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LA

ISSUE 58

DOWNTOWNER[®]

THE INSIDER GUIDE TO DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

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

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GUERRILLA TACOS

THE BEST OF LOS ANGELES ON A TORTILLA

Written By Abel Horwitz
Photographed By Jack Stutz

Guerrilla Tacos is a special kind of place. An Only in LA place where all the ingredients that go into making this city so wonderful — the diverse cultures all living together, the quality of the food we have available to us — get served up on tortillas.

"Tacos are the best vehicle to cook anything you want," says Chef Wes Avila. "They're the perfect size. It's less than a full plate of food so you're not committing to it, and you can try several different kinds of things. Anything can be put on tortillas." Chef Avila started serving tacos from a folding table and a portable stove in 2012. He had no food license, and he would sling them anywhere he could get away with before the cops would chase him away (hence calling his place Guerrilla). He had trained with Alain Ducasse in Paris and was working in some of the best restaurants in the city before setting out on his own, and the rumors of a pedigreed chef and his tacos began to build as the line around his table began to grow.

(Continued on Page 4)



SPACELAND

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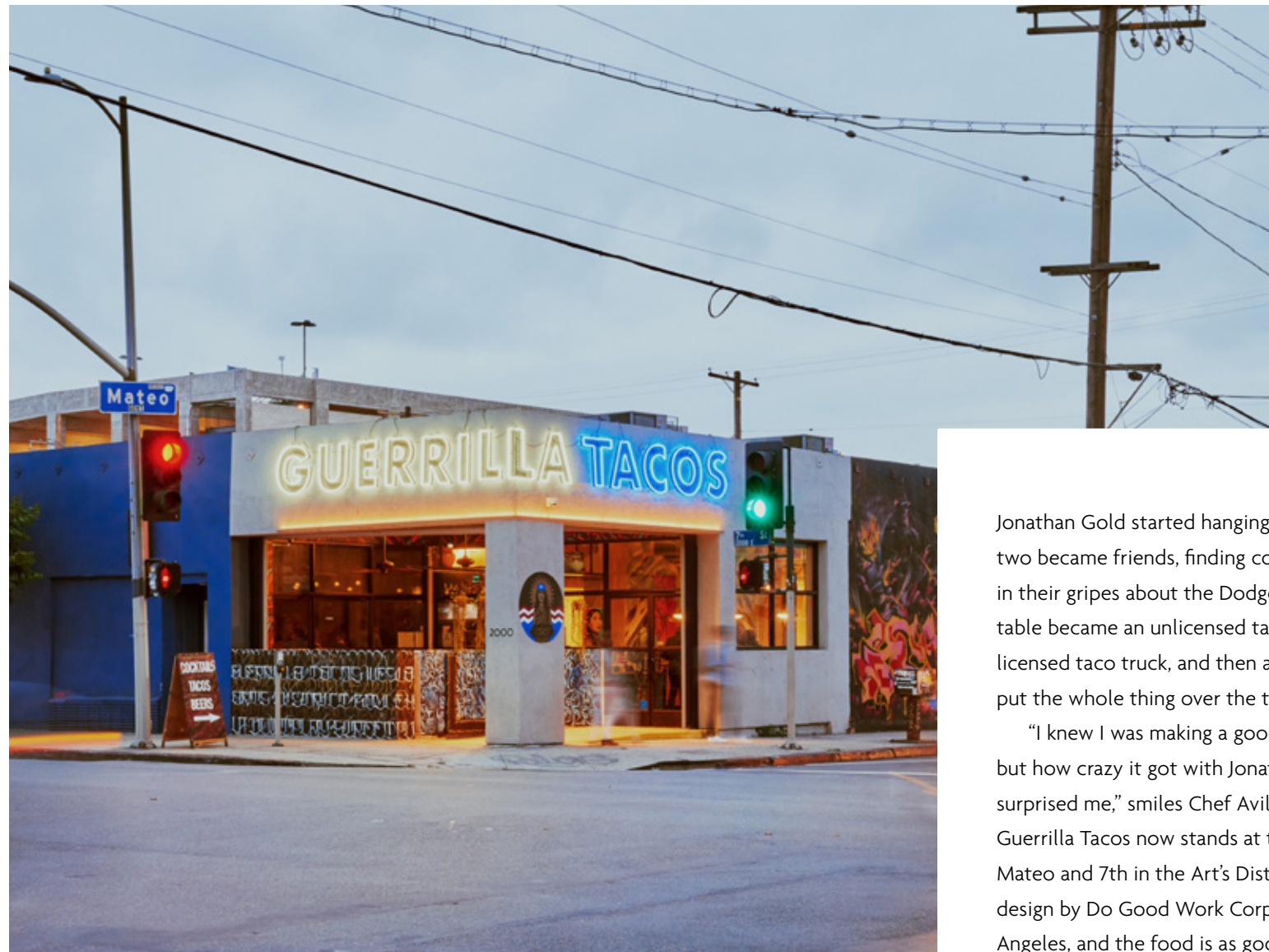
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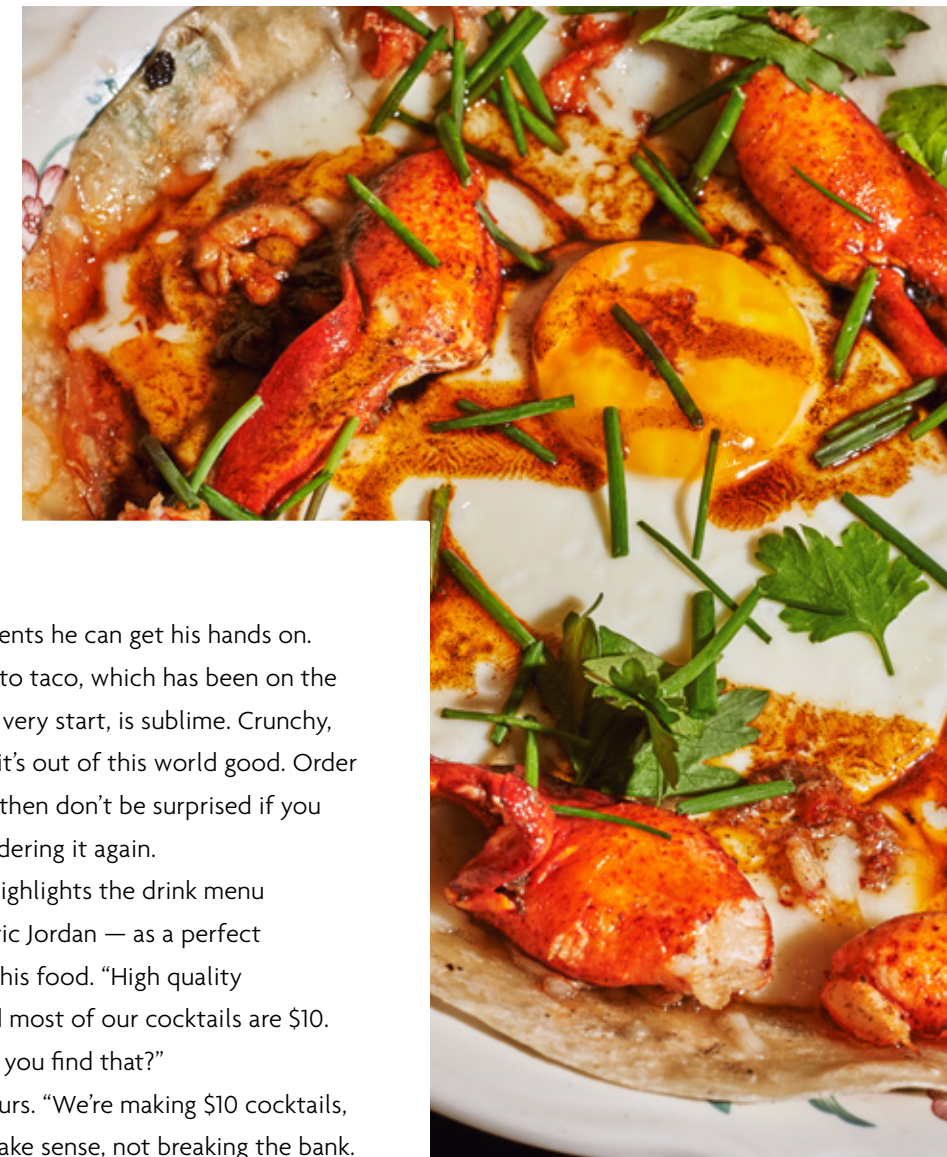
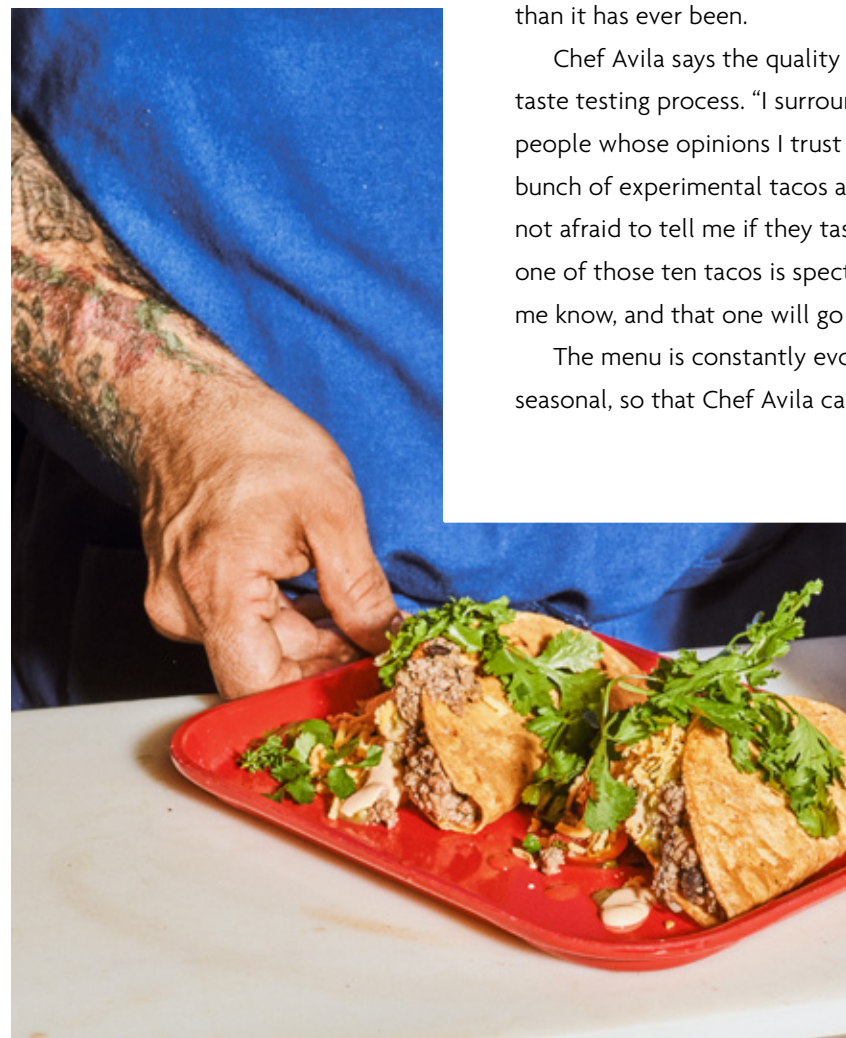


Jonathan Gold started hanging out, and the two became friends, finding common ground in their gripes about the Dodgers. The card table became an unlicensed taco truck, then a licensed taco truck, and then a review by Gold put the whole thing over the top.

“I knew I was making a good product, but how crazy it got with Jonathan’s review surprised me,” smiles Chef Avila. Guerrilla Tacos now stands at the corner of Mateo and 7th in the Art’s District. The interior design by Do Good Work Corp is boldly Los Angeles, and the food is as good, if not better, than it has ever been.

Chef Avila says the quality comes from a taste testing process. “I surround myself with people whose opinions I trust and I throw a bunch of experimental tacos at them. They’re not afraid to tell me if they taste like shit. But if one of those ten tacos is spectacular, they’ll let me know, and that one will go on the menu.”

The menu is constantly evolving. It’s seasonal, so that Chef Avila can work with the



freshest ingredients he can get his hands on. The sweet potato taco, which has been on the menu since the very start, is sublime. Crunchy, sweet, smoky... it’s out of this world good. Order it, enjoy it, and then don’t be surprised if you find yourself ordering it again.

Chef Avila highlights the drink menu — helmed by Eric Jordan — as a perfect compliment to his food. “High quality ingredients, and most of our cocktails are \$10. Where else can you find that?”

Jordan concurs. “We’re making \$10 cocktails, making them make sense, not breaking the bank. It’s pretty dope.”

The food is outstanding, the cocktails sublime and affordable, and the feel of the place ties it all together. Guerrilla Tacos is one of the Arts District’s most beloved restaurants, and it’s easy to see why.

FIND IT HERE:
2000 E 7th St.
guerrillatacos.com



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KINTO

JAPANESE MINIMALISM DESIGN FOR THE HOME

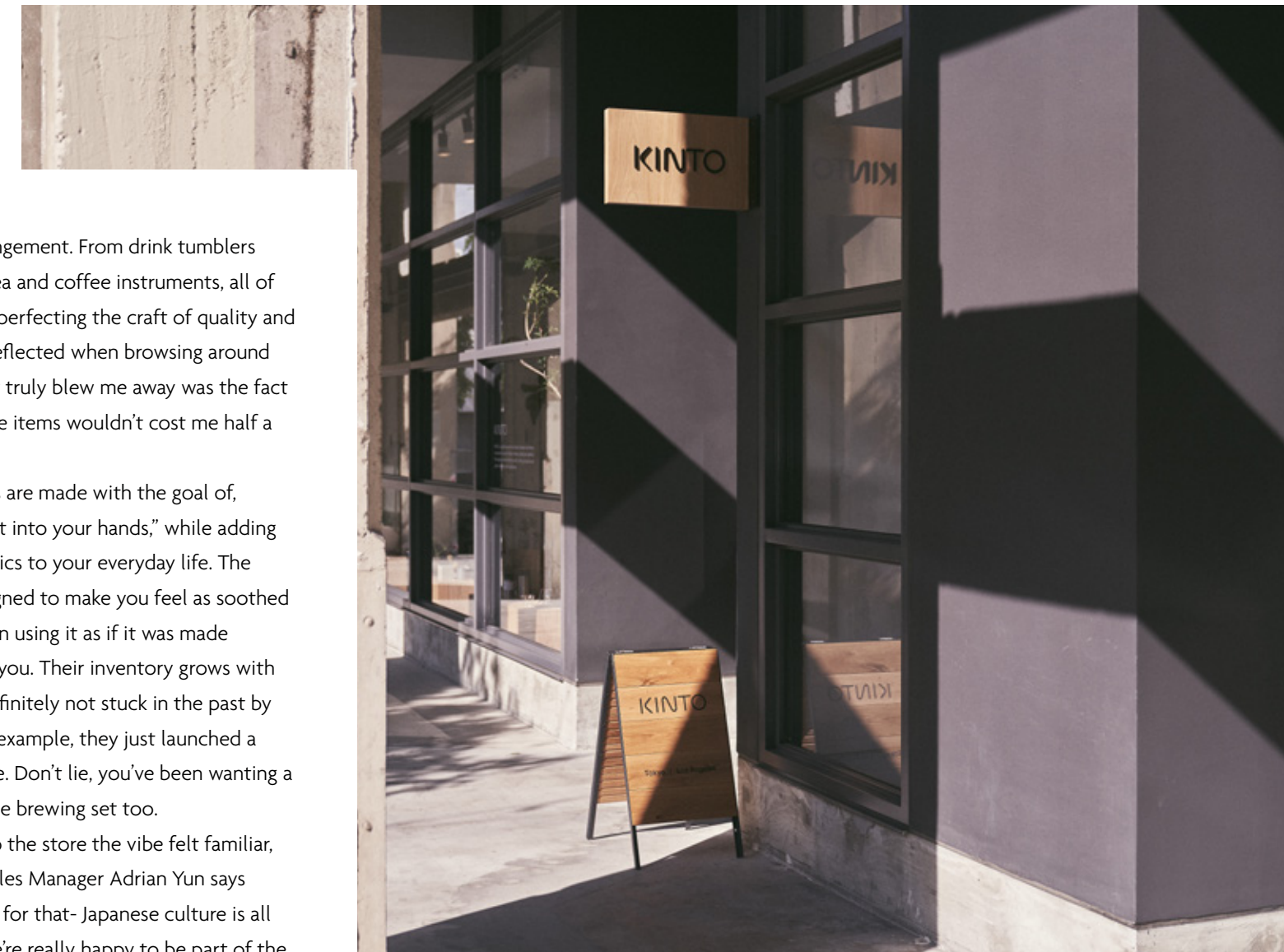
Written By Mariana Ramos
Photographed By Jack Strutz

The current wave of minimal design seems to be sweeping the nation. It's quite noticeable on everything from people's Instagram feeds to their wardrobe. "Less is more" has become an entire brand complete with a color palette, few stand-alone pieces, and fantastic use of negative space. The word, "minimal" plays different roles depending on the subject at hand, and when in regards to Japanese culture it is not a practice that is taken lightly.

The art of Zen, simplicity, and peaceful existence without excess is a huge practice in Japanese culture. The Japanese aesthetic of Wabi-sabi is all about appreciating the quality of simple and plain objects, it is an ode to the absence of unnecessary features. In the 47 years that Kinto has been in business, they have mastered this aesthetic with their everyday life products, and they're ready to prove it with their new store at ROW right here in DTLA.

Before making their big move to LA Kinto solely operated as a wholesale online store for U.S. based customers. This marks their first showroom/store in the whole world, the second one opened in Tokyo just a month later. Clearly, placing their bets in DTLA and the ROW.

Kinto's aim is to make you feel at ease, at home, and their space does just that. The natural light that comes rushing in through the windows allows the objects to flaunt their Fung Shuei



and proud arrangement. From drink tumblers to tableware, tea and coffee instruments, all of Kinto's years in perfecting the craft of quality and simplicity are reflected when browsing around the store. What truly blew me away was the fact that most of the items wouldn't cost me half a month's rent.

The products are made with the goal of, "fitting just right into your hands," while adding elegant aesthetics to your everyday life. The pieces are designed to make you feel as soothed as possible upon using it as if it was made specifically for you. Their inventory grows with time, they're definitely not stuck in the past by any means, for example, they just launched a coffee wear line. Don't lie, you've been wanting a pour over coffee brewing set too.

Stepping into the store the vibe felt familiar, the National Sales Manager Adrian Yun says there's a reason for that- Japanese culture is all over DTLA, "We're really happy to be part of the growing ROW community, as well as being near Little Tokyo." And he isn't wrong, multiple other Japanese brands have been popping up all over DTLA recently and locals love it.

The shopping experience really comes together with a sense of purpose to transport you to a peaceful place. A vision where you can vividly imagine the memories to be made, around items that don't take you out of the moment. What items have you ever come across that make you want to put your phone down and be present? Probably not many. Well, Kinto's products have nailed just that.

FIND IT HERE:
767 S Alameda St. 2B #188
kinto-usa.com





EAT

A GUERRILLA TACOS

2000 E 7th St.
guerrillatacos.com

B HAYATO

1320 E 7th St. #126
hayatorrestaurant.com

C BAO HIRRO

905 E 2nd St. Suite 109
baohirro.com



MOVE

D KINTO

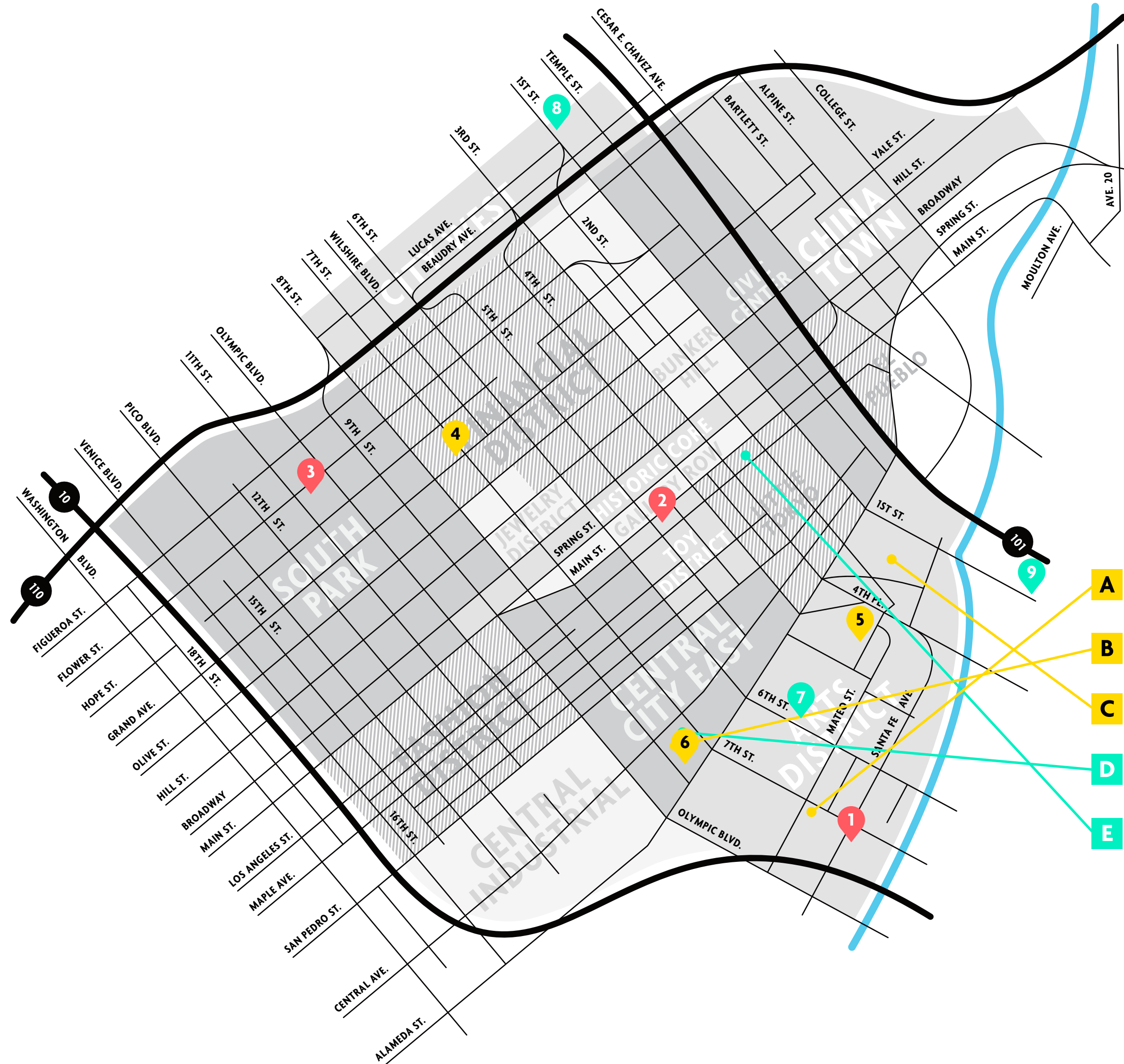
767 S Alameda St. 2B #188
kinto-usa.com

E FLOWER SCHOOL LA

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flowerschoolla.com

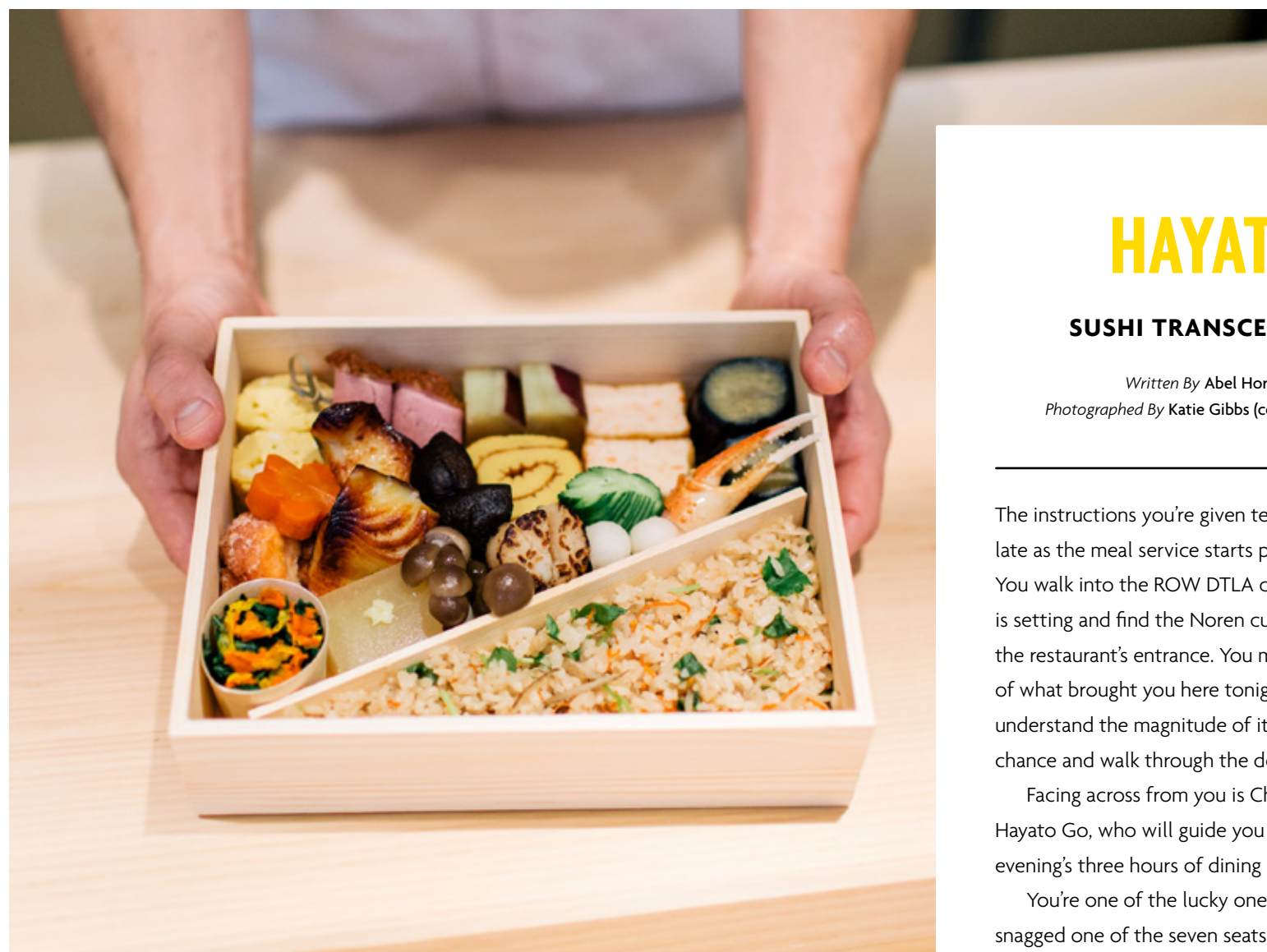
- CITY STREETS
- FREEWAYS
- LA RIVER
- M METRO RAIL STATIONS

*MAP SIMPLIFIED & NOT TO SCALE



DOWNTOWN FAVORITES

- 1 STUMPTOWN COFFEE**
120 E 8th St. #400 — stumptowncoffee.com
Their direct trade approach to sourcing means that they work directly with the farmers who grow the beans, and their coffee is truly excellent.
- 2 THE LOVE SONG BAR**
450 S Main St.
The Love Song is the high-end bar connected to the Regent Theater, and it's a great place to get a drink before or after the show. Vinyl records on the speakers and drink names like Black Flag's Rise Above (a Dark n' Stormy) and Lou's Waiting For the Man (their Manhattan) lend some rock n' roll cred to the space.
- 3 THE BAR AT BROKEN SPANISH**
1050 S Flower St. — brokenspanish.com
Mezcal is the drink du jour right now, but Broken Spanish was far ahead of the curve on this one. Saddle up to the bar, let the bartenders take you for a spin around Mexico, and try not to wince at your bar tab when the check comes.
- 4 LE GRAND**
707 S Grand Ave. — legrand-restaurant.com
This re-do of the Tom George restaurant brings a Mediterranean touch to this clubby fine dining space. The chefs, Greek brothers Alex and Chris Manos, are offering a menu inspired by their home country, and the wine program is completely redone.
- 5 DUELLO**
449 S Hewitt St. — duellodtla.com
Almost from the get-go, the extremely promising Simone Restaurant was doomed, with a scathing (and honest) LA Times review putting the final nail on the coffin. Rising from the ashes is Duello, where a new chef brings a new menu and new life into the place. The food remains California-chic, and we're wishing them the best of luck!
- 6 GOLDBURGER**
777 S Alameda St. — instagram.com/golddurgerla
Seriously, look at these burgers! You'd think we've reached the point where we've seen everything you can do with a bun and some meat, but holy cats do these look delicious. Melty, messy and charred just right. You'll find Goldburger at Smorgasburg on Sundays.
- 7 LA BOULDERS**
1375 6th St. #8 — touchstoneclimbing.com/la-boulders
In addition to bouldering (climbing low walls without the use of ropes), LA Boulders hosts yoga, dance and workout classes, has free weights and cardio equipment, and is part of the Touchstone Climbing family, so a membership here gives you access to any of their other gyms as well.
- 8 VISTA HERMOSA NATURAL PARK**
100 N Toluca St.
This gorgeous little park has one of the most IG-worthy views of DTLA, but when you're not doing it for the 'gram you'll find yourself in a tiny oasis of SoCal native plantlife, walking trails and green space. It's also a popular spot for wedding and quinceañera photos, which are always fun and heartwarming to watch take place.
- 9 LIBROS SCHMIBROS**
103 N Boyle Ave. — librosschmibros.org
Libros Schmibros is a Boyle Heights-based lending library that puts low-or no-cost books into all hands, native and immigrant. There's such a magical feel to this place that you're sure to walk out with a treasure or two, and right now they're accepting donations of Spanish-language books.



HAYATO

SUSHI TRANSCENDENT

Written By Abel Horwitz
Photographed By Katie Gibbs (courtesy Hayato)

The instructions you're given tell you not to be late as the meal service starts promptly at seven. You walk into the ROW DTLA complex as the sun is setting and find the Noren curtain that signifies the restaurant's entrance. You may have an idea of what brought you here tonight, but you won't understand the magnitude of it until you take a chance and walk through the door.

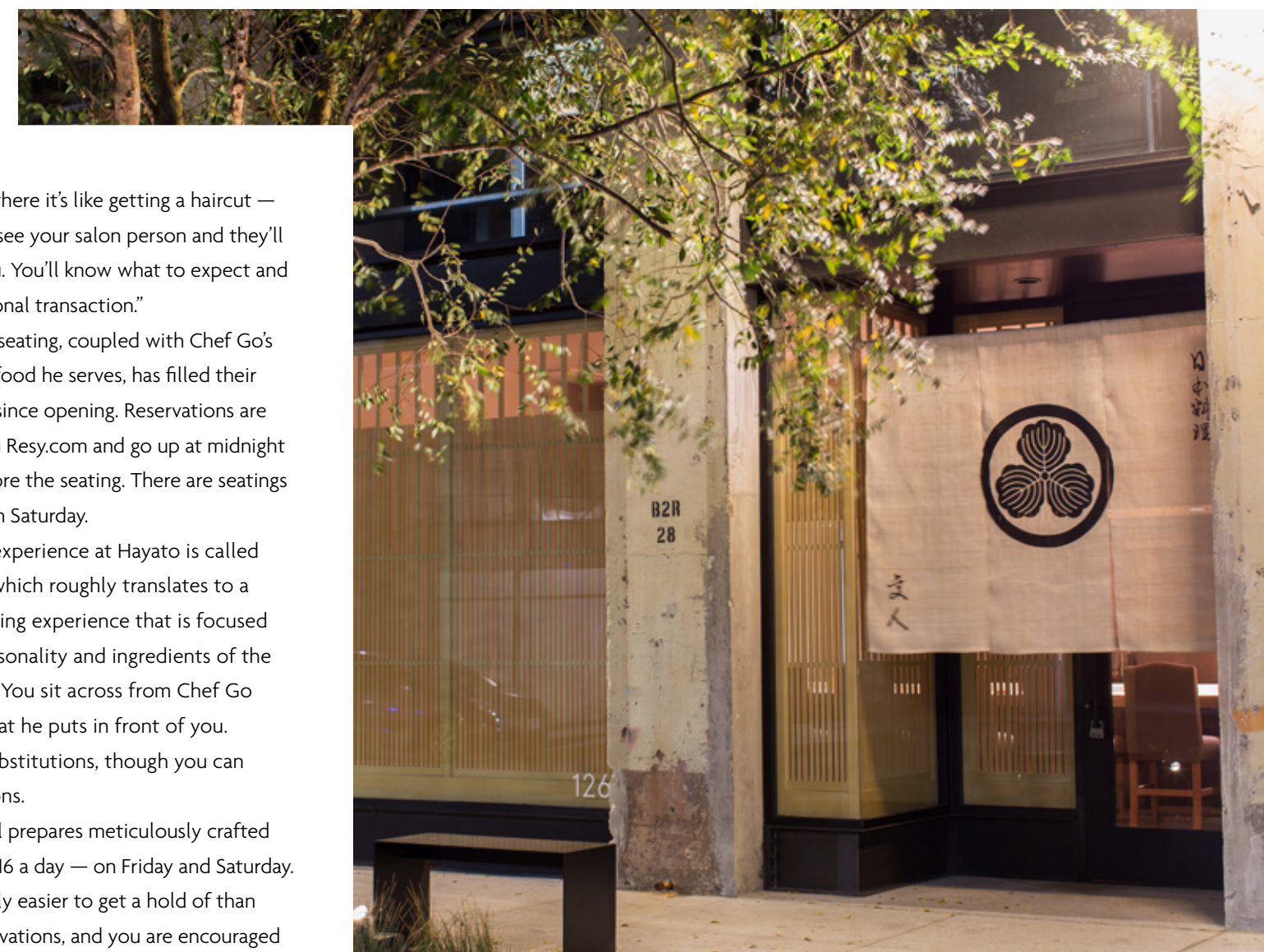
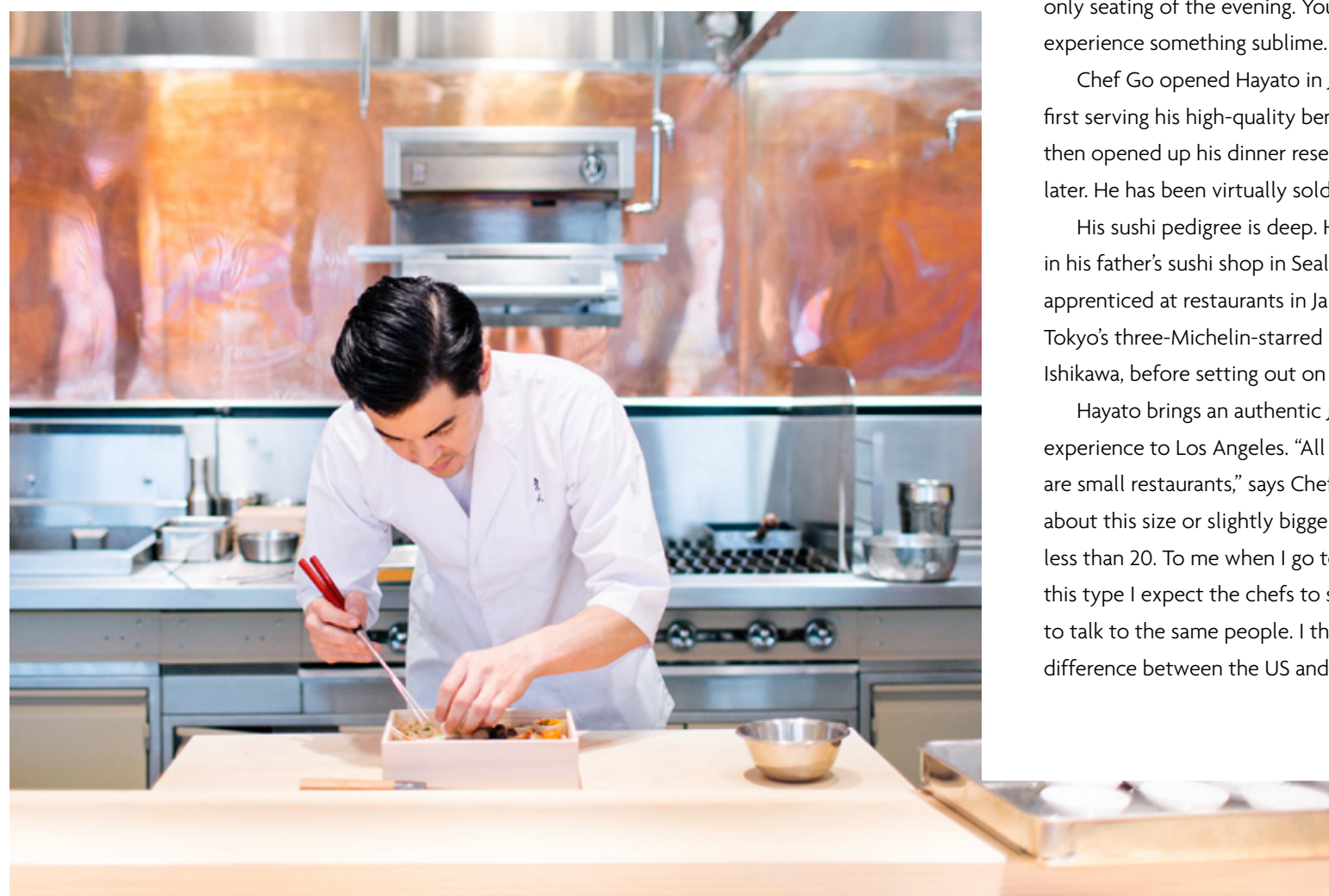
Facing across from you is Chef Brandon Hayato Go, who will guide you through the evening's three hours of dining mastery.

You're one of the lucky ones who has snagged one of the seven seats available for the only seating of the evening. You are about to experience something sublime.

Chef Go opened Hayato in January of 2018, first serving his high-quality bento boxes, and then opened up his dinner reservations a month later. He has been virtually sold out ever since.

His sushi pedigree is deep. He began working in his father's sushi shop in Seal Beach at 15 and apprenticed at restaurants in Japan, including Tokyo's three-Michelin-starred Kagurazaka Ishikawa, before setting out on his own.

Hayato brings an authentic Japanese dining experience to Los Angeles. "All places in Japan are small restaurants," says Chef Go. "They are about this size or slightly bigger, with seating less than 20. To me when I go to a restaurant of this type I expect the chefs to serve me, I expect to talk to the same people. I think that's the big difference between the US and Japan. When I go



to a restaurant there it's like getting a haircut — you're going to see your salon person and they'll take care of you. You'll know what to expect and it's a more personal transaction."

The limited seating, coupled with Chef Go's mastery of the food he serves, has filled their reservation list since opening. Reservations are booked through Resy.com and go up at midnight one month before the seating. There are seatings Tuesday through Saturday.

The dining experience at Hayato is called kappo kaiseki, which roughly translates to a Chef's table dining experience that is focused on extreme seasonality and ingredients of the highest quality. You sit across from Chef Go and you eat what he puts in front of you. There are no substitutions, though you can request omissions.

Chef Go still prepares meticulously crafted bento boxes — 16 a day — on Friday and Saturday. These are slightly easier to get a hold of than the dinner reservations, and you are encouraged to find a quiet place among the ROW's buildings to savor them. For Chef Go the intention of the food in the bento boxes is a different experience than eating in his restaurant. "The flavors play off of each other in the bento," he says. "It's different than the dinner, which is showing off the pristine seafood. In the dinner, when you eat crab I want it to taste like crab."

The reviews are equally stunning, with LA Times food critic Bill Addison describing a meal at Hayato as "transcendent" and Food & Wine naming him one of the best new chefs of 2019.

Hayato is in the upper echelons of dining in Los Angeles. Intimate and exacting. An evening at Hayato is an experience to be treasured.

FIND IT HERE:
1320 E 7th St. #126
hayatorestaurant.com





FLOWER SCHOOL LA

TEACHING DTLA HOW TO LIVE LIFE IN FULL BLOOM

Written By Mariana Ramos
Photographed By Kort Havens

The more that our skyline grows, the more DTLA feels like a concrete jungle, and while greenery may be hard to come by — locals know where to go to spruce up their homes with some Mother Nature. The LA Flower Market is a popular tradition on a Saturday morning following brunch, but for floral design students — it's heaven on Earth.

For Thomas Kort, the LA Flower Market is a gift because it allows him and his students to shop local when practicing their craft a few blocks over on the edge of Little Tokyo at his newly opened Flower School. Shopping local is one of his most important philosophies to keep the art of floral design as sustainable as possible. While floral design might be a new concept for some (certainly was for me) Flower School is here to educate those passionate on the subject and also to help florists navigate the ins-and-outs of managing a successful flower shop.

New York, Paris, and Holland have long held the reigns for the most prestigious flowers, schools, and designers. Thomas, a NY transplant but LA native, knew it was time to highlight California, and DTLA is the perfect place for him to pass down his years of experience. The Flower School offers a variety of programs like an immersive 5-day course that marks the start a more intense professional program for those ready to dive into the business.



Flower School LA is certainly one of a kind in the sense that they're the only ones with the professional development to really create well-rounded designers taught to succeed. In an industry with exponential growth and possibilities all over the globe, Thomas hopes to equip flower shops with new talent in and outside Los Angeles.

Thomas and his team are not blind to the sense of community in DTLA, that's why they have Open Studio sessions, special events, and workshops where infamous florists from all over the world come to visit and teach their specialty.

In the shop itself, there is a selection of vases, candles, and other exclusive pottery and dishware designed by other florists, available for sale. Students are more than welcome to purchase them for their creations, and if you think there's probably no way you could walk away proudly from your very first time — think again.

As a complete and absolute newbie to this world, I can honestly say I looked at my finished product after an Open Studio session with Thomas and beamed with pride. Not only did I learn a ton but the whole process felt quite therapeutic and it shocked me to see the resemblance between my arrangement and my personality.

After you gather all the practical skills from the Flower School's professional programs, you'll be equipped with a certificate of completion, which helps, but Thomas says it's the confidence reflected in his students that assures him of their forthcoming success. In my eyes, that is also a reflection of the success coming to Flower School LA.

FIND IT HERE:
223 S Los Angeles St.
flowerschoolla.com



Interior photo courtesy of Bao Hiroo



BAO HIRRO

IN THE SPIRIT OF MISCHIEF AND TRADITION

Written By Dakota Nate
Photographed By Robiee Ziegler & Stan Lee

As the Arts District continues to fill to the brim with refined watering holes and chef-driven eateries juxtaposed within graffitied walls running the game along East 2nd from Alameda to Santa Fe rests a lineup of some of the best spots to get your grub on in the whole city. For example, chef Sang Yoon's Father's Office serves up classic gastropub vibes and is said to have the best burgers in the world, while Nightshade by Top Chef's Mei Lin offers a high-end, Asian-inspired menu amidst a lush atmosphere. Welcomed by the turn of the neighborhood, the new kid on the block taking up shop alongside these culinary juggernauts is yet another chef-driven establishment, but with a nostalgic twist.

Bao Hiroo, by way of Chairman Truck founder, chef Hiroo Nagahara is to be Los Angeles' newest modern take on traditional bao, and the Tokyo-born, Japanese-Taiwanese American isn't playing around with trendy ideals or extravagant culinary antics. Instead, he's taking a Chinese staple and making it his own, all while creating a relatable and enticing lineup of tightly-packed sweet and savory buns, ranging from soft and fluffy to crispy and crunchy. What's special about Hiroo's bao, is that with every sticky, gooey, or crunchy bite, what you're tasting is an ode to the chef's childhood in Japan, mixed with the comestible discoveries he made upon arriving in the states as a child at the age of seven.

"As a concept, for me it's really about nostalgia," says chef Hiroo "It's really about taking things that are nostalgic for me growing up, like my mother's a big influence, my aunt — they all cooked. I come from one of those families that just cooks all the time. Because of that, with that kind of upbringing, it changes you — you appreciate food, you appreciate technique, you appreciate all the love that goes into the food itself."

With just about everything made in house from scratch, all the way down to bottled low ABV cocktails, each bao is derivative of Hiroo's mother's recipes -- a mashup of mantou bao in steamed and fried varieties. Bold American flavor pairings live within these steamy delicacies such as steamed brisket bao with apple and fennel, and on the wild side, a crunchy Japanese curry bao that's stuffed with fried tofu, veggies, and fingerling potatoes. You'll find some dynamite sweets options as well, including an ode to chef Hiroo's favorite cookie — an oreo bao. As far as what's going to be spun behind the bar, aforementioned low ABV cocktails are to be featured alongside a full beer and wine program, just until a full bar becomes a part of Bar Hiroo's practically curated spectrum.

Whereas nostalgia is a reoccurring theme here, so is preservation -- the preservation of tradition and origin. Trained under the wing of the late and great chef Charlie Trotter, the philosophy of closeness and community runs deep within Chef Hiroo's culinary nest. Also in the name of preservation, art will be displayed by local artists to pay homage to the true nature of the Arts District. Like most good things, Bao Hiroo also comes with a little mischief. Bao Hiroo's logo is a homage to Tanuki, a major cultural Japanese icon that is a mix between a dog and a raccoon with giant cajones and a playful spirit. Consider this somewhat of chef Hiroo's spirit animal.

"Throughout the years, there are many things that have changed in human history, but basically the environment of eating and the table itself hasn't really changed over the last few thousand years. It's still a place of gathering, it's still a place of nourishment," notes Hiroo "I guess in this world, that's one thing that will remain constant -- the philosophy around the tables, what it means to eat with friends and family."

As of the last week of May, you're invited to be the first of your friends to check out Hiroo's bao for yourself and let the comfort of steamy, heavenly goodness envelop you. Open seven days a week, you have no excuse not to get your bao on, baby. You won't regret it.

FIND IT HERE:
905 E 2nd St. Suite 109
baohiroo.com

Photographed by Robiee Ziegler



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