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LA

ISSUE 39

# DOWNTOWNER<sup>®</sup>

THE INSIDER GUIDE TO DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

PAGE 3

## UNCLE JOHN'S

If you're craving Cajun, this place has got you covered!



### DRY RIVER BREWING

A brewery invested in quality you'll taste right away.

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### MAP OF DOWNTOWN

Find your way.

PAGE 8

### H. MERRICK OF CALIFORNIA

California cool gets draped in the ultimate wear.

PAGE 10



# LONG LIVE DOWNTOWN

THE INSIDER'S VIEW OF DOWNTOWN CULTURE, FOOD, DRINKS, FASHION & THE PEOPLE WHO SHAPE IT.

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— ferroconcrete.com —

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# UNCLE JOHN'S

## CAJUN CRAVINGS

Written & Photographed By Amanda Gunawan

There are days when you just crave the spicy, salty, tangy flavor of Cajun food. There are days when a Whole Foods salad for dinner doesn't quite cut it. There are days when you feel like getting your hands down and dirty. There are days when you feel like you've worked hard and damn it, you deserve a good meal!

...And when you're having one of those days, look no further than Uncle John's (because let's be honest, nobody's got the time to line up for Boiling Crab).

As soon as you are done parking your car along Grand Ave (and obsessively checking your meter to see if you've put in enough money), you are greeted by the amiable smile of a man (who I'm assuming is Uncle John), whose face is plastered on an unassuming signboard at the front of the restaurant.

Uncle John's prides itself for being an American-styled diner that post-face-lift. It has all the best elements that is typically associated with a diner. Comfort food, friendly servers that make you feel right at home, great music, and all in all, a warm environment that people can simply bask in, to enjoy a meal with friends without any frills. A diner is a place that you go to in your pajamas, in the middle of the night, without having to feel out of place and Uncle John's is a place for precisely that.

Uncle John's also differs from a typical American-styled diner in multiple ways. Let's start with the most shocking of them all: meet the person responsible for the Face-lift, 30-year old Shirley. You would expect the owner to at least somewhat resemble the man in the logo but boy, are you in for a treat! Vivacious and extremely hospitable, Shirley is the 4th owner to have taken over Uncle John's. A year and a half ago, Shirley moved back to Los Angeles from Germany.

(Continued on page 4)







(Continued from page 3)

"I wanted to open a restaurant and my mom's friends were trying to sell this place. I took one look at it and I knew immediately that this was the one," she asserted with great tenacity. All the previous owners of Uncle John's added something extra to the diner, akin to their signature, before they left. Some of the additions include Chinese food and new, more innovative dishes to the standard American Diner menu. On top of adding a modern twist to the overall look of the place, Shirley decided to introduce Cajun night.

Cajun night is available Mondays-Saturdays 5.30pm to 10.30pm. Think: a whole sack of seafood soaked in garlic butter, lemon pepper and Cajun sauce with a choice of spice level ranging from mild to extra spicy. Everyone gets a bib and a pair of gloves because, oh yes, it will get messy. There is nothing quite like sharing a light-hearted conversation with great friends while peeling a prawn. It finally becomes distinguishable the friends who really cook, from the ones who pretend to cook but do not know their ways around a crawfish. The Cajun spices throw in a real kick and yet are not too strong that you still taste it in your mouth the next day. For the rare oddities that do not enjoy the Cajun flavor, Uncle John's has got you covered. They have a wide selection of fried seafood that come with the tastiest fries that can be customized with either lemon pepper, Cajun, or simply plain. The habanero chicken wings are also an option for the non-seafood eaters. The meal is then finished off with a thai-tea float and the whole experience is absolute perfection.

Dine at Uncle John's to enjoy delicious Cajun food while feeling right at home. The smile of contentment belonging to the man in the logo is a fairly accurate foreshadowing of the customers'.

FIND IT HERE:  
834 S Grand Ave.  
unclejohnsdta.com



# EAT SHOP PLAY LITTLE TOKYO

Support local restaurants while exploring the variety of cuisines and rich culture that Little Tokyo has to offer, as Metro builds the Regional Connector Transit Project.

Discover more at [metro.net/eatshopplay](http://metro.net/eatshopplay).

- Cafe Demitasse 1**  
135 S San Pedro St  
213.613.9300
- Cafe Dulce 2**  
134 Japanese Village Plaza  
213.346.9910
- Chado Tea Room 3**  
369 E 1st St  
213.258.2531
- EBISU Japanese Tavern 4**  
356 E 2nd St  
213.613.1644
- Far Bar 5**  
347 E 1st St  
213.617.9990
- Fugetsu-Do Confectionery 6**  
315 E 1st St  
213.625.8595
- JiST Cafe 7**  
116 Judge John Aiso St  
213.792.2116
- Korea BBQ House 8**  
123 S Onizuka St, Ste 302  
213.680.1826
- Las Galas 9**  
103 Japanese Village Plaza  
213.687.4811
- Mitsuru Sushi & Grill 10**  
316 E 1st St  
213.626.4046
- My Ramen Bar 11**  
321 1/4 E 1st St  
213.613.9888
- Oomasa 12**  
100 Japanese Village Plaza Mall  
213.623.9048
- Poke Express By Honda-Ya 13**  
316 E 2nd St  
213.628.3665
- Snocity Urban Eatery 14**  
330 E 2nd St, Ste C  
213.265.7879
- Sushi & Teri 15**  
116 Japanese Village Plaza  
213.687.8368
- Teishokuya of Tokyo 16**  
345 E 2nd St  
213.680.0344
- Zencu Sushi & Grill Little Tokyo Mall 17**  
319 E 2nd St, Ste 206  
213.687.7780







# DRY RIVER BREWING

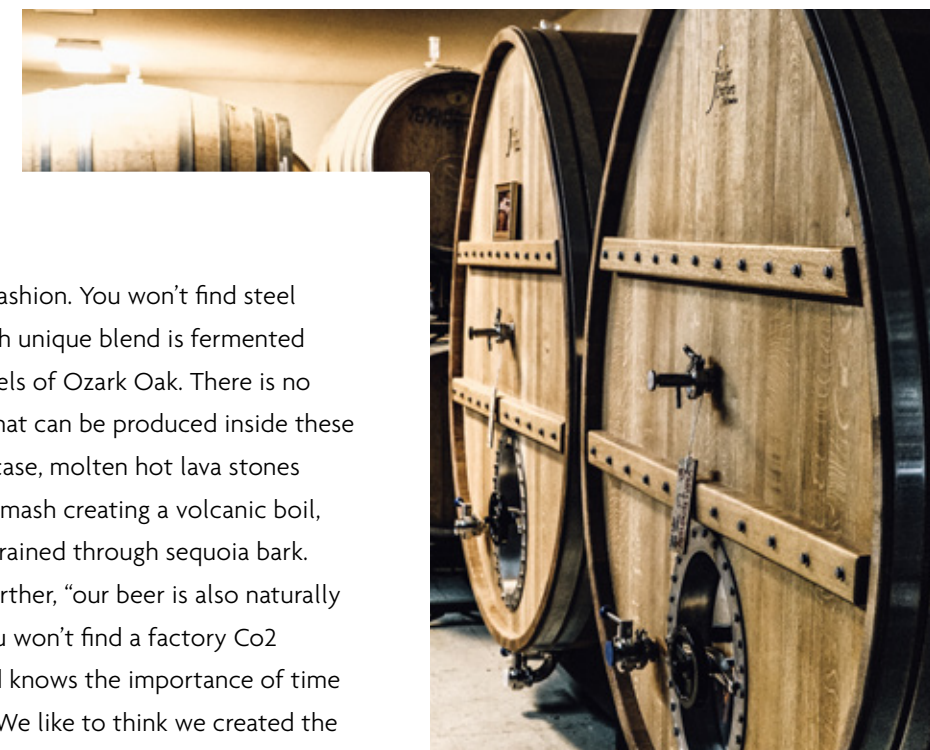
## FOLLOW THE RIVER

Written By Travis Platt  
Photographed By Robiee Ziegler

Like a river, ideas flow freely through a mind. It's the next step of paddling upstream, to make those visions a reality that tests a person's will and devotion. Sharp witted David Hodgins didn't hesitate on a brewing revelation, and quickly grabbed a paddle for the journey ahead. But with such a specific operation he intended to erect, he sought another set of hands to grab the oar aside him to fight the rapids. Insert Naga Reshi, a wide smiled beer guru, who at the time was burying barrels in deserted sands off Brazil to ferment with exotic jungle fruit. David extended the other paddle and Naga graciously accepted leaving one jungle for the next. Four years later, Dry River Brewing is cruising fiercely with the current, and this tandem quite possibly has forever changed the perception of what it means to brew beer in Los Angeles.

Walking through the salvaged fireproof doors, you're visually transported to a hidden dockside bar. Within the hollowed air, reclaimed wooden beams are bolted to walls of weathered panels. Take a seat to witness each unique brew, guided by the principle of biodynamic sours, waterfall from taps in different flavors and vibrant colors. Dry River's taste is pure and invigorating, and the wonder of flavor floats any attention into absolute beer bliss.

The back cavern is where Naga finely tunes the souls to each brew, sometimes taking



three years to fashion. You won't find steel fermenters. Each unique blend is fermented in wooden barrels of Ozark Oak. There is no limitation to what can be produced inside these barrels. In one case, molten hot lava stones dropped in the mash creating a volcanic boil, another time strained through sequoia bark. Naga takes it further, "our beer is also naturally carbonated, you won't find a factory Co2 machine." David knows the importance of time to taste ratio, "We like to think we created the term Slow Beer, it may have taken a while but now the process is fully functioning in our tap room, and our future beers are right here aging as we speak."

When asked what's ahead for the future of Dry River, Naga's confidence glowed, "To create the highest of standards and know anything is possible." Dave grinned and followed by emphasizing the importance to "create a gathering for the river revitalization effort, and draw in awareness to new and exciting things." Exciting is an understatement.

Every river has a source, the community at Dry River is just that. The exciting yet calming vitality inside lures diverse minds to gather and connect through conversation and the boundless passion for the sought after brews, like the new Mangosa Escura, a dark Mango Gose.

A river cuts through rock not because of power, but because of its persistence. In a world of commercialized beer perceptions, this hand-made wooden sanctuary is a modern brewing nirvana, channeling towards an open mindset how beer can be made and molding new perceptions of how it should taste.

FIND IT HERE:  
671 S Anderson St.  
dryriverbrewing.com



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### 3 - MADE TO ORDER IN SMALL BATCHES



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# DRINK

A

## DRY RIVER BREWING

671 S Anderson St.  
dryriverbrewing.com

B

## STRADA

119 E 5th St.  
stradadtla.com



# EAT

C

## UNCLE JOHN'S

834 S Grand Ave.  
unclejohnsdta.com

D

## LA TOSTADERIA

317 S Broadway  
instagram.com/la\_tostaderia



# MOVE

E

## H. MERRICK OF CALIFORNIA

115 W 9th St.  
hmerrickofcalifornia.com

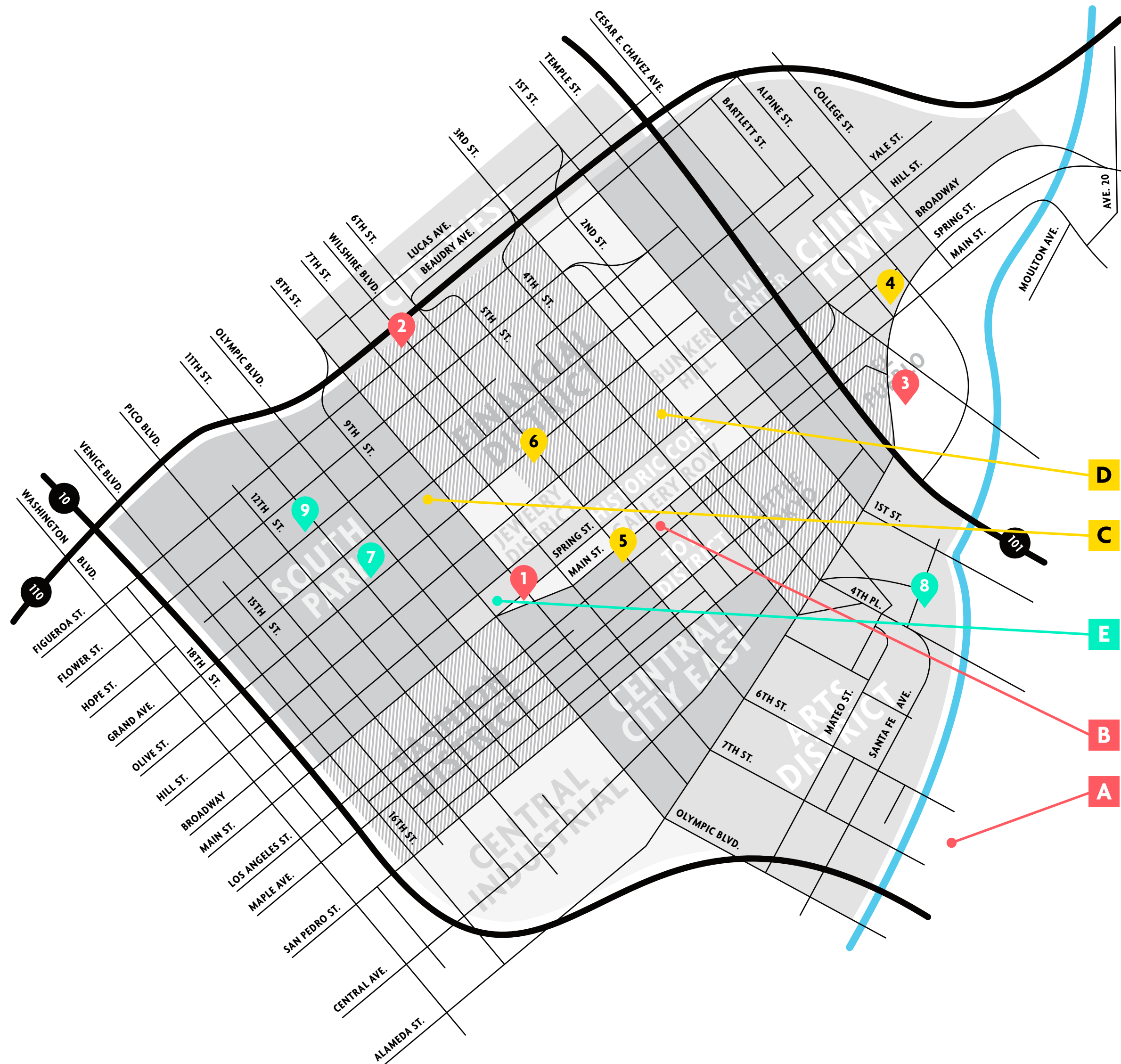
CITY STREETS

FREEWAYS

LA RIVER

M METRO RAIL STATIONS

\*MAP SIMPLIFIED & NOT TO SCALE



# DOWNTOWN FAVORITES

1

## CRANES BAR

810 S Spring St. / (213) 239-0047  
Step down into the old National City Bank vault, under the buzzing neon "cocktails" sign, and enter Crane's, a casual-chic bar where cellphones don't work (that's a good thing). Retro video games, a jukebox and drink specials entice you to spend a few hours away from the hustle.

2

## SPIRE 73

900 Wilshire Blvd. Floor 73 — [dta.intercontinental.com/dining](http://dta.intercontinental.com/dining)  
73 floors in the sky. Located at the top of the Wilshire Grand, this is the tallest open-air bar in the United States. Views to the ocean and a well-stocked bar. The Intercontinental Hotel's lobby is located one floor below and is free and open to the public, giving everyone a bird's-eye view of DTLA.

3

## TRAXX BAR

800 N Alameda St. — [traxxunionstation.com](http://traxxunionstation.com)  
Located in Union Station, the bar at Traxx is a great place to people watch, sip a cocktail, and marvel at the gorgeous train station's renovation and revitalization.

4

## PHILIPPE'S

1001 North Alameda St. — [philippes.com](http://philippes.com)  
Old. School. Downtown. Philippe's has been open since 1908 and lays claim to the original French Dipped Sandwich. Sawdust covered floors, a candy stand, and counter service that has withstood the test of time. DTLA cool, grandpa style.

5

## PALIKAO

130 E 6th St. — [facebook.com/palikaocouscous](http://facebook.com/palikaocouscous)  
Couscous-centric bowls inspired by the chef's grandmother who lived in Palikao, Algeria. Healthy and delicious!

6

## DRUNK DOG CAFE

606 S Olive St. #101 — [drunkdogcafe.com](http://drunkdogcafe.com)  
Outrageous hot dogs abound. Try to Eliote Perrito, a hot dog topped with Mexican street corn, or the Doridog, topped with, yup, Doritos.

7

## HORROR ESCAPES LA

1041 South Olive St. — [horrorescapesla.com](http://horrorescapesla.com)  
Because sometimes you just need to solve puzzles and scream your fool head off. They have three rooms of increasing difficulty, a secret comic book shop and The Nightshift, their warehouse-sized escape game next door. All guaranteed to send shivers down your spine.

8

## SHOP CALLED QUEST

300 S Santa Fe Ave. — [ashopcalledquest.com](http://ashopcalledquest.com)  
Art's District nerd paradise. Comic books, pins, toys, games, t-shirts and whatever else scratches your geek itch. Also, best name ever.

9

## SPEEDPLAY

1113 1/2 S Hope St. — [speedplayla.com](http://speedplayla.com)  
Get your butt kicked and toned with a sixty-minute workout class developed by a chiropractor and a personal trainer designed to be accessible to everyone and varied enough to never feel routine.





# H. MERRICK OF CALIFORNIA

## CALIFORNIA COOL

Written By Elana Kluner  
Photographed By Laetitia Wagnapel

Skip the traffic-jammed trip heading west on the 10, designer Heidi Merrick brought the surf and sand to 9th street, quite literally. Industrial copper racks of California chic ready-to-wear juxtapose the centerpiece of an enormous light-grey rock sitting atop a sand dune, created and craned in by installation artist and close friend of Heidi's, Josephine Wister Faure. "I asked her for a water feature and she was like, 'Here,'" jokes Heidi. Large-scale framed prints of the ocean by Sharon Montrose cover the walls along with custom surfboards by Heidi's brother Britt Merrick in fall hues, matching the current collection. A teak wood canopy bed by Bernard Brucha, covered in gold sequin and black leather throw pillows from Heidi's home line, sits amidst Spanish rugs on the concrete floor, just in case you're tired of trying on clothes in the cabanas. Although this flagship store could easily be a beach resort on the coast of the California Market Center, this LA-made brand retails feminine, fantastical designs seas away from swimwear (But they do sell that, too).

Whimsical gowns, sequined skirts and velvet trouser-sets are made pattern-to-product in Heidi's design studio above the shop. "The local designer has a local store, I think it's just the right way to go," Heidi says as she reminisces on a time before her downtown getaway was born. "I really wanted to represent the full collection well. I hate the way stores buy. Every time an order would come in, I died a little bit. People love to say 'This is what you're selling and this is what you



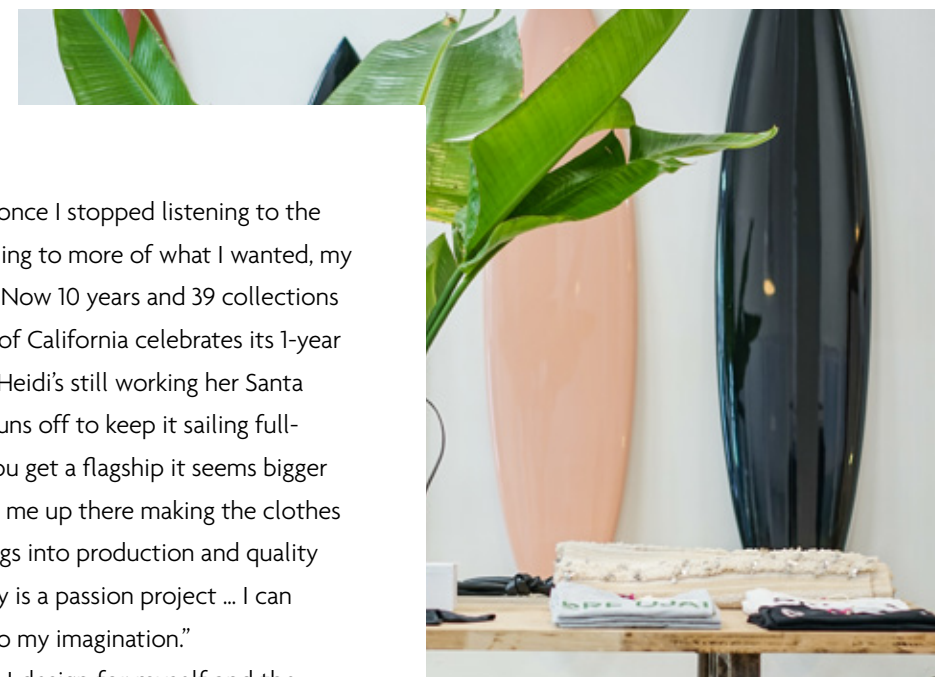
need to be', but once I stopped listening to the trends and listening to more of what I wanted, my sales increased." Now 10 years and 39 collections later, H. Merrick of California celebrates its 1-year anniversary and Heidi's still working her Santa Barbara beach-buns off to keep it sailing full-speed. "When you get a flagship it seems bigger than it is. It's still me up there making the clothes and sending things into production and quality checking. It really is a passion project ... I can never catch up to my imagination."

"I truly think I design for myself and the people around me," Heidi says, sitting in her favorite piece, the Apollo skirt, which she has in every color. "I like to make women feel that wonderful feeling when you put on a dress and think, 'Gosh, I didn't know I looked like this. I can do anything in it.'"

Every collection has some sort of reincarnation of 'the Heidi dress', an original and favored piece from the brand's beginnings. The pattern was made back when Heidi was studying in fashion school at the Los Angeles Trade Technical College. "Like from 'Sound of Music' where Maria (Von Trapp) makes clothes out of the curtains, I went and bought from a store that sells weird thick embroidered home fabrics and made each layer in a different vintage upholstery. I lined it in black Spanish trim. It was Heidi grown up." And now that the brand is all grown up, 'the Heidi dress' blueprint can still be seen, but in reverse.

Besides the SRF line that can be found in-store, which Heidi shared is an inside joke on keeping your surf spot secret, plans are in the works for a men's collection coming in 2018. So until then, men are welcome to come in and escape the city streets, dip their toes in the sand, sip on a refreshing can of La Croix sparkling water, and listen to the relaxing Tropicana music.

FIND IT HERE:  
115 W 9th St.  
hmerrickofcalifornia.com



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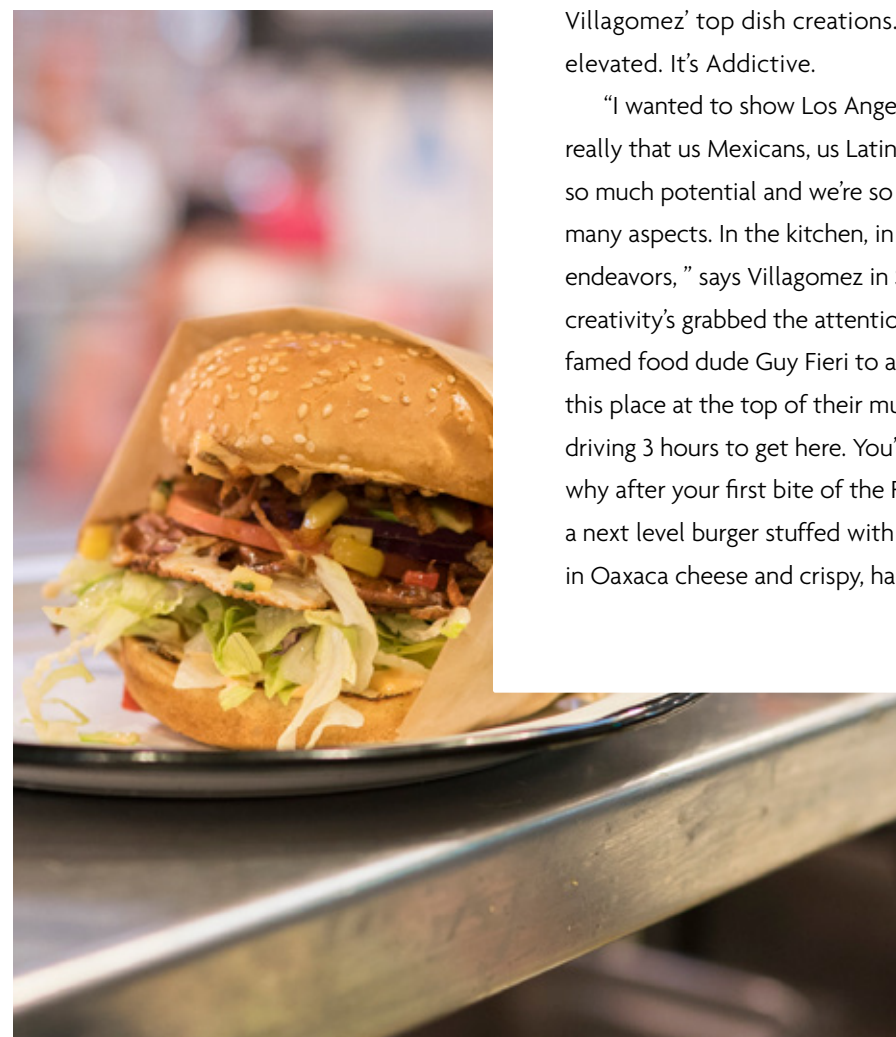
# LA TOSTADERIA

FROM MEXICO WITH LOVE

Written By Linda Hosmer  
Photographed By Kort Havens

“Adelante! Sienta se! (Come on in! Take a seat!),” motions Chef Fernando Villagomez with the kind of smile that welcomes you, hugs you and makes you feel at home. And La Tostaderia, a food counter inside Grand Central Market (GCM), is just that — it’s home to Chef Villagomez’ top dish creations. It’s Mexican. It’s elevated. It’s Addictive.

“I wanted to show Los Angeles, to the world really that us Mexicans, us Latinos we have so much potential and we’re so creative in so many aspects. In the kitchen, in entrepreneurial endeavors,” says Villagomez in Spanish. And his creativity’s grabbed the attention of so many from famed food dude Guy Fieri to a couple who had this place at the top of their must-eat spots after driving 3 hours to get here. You’ll taste exactly why after your first bite of the Patrona Burger, a next level burger stuffed with shrimp trapped in Oaxaca cheese and crispy, hash brown-esque

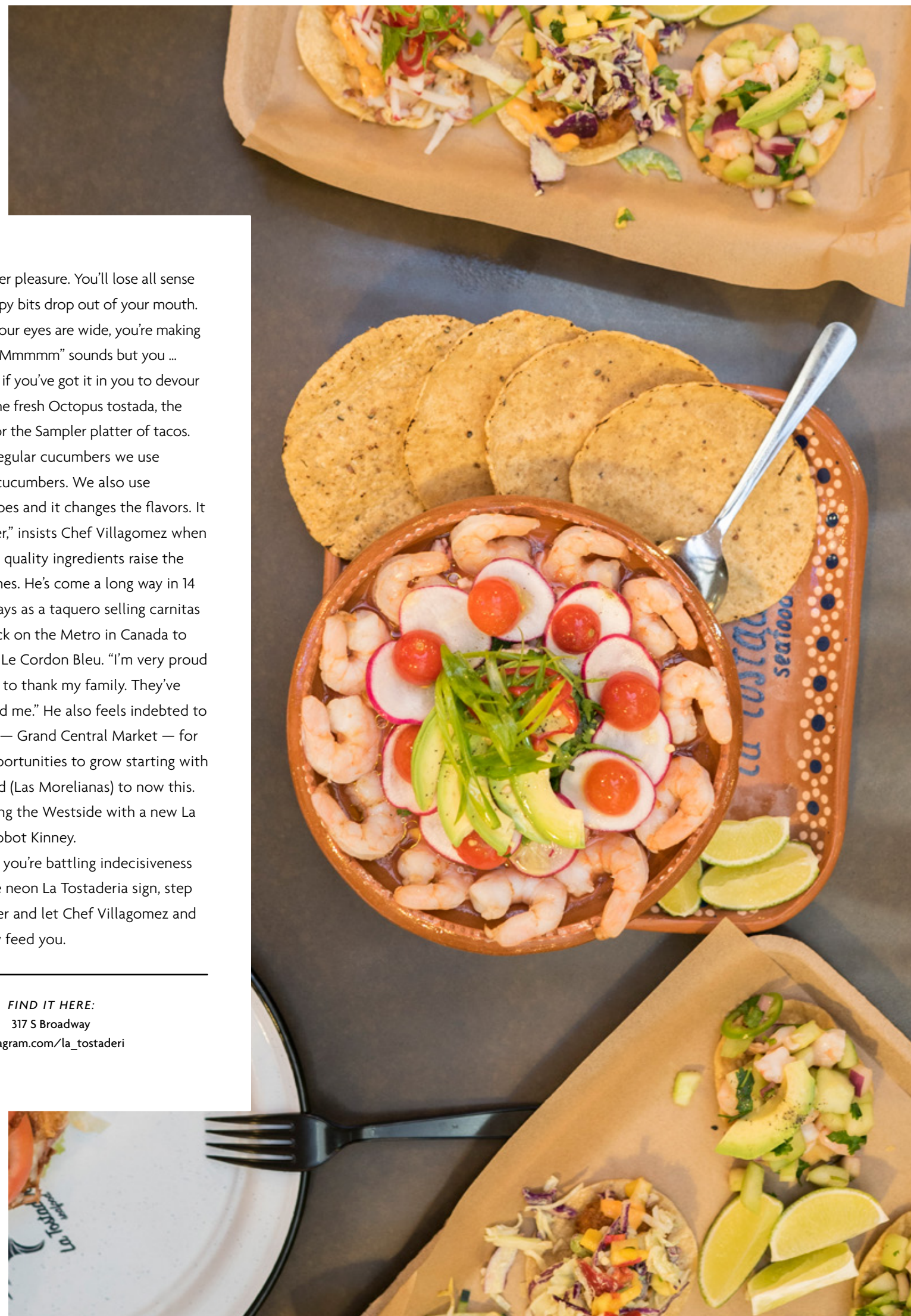


potatoes. It’s sheer pleasure. You’ll lose all sense of shame as sloppy bits drop out of your mouth. You look crazy, your eyes are wide, you’re making those annoying “Mmmmm” sounds but you ... are ... happy. And if you’ve got it in you to devour more — go for the fresh Octopus tostada, the Shrimp ceviche or the Sampler platter of tacos.

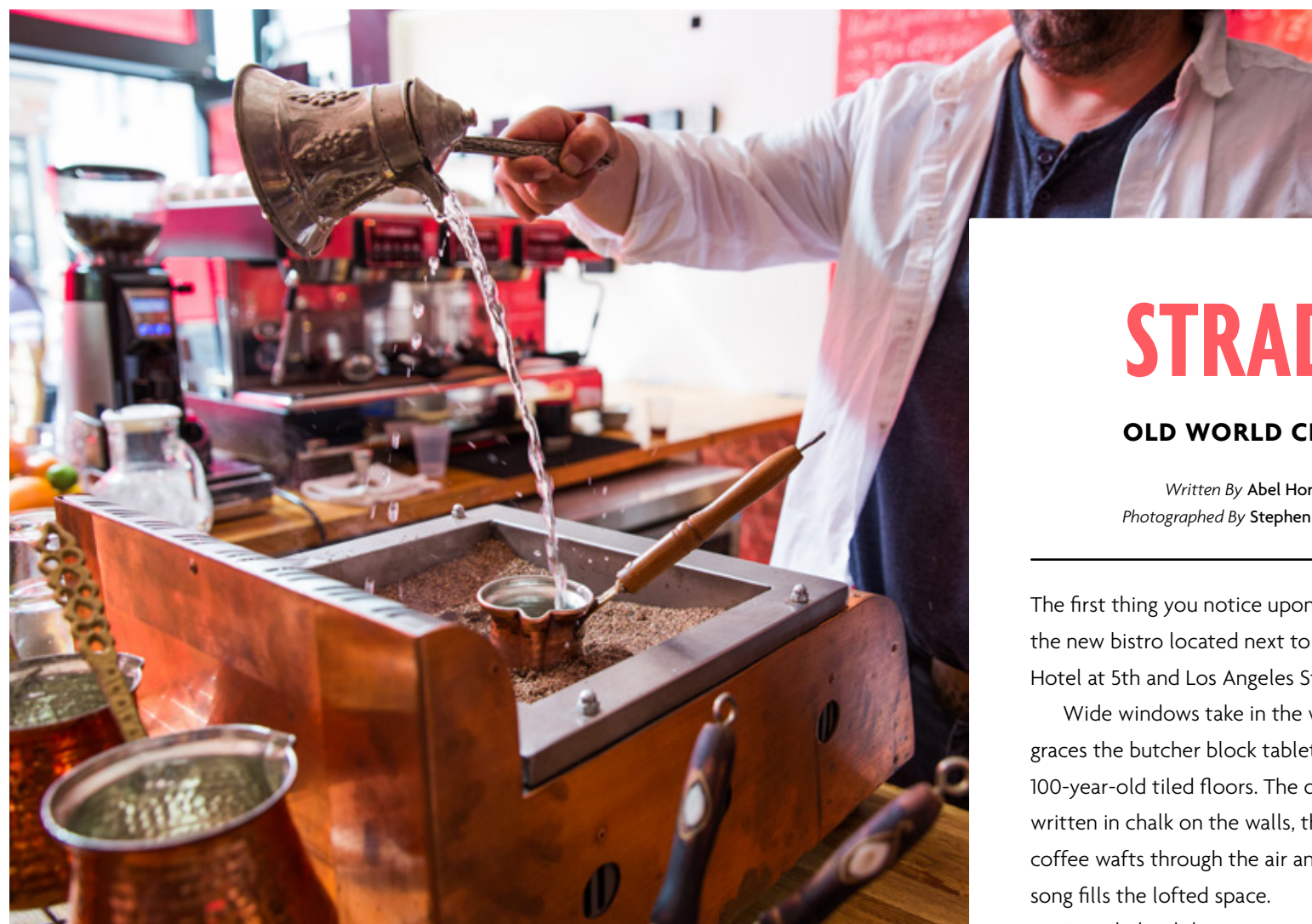
“Instead of regular cucumbers we use organic Persian cucumbers. We also use heirloom tomatoes and it changes the flavors. It comes out better,” insists Chef Villagomez when it comes to how quality ingredients raise the depth of his dishes. He’s come a long way in 14 years from his days as a taquero selling carnitas out of a backpack on the Metro in Canada to graduating from Le Cordon Bleu. “I’m very proud and I really have to thank my family. They’ve always supported me.” He also feels indebted to his other family — Grand Central Market — for the multiple opportunities to grow starting with his carnitas stand (Las Morelianas) to now this. He’s even reaching the Westside with a new La Tostaderia on Abbot Kinney.

So next time you’re battling indecisiveness at GCM, find the neon La Tostaderia sign, step up to the counter and let Chef Villagomez and his friendly crew feed you.

FIND IT HERE:  
317 S Broadway  
[instagram.com/la\\_tostaderia](https://www.instagram.com/la_tostaderia)







## STRADA

### OLD WORLD CHARM

Written By Abel Horwitz  
Photographed By Stephen LaMarche

The first thing you notice upon entering Strada, the new bistro located next to the King Edward Hotel at 5th and Los Angeles Street, is the light.

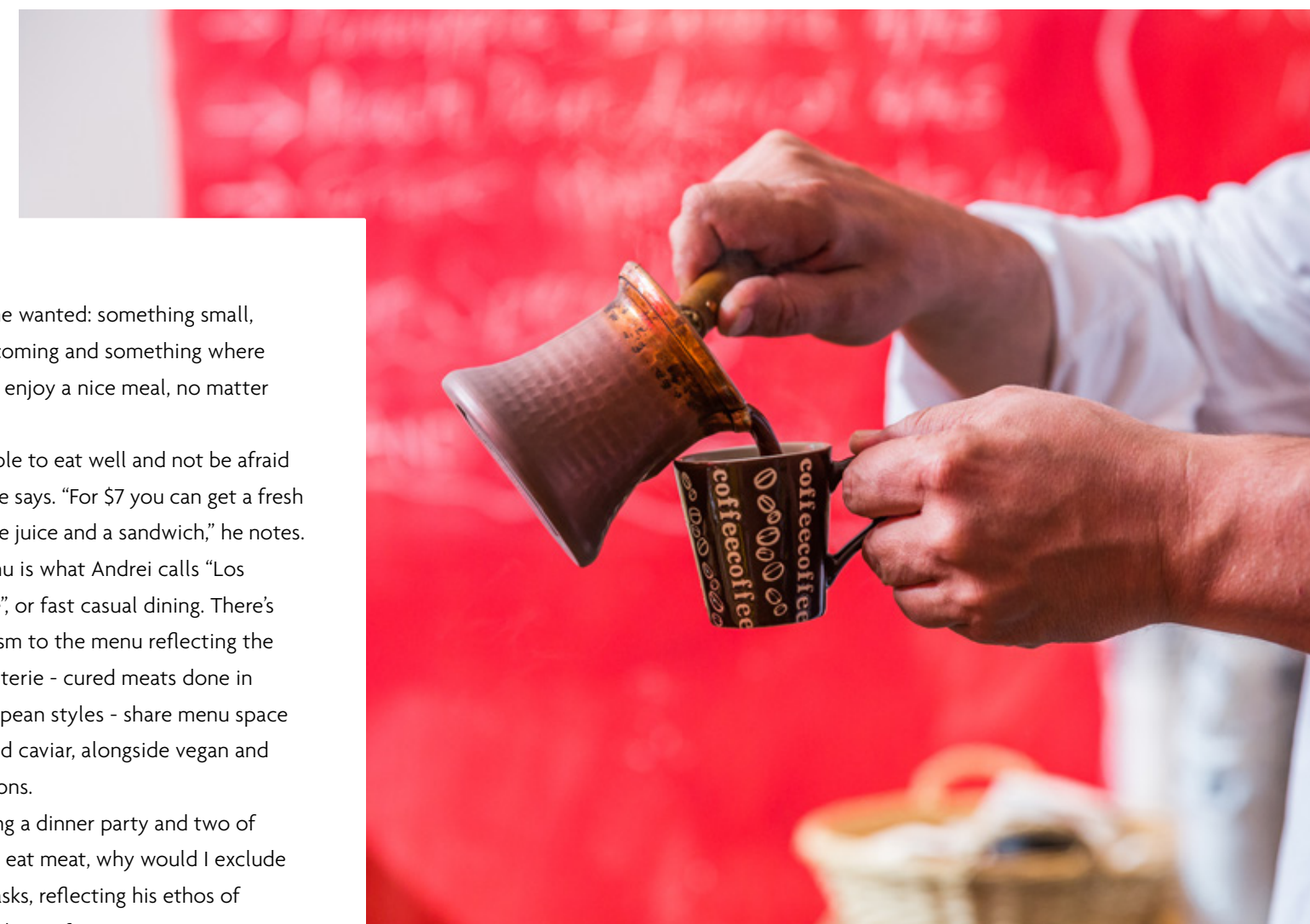
Wide windows take in the world as sunlight graces the butcher block tabletops and the 100-year-old tiled floors. The daily specials are written in chalk on the walls, the smell of good coffee wafts through the air and the perfect song fills the lofted space.

From behind the counter owner/operator Julian Andrei sips a Turkish coffee and watches the world go by. The buzz and bustle of the area, as well as the bus stop right outside his window, ensures foot traffic throughout the day.

Andrei chuckles. "It's like a Fellini film," he says, his Romanian accent soft and warm. "'Strada' means 'street' in Italian, and I want everyone who comes in here to feel welcome."

The location was what attracted Andrei to this storefront. The King Edward was built by John Parkinson, the architect also responsible for Union Station, and it was the history of the building, as well as the feel of the neighborhood that drew Andrei in. Aged wood, marble columns and an intricately tiled floor give the airy space a sense of old world European grace.

Andrei used to manage Mas Malo, and when he decided to step out into his own place



he knew what he wanted: something small, something welcoming and something where everyone could enjoy a nice meal, no matter their budget.

"I want people to eat well and not be afraid of coming in," he says. "For \$7 you can get a fresh squeezed orange juice and a sandwich," he notes.

Strada's menu is what Andrei calls "Los Angeles Cuisine", or fast casual dining. There's a multiculturalism to the menu reflecting the city. The charcuterie - cured meats done in traditional European styles - share menu space with ceviche and caviar, alongside vegan and vegetarian options.

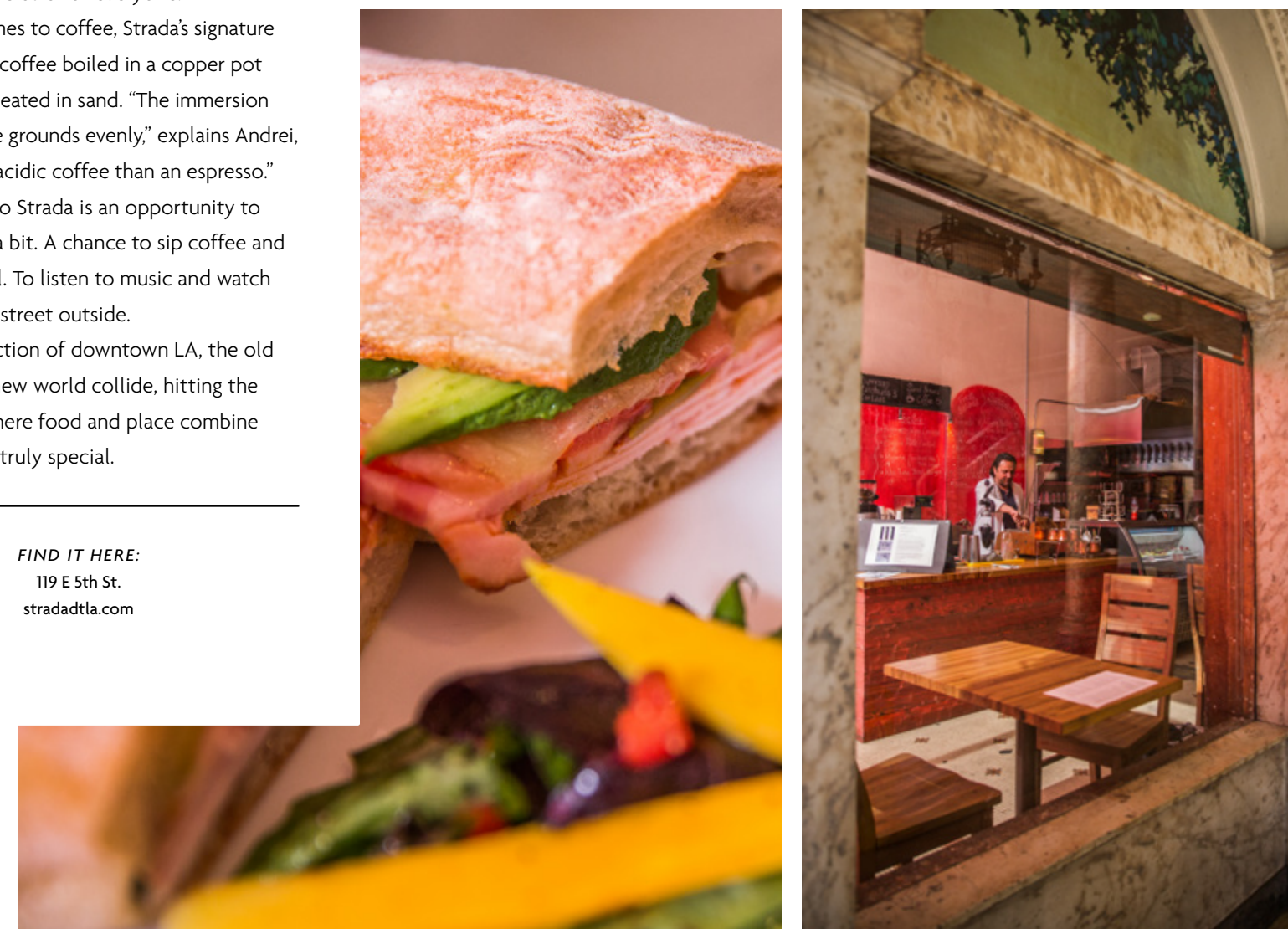
"If I'm hosting a dinner party and two of my guests don't eat meat, why would I exclude them?" Andrei asks, reflecting his ethos of making Strada a bistro for everyone.

When it comes to coffee, Strada's signature is Turkish-style: coffee boiled in a copper pot immersed and heated in sand. "The immersion heats the coffee grounds evenly," explains Andrei, "creating a less acidic coffee than an espresso."

Stepping into Strada is an opportunity to slow down for a bit. A chance to sip coffee and eat a good meal. To listen to music and watch the buzz of the street outside.

In a busy section of downtown LA, the old world and the new world collide, hitting the perfect note where food and place combine into something truly special.

FIND IT HERE:  
119 E 5th St.  
stradadtla.com





# ADRIÁN VILLAR ROJAS

## THE THEATER OF DISAPPEARANCE

Through May 13, 2018 | The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA

Lead support is provided by the Aileen Getty Foundation, kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Maurice Marciano, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris, London, and VIONNET.

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