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LA

ISSUE 70

DOWNTOWNER[®]

THE INSIDER GUIDE TO DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

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LA's Favorite Since 1972



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

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NOUS TOUS

ALL IN ART

Written By Daniel Nieblas
Photography By Robiee Ziegler

The plaza of Old Chinatown, despite its iconic status as cultural hub, seems to be a COVID-19 wasteland. Souvenir shops close before dusk, yoga classes remain empty, and museums are locked up. One restaurant remains open at twilight, but it's a burger joint (take-out only). One would think an array of faded Ancient Chinese facades and their unkempt state of plywood would indicate everyone left long ago, but in comes Kayla Palisoci, a young and confident woman poised to guide one of those locked-up museums into the future.

The Nous Tous Community Gallery is located on a dusty corner of Jung Jing Road. Judging by Kayla, its communications director and thought leader, the art of post-covid rules - we're in this together - is more than a mantra. She is bent on transforming the gallery into a new kind of platform for bold voices. "Covid's been a blessing in disguise."

Everything about Nous Tous is going virtual, and global. Kayla explained that the museum has been receiving a lot of support from philanthropic organizations. "We were given grants to sustain our rent," she said, "and so we could host community gatherings with folks who are in freaking Costa Rica, and basically do zoom meetings all over the world...it helped us branch out."

The space itself, now locked up behind a blue painted door, is being refurbished and the entire organisation that runs it, Citizens of Culture, is being restructured to focus on its new mission: to make Nous Tous a virtual museum for bold and emerging artists to showcase their work.

Nous Tous is french for "all of us," and was the brainchild of a few women determined to create a space for developing critical thinking and emotional intelligence. This was all being started during the 2016 presidential elections, when both seemed to be on the decline.

Nous Tous became the headquarters of avante garde photographers like Jeanne Heo, an artist that focuses on the Korean community and Asian diaspora in Los Angeles. Overall, Kayla said that it is people like Jeanne Nous Tous is determined to highlight and capitulate in the world of art. "She

is why Nous Tous is moving forward...she framed community-gatherings in a way that was one, authentic and two, intentional!"

Yet it is left to suspect what is next for small art spaces like Nous Tous. For all anyone knows, small, community-oriented museums may become relics of the past. According to the Los Angeles Times, most small-to-medium museums in Southern California don't have the capacity to survive pandemic-related closures in the long-term, many may never open their doors again.

Nous Tous however, is different, and Kayla seems to take things in stride. It and she are quickly adapting to this ever-changing reality we face as a society. "Growth will come through commitment," she said, getting and redefining what it means to represent and preserve the power of art, no matter its location.

To Support the gallery in its mission, visit their instagram page for more details on upcoming virtual events.

IND

noustous.co
[instagram.com/noustousla](https://www.instagram.com/noustousla)

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PETITE PESO

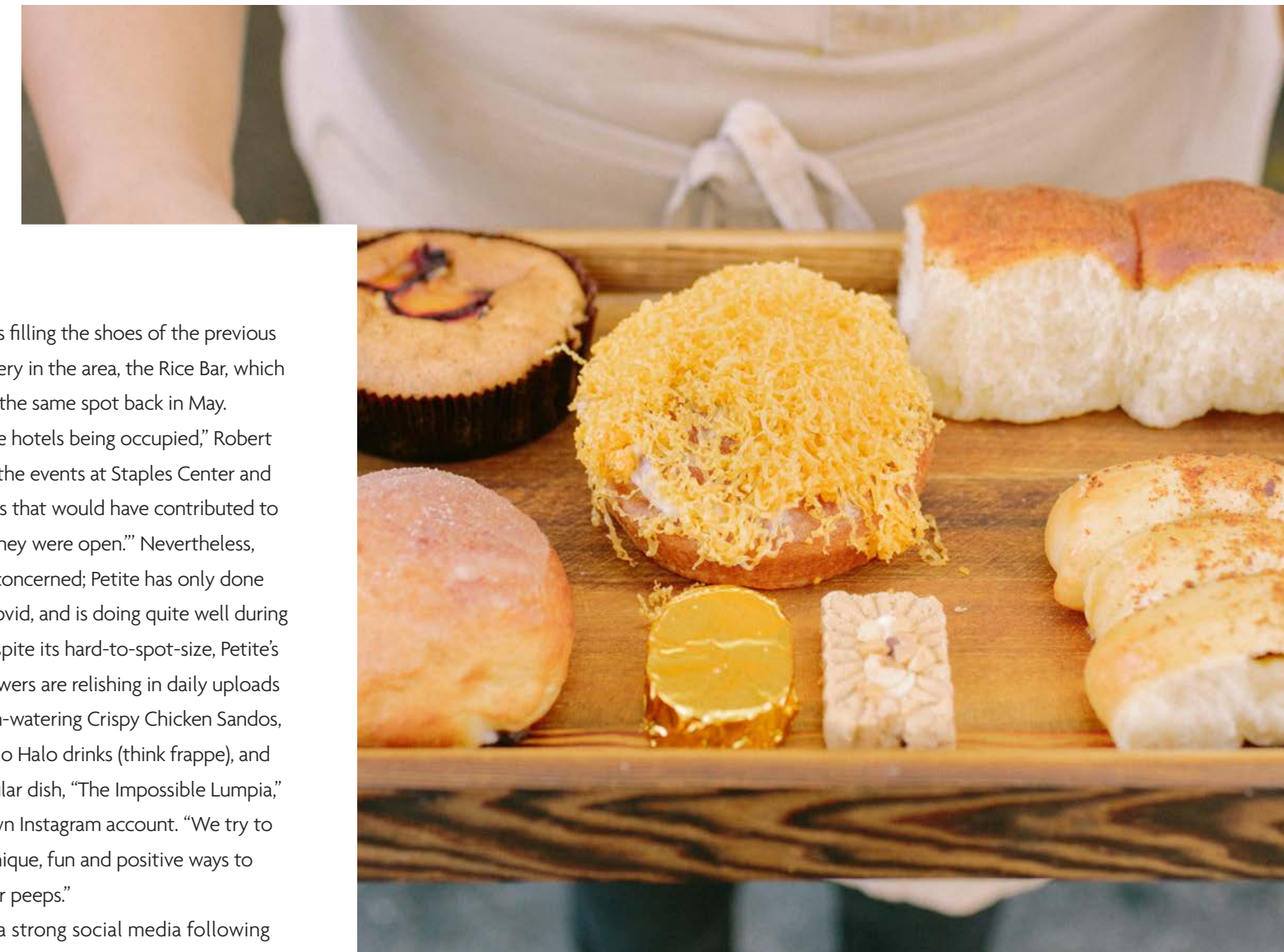
LITTLE SHOP OF FLAVORS

Written By Daniel Nieblas
Photography By Rebekah Lemire

Walking along the always under construction 7th Street, colloquially christened "Restaurant Row" recently, you would barely notice the brasserie-chic energy of a tiny eatery named Petite Peso. French aesthetics and Filipino dishes combust in this supremely small space (most of it is the kitchen). Its display of polvoron cookies and ensaimadas seem to quietly compete for your attention on a street dominated by loud taco trucks and large gourmet spots like Bottega Louie and Joe's DTLA.

For any cuisine as uncommon as Filipino, the challenge would seem to get those adobo rice bowls competing with the various ramen and chinese spots in the neighborhood. But Robert Villanueva, President and co-founder of Petite explained they're unphased by their unique role, "we love the Downtown community, culture and creatives that live and work in DTLA and knew that Peso would be accepted here."

It's co-founder, Tiffany Tanaka, is the Chief Experience Officer, while Ria Dolly Barbosa - Culinary and Executive Chef - have also done their part in making sure people that walk by don't forget the looks or aroma of their little spot. By the names alone, you could already taste the trio's savor of Filipino fried food and Provincial town feels.



Petite Peso is filling the shoes of the previous sole Filipino eatery in the area, the Rice Bar, which closed down at the same spot back in May.

"We miss the hotels being occupied," Robert said, "and all of the events at Staples Center and the other venues that would have contributed to our business if they were open." Nevertheless, he didn't seem concerned; Petite has only done business post-covid, and is doing quite well during these times. Despite its hard-to-spot-size, Petite's nearly 30K followers are relishing in daily uploads of bright, mouth-watering Crispy Chicken Sandos, Passion Fruit Halo Halo drinks (think frappe), and their most popular dish, "The Impossible Lumpia," which has its own Instagram account. "We try to always create unique, fun and positive ways to interact with our peeps."

Along with a strong social media following comes the prospect of expansion; the demand is certainly there, according to Robert. "We see Peso having a second location. We feel that people are really digging the Food, Hospitality and Vibe and we want to be able to bring that to different parts of LA."

Anyone who comes across Petite Peso, be it online or walking by its humble boutique, would agree that it is an underdog in the cutthroat business of L.A dining, but it has all the stuff you need to grow into a city hotspot, a la Tacos 1986 and Dolly Lama. You can spot its neon sign and retro looks six days a week, from 11AM-9PM.

FIND IT HERE
419 West 7th St.
petitepeso.com





CHEF JOSEF CENTENO

HIS LEGACY IN THE TIME OF COVID

Written By Mariana Ramos
Photography By GL Askew II

The business of restaurateurs involves leaving a mark on the culinary world; it's an ambitious goal only the best will ever accomplish. If DTLA has proven to be a part of that world- Josef Centeno has certainly built his legacy here.

The intersection of 4th and Main is nicknamed "Centeno Square" amongst those who have had the pleasure of dining at any of Chef Josef's many endeavors. From local patrons and tourists to food critics and even Michelin guides - his cuisines are well-known. When the DTLA renaissance was beginning, Chef Josef was a pioneer of the movement when he brought some much needed culinary presence to the Historic Core.

In February 2020, Josef was nominated for a James Beard Award, arguably the most prestigious culinary awards in the country. His Asian-fusion gem Orsa and Winston was awarded a Michelin star in 2019, and Bar Ama's queso has been famed as one of the best in the world by multiple publications. However, none that made Josef's restaurants immune to what has been plaguing restaurants when COVID-19 hit the world.

Tough decisions had to be made, and in Chef Josef's case, that meant closing down iconic Baco Mercat, and his Culver City local favorite Amã•cita (both only two weeks apart), "Independent bars and restaurants of a certain size and serving ambitious food (which costs a lot labor-wise and



ingredient-wise to prepare)—are probably having the hardest time," says Chef Josef. Despite two closures, Chef Josef is not one to give up so easily; it's not in his blood. Born in San Antonio, as a kid he was submerged in authentic Tex-Mex culture and cuisine, usually immersing himself in culinary books. Once he left the Lone Star State for the CIA (Culinary Institute of Art) in New York, he experienced all the culture and cuisines represented in those books he read. Eventually, that would also inspire him to write his own. "Learning about and respecting the way different cultures approach flavor and use of seasonings and spices and techniques—that has resonated with me. Especially because I come from a big multicultural family."

Josef's experience isn't a rags to riches story, it's a rags to enriching story, as he has enriched all of DTLA with his cuisine, and doesn't plan to stop. In the last five months, Josef has been developing Prospect Pine. "It is my cut-and-sew all-natural dyed clothing and general goods line," he said. "I've taken my hobby and therapy of designing/natural dyeing clothes and other goods," he explained. As for his culinary endeavors, Josef is going to keep fighting for Bar Ama, Orsa and Winston, and the staff that has been by his side from the very beginning. As a word of consolation to his fellow restaurateurs going through these COVID pains, he said "stay strong, be persistent, and plan to work really hard for a lot less. The road ahead is not going to be easy and likely going to be much more difficult, but chefs are the hardest-working and most determined people I know because we already had to be that way in this business. It's what will get us to the other side."

instagram.com/chefjosefcenteno



OUTDOOR EATING & DRINKING IN ONE DAY

BECAUSE WE MISS BAR HOPPING

Written By Janica De Guzman

If one good thing came out of the pandemic, it's the creativity bars and restaurants established to safely serve Downtowners. We've rounded up a few outdoor dining and drinking spots that are all within walking distance from each other, just so you don't have to step foot in a car or enclosed space.



@maneuladtla

Lunch at Manuela

907 E 3rd St manuela-la.com

If you ever imagined feasting on impeccably buttery biscuits while being surrounded by live chickens and multi-million dollar sculptures, Manuela is a place worth visiting. They re-opened their doors recently with extra safety precautions, and are just in time for Dine LA's exclusive menu featuring a 3-course lunch for \$25.

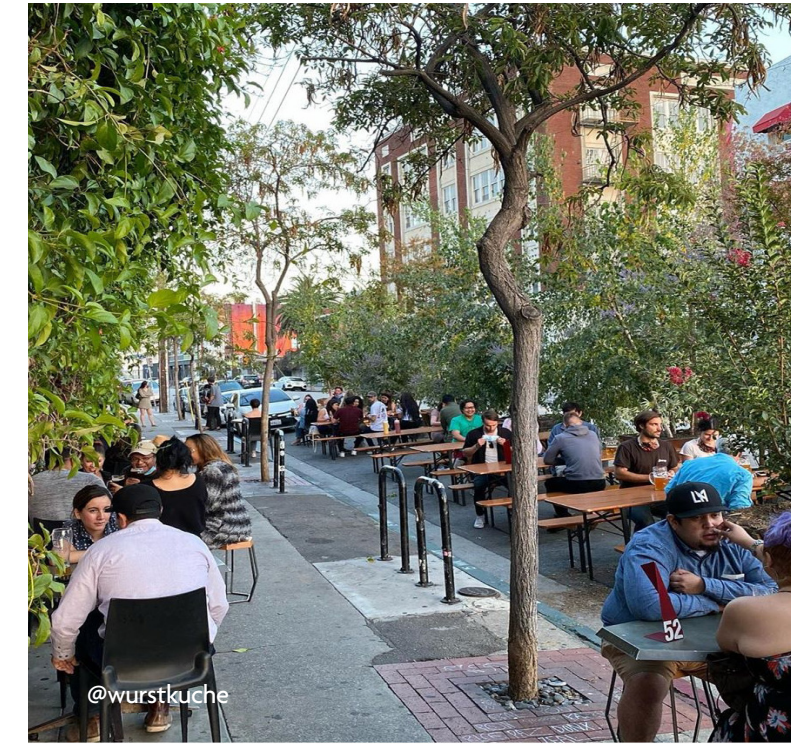


@eatdrinkamericano

Cocktails at Eat Drink Americano

923 E 3rd St eatdrinkamericano.com

Head next door and sip some cocktails at Eat Drink Americano's parking lot-turned-patio. The added umbrellas keep you cool while their not-your-average cocktails keep you cooler. Try the Five Loko with roasted pineapple-infused verde mezcal, Aperol, tamarind, and lime.



@wurstkuche

Beers at Wurstkuche

800 E 3rd St wurstkuche.com

Take a stroll along 3rd street and make your way towards the Arts District's officially unofficial streetside beer garden. With barriers and greenery to keep you safe from passing cars, sip your way through a flight and revel in the thrill of street drinking.



@theescondite

The Escondite

410 Boyd St, theescondite.com

Take 3rd Street and head towards the core until you reach Skidrokyo. The Escondite never fails to make a unique experience, especially now with their 50's car hop, pick-up trucks transformed to tables, and rocking chairs facing the DTLA skyline. Bring your own car, not your own beer.



@paliwineco

Wine at Pali Wine

811 Traction Ave paliwineco.com

Just a few doors down is an unpretentious wine bar serving discerning palates and those who are just looking for rosiest rose. Their sidewalk patio fills up fast, but patrons are welcome to drink in the cafe light-filled alley that's bumping with a Spotify playlist curated to rival any KCRW dj.

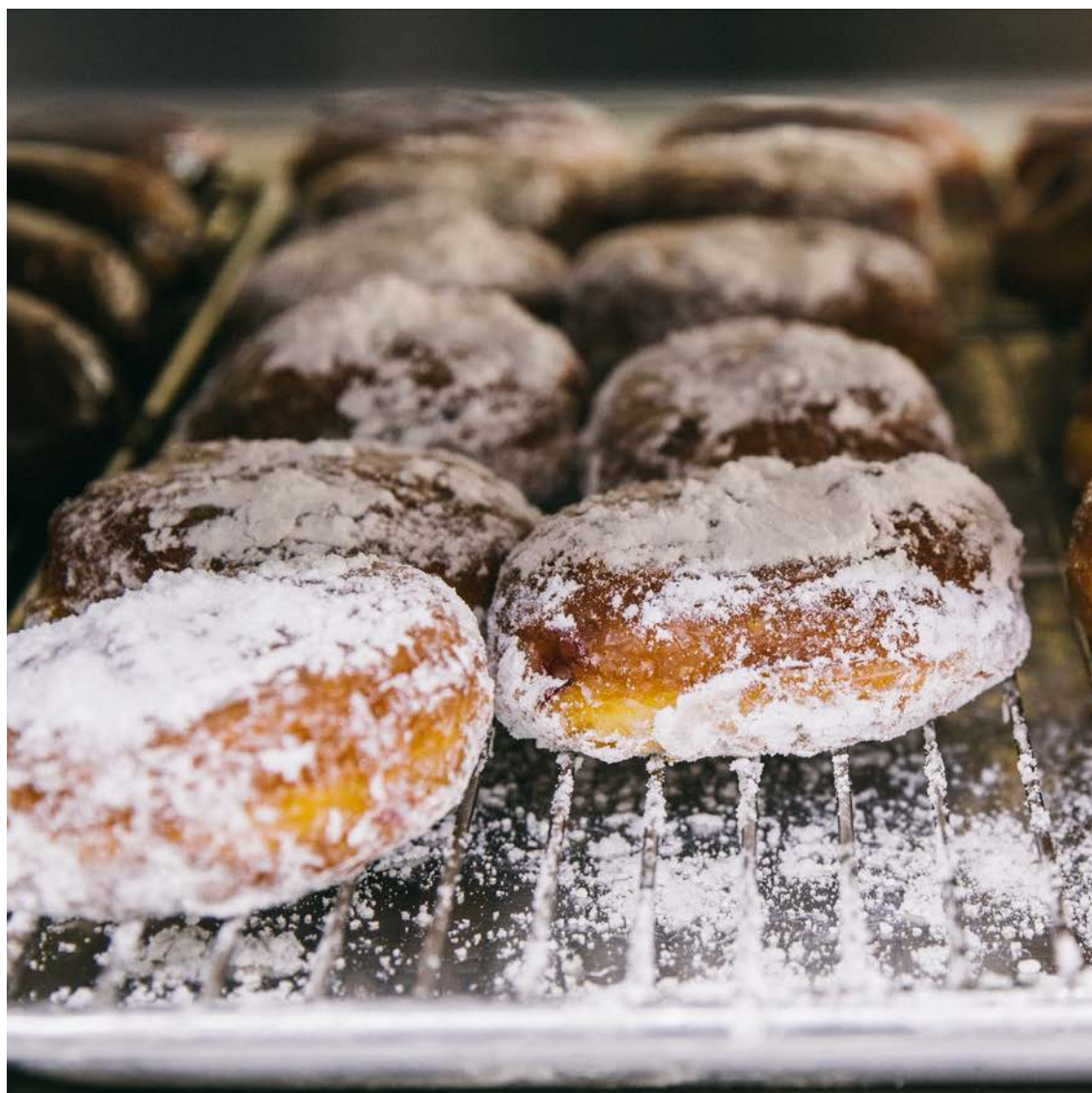


@redbirdla

Redbird

114 E 2nd St. redbird.la

End the night with an elevated experience at one of Redbird's three courtyards. If you've made it this long drinking and walking, you're a champ and deserve to feast on their 24oz bone-in ribeye served with heirloom tomatoes, aged balsamic, and thyme.



THE DONUT MAN

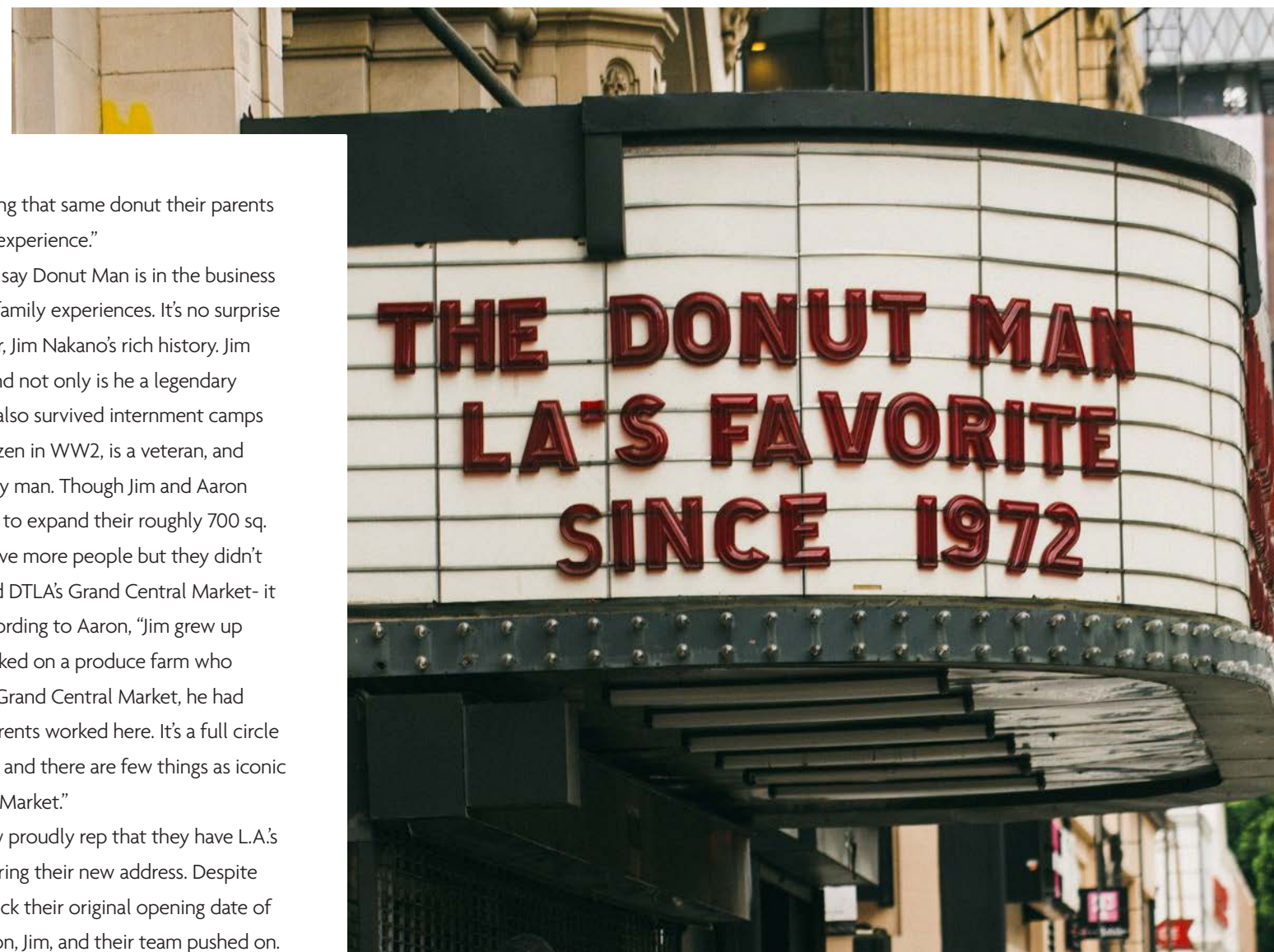
LA'S FAVORITE SINCE 1972

Written By Mariana Ramos
Photography By GL Askew II

There are few things left in the world that are true Americana- a diner, a gas station where a gallon is less than \$2, and a good, simple, donut. Ever since 1972, Glendor's Donut Man has been that donut for many traveling through the iconic Route 66 in and out of California. However, now you don't even need a car to savor the fresh deliciousness because they've opened up shop in another iconic location: DTLA's Grand Central Market.

Since Donut Man's owner Jim Nakano opened up his 24-hour donut shop in Glendora, generations of folks have lined up for their chance to try his donuts, more famously, his strawberry filled donuts. Filled seems like an understatement considering how many strawberries these donuts are packing. Of course, only the freshest fruits make the cut and according to general manager Aaron Wearp, the dough itself is not "the usual" for many reasons. One of them is that "We fry at a higher temperature than most, this, in the end, decreases oil absorption of the donut and gives it a crispier feel," he said. Depending on the season, the main fruit might be a peach instead of a strawberry, but don't worry they are just as tasty.

"Everyone has something that makes them special, but we want to keep it as traditional as much as we can. At the end of the day I want that to be a good donut, I want it to be the donut you grew up with," says Aaron, and for some folks it is. Generations of grandparents, parents, and children have grown up with the Donut Man since 1972,



"And they're tasting that same donut their parents had. It's a shared experience."

So you could say Donut Man is in the business of nostalgia and family experiences. It's no surprise given the founder, Jim Nakano's rich history. Jim grew up in L.A. and not only is he a legendary entrepreneur he also survived internment camps as a Japanese citizen in WW2, is a veteran, and a self-made family man. Though Jim and Aaron knew they'd have to expand their roughly 700 sq. ft. flagship, to serve more people but they didn't go looking to find DTLA's Grand Central Market- it found them. According to Aaron, "Jim grew up here, his dad worked on a produce farm who delivered to the Grand Central Market, he had friends whose parents worked here. It's a full circle with L.A. and Jim, and there are few things as iconic as Grand Central Market."

They can now proudly rep that they have L.A.'s #1 Donut considering their new address. Despite COVID setting back their original opening date of March 2020, Aaron, Jim, and their team pushed on. When they finally opened their doors, alongside Grand Central Market, the community rallied behind and they had a socially-distant line that wrapped around the building.

Outside of the fruit packed donuts, their foot-long Tiger Tails have caused quite the sensation, and they have plenty of other sweet options for your sugar-fix. The line does move swiftly but if you go around 1-2 PM on the weekday you might luck out and miss the lunch crowd. Outdoor seating is also available now at Grand Central, and with the heat not stopping any time soon it's a great time to enjoy an iconic L.A. treat from Donut Man, Al Fresco style.

FIND IT HERE
Grand Central Market, 317 S Broadway A-1
thedonutmanca.com



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