining renaissance in Los Angeles, ranging from established ventures like Beverly Hills' *Il Pastaio* to *Drago Ristorante*, which opened late last year in the Petersen Automotive Museum. But *Drago Centro* -- his Downtown magnum opus housed in a former bank vault -- remains a stalwart and continues to create inventive riffs on Italian classics. Look out for seasonal specials, like this summer's house-made fettuccini blanketed by black truffle shavings and corn-filled pasta topped with chunks of crisp pancetta. Or stick with menu mainstays, such as a jumbo-sized piece of handkerchief pasta served with crab and pesto, or a tender, truffle-crusted chicken that your knife will slice right through.

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OSTERIA BIGOLI

OSTERIA BIGOLI

SANTA MONICA

On any given day, you'll find chef Claudio Marchesan chatting up guests and asking how they're enjoying his restaurant's rustic Italian offerings. The intimate space consistently attracts loyal Montana Avenue locals, and Marchesan himself is equally invested in the community. (In fact, he often mines Santa Monica's farmers market in search of fresh produce for dinner service.) His finds -- such as juicy grape tomatoes or baby lettuce -- might show up as part of the creamy burrata starter or the delightfully crisp mixed salad. As for heartier finds, there's his flavor-packed veal and pork meatballs, the delicious combo of tripe and beans, and veal loin medallions.

FRITTO MISTO

SANTA MONICA & HERMOSA BEACH

The namesake dish at this long-standing neighborhood joint is a hearty plate of mixed, fried things (quite literally, that's what fritto misto means in Italian) -- and it's exactly how you should kick-start your meal. Piled with battered and fried shrimp, calamari, and veggies, the platter comes with a dangerously addictive roasted garlic mayo dip that will have you begging for a refill. And while other restaurants pride themselves on Instagram-ready fare and photogenic interiors, Fritto Misto is as cozy, homey, and unpretentious as they come. That's what you'd expect from a place that plies you with plenty of warm, fresh bread and butter and has a build-your-own-pasta option on the menu.



FORMA RESTAURANT & CHEESE BAR

FORMA RESTAURANT & CHEESE BAR

SANTA MONICA

Two words: cheese wheel. This perpetually lively Montana Avenue eatery serves some of its pastas dalla forma -- a preparation method where the noodles are tossed

into gigantic cheese wheels and arrive to you steaming, fragrant, and irresistibly cheesy. (Warning: The practice isn't executed tableside, so if you want a peek, sneak over to the dining room's back corner for a look-see.) For a simple, straightforward dish that truly showcases the perfection of Forma's al dente noodles and the flavors of the cheese, ask for the chitarra cacio e pepe -- a combo of black pepper, extra-virgin olive oil, and slightly sharp, salty, melty Pecorino Romano. Don't overlook the cheese bar either -- there's an overwhelming array of options, from pungent goat Cheddar to Boschetto al Tartufo (a truffle-flecked, semi-soft cheese made from cow's and sheep's milk).



UOVO

UOVO

SANTA MONICA

Santa Monica's not exactly hurting for good Italian cuisine, but this new, semi-casual, reasonably priced pasta bar definitely fills a void. The brainchild of Sugarfish co-

founders Lele Massimini and Jerry Greenberg, Uovo is entirely focused on pasta (with a few veggie complements). The noodles are handmade in a kitchen in Bologna using special red egg yolks available only in Italy, and then shipped stateside daily so that Uovo's cooks can prepare classic dishes -- cacio e pepe, a slightly spicy tonnarelli all'Arrabiata with a kick, and tagliatelle al ragu (made without cheese, milk, or cream, it's already a signature dish) -- that serve to highlight the delectable pasta.



NORTH ITALIA

NORTH ITALIA

SANTA MONICA & EL SEGUNDO

Restaurateur Sam Fox, who's behind Third Street Promenade-adjacent spots like True Food Kitchen and Flower Child, opened a North Italia outpost in Santa Monica earlier this year. And although it'd be easy to dismiss a chain restaurant with locations in Arizona and Texas, this place is a solid bet when you want to enjoy handmade pizzas (go for the meaty Pig pie piled with spicy pepperoni, soppressata, and sausage) and