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LA

ISSUE 63

# DOWNTOWNER<sup>®</sup>

THE INSIDER GUIDE TO DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

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of Strut in DTLA



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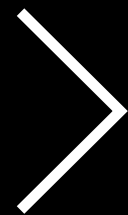
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THE INSIDER'S VIEW OF DOWNTOWN CULTURE, FOOD, DRINKS, FASHION & THE PEOPLE WHO SHAPE IT.

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TEASE IF YOU PLEASE

CELEBRATING SIX YEARS OF STRUT IN DTLA

Written By Dakota Nate

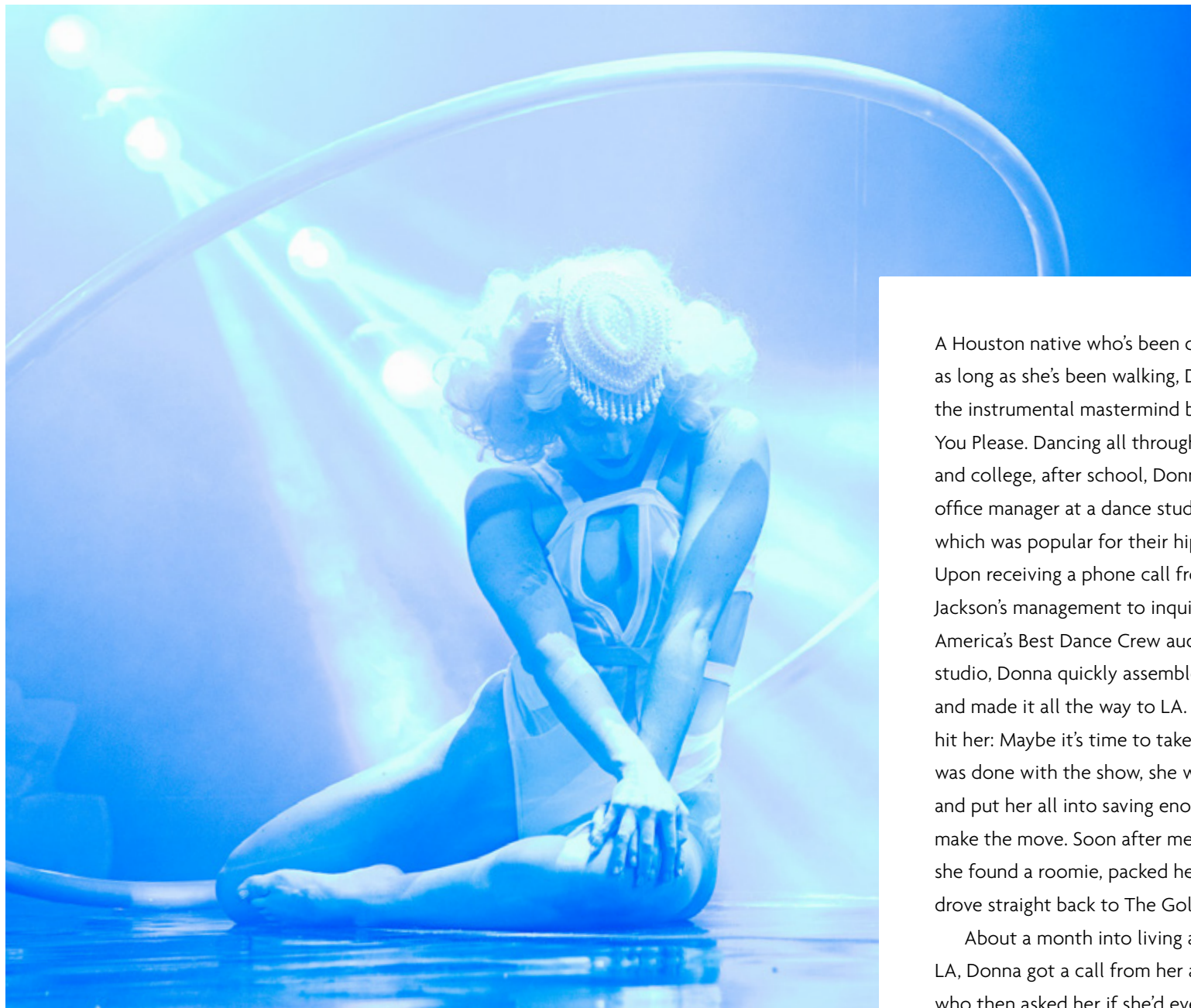
Photographed By Robiee Ziegler & Meredith Carlson

Ladies and gentlemen, break out your bowties and your feather boas, we're going out. Well, on November 16th, we are. Since 2013, Tease, If You Please! has stunned the likes of date night attendees, weekend warriors, and many an Average Joe changed forever by a variety of glamazons strutting up and down the stage beneath their kitten heels and marabou robes. Now, now, burlesque is so much more than beautiful women slinking around on stage, taking off expensive outfits before the eyes of an eager crowd to the wahn wahn of a dirty saxophone — burlesque is about the art of allure. Just ask Donna Hood, the silken goddess behind this major success of a show.

"Burlesque is really about trying to draw people in," says Donna. "You should probably be able to stand up on that stage, literally just stand there, and hold my attention and keep me interested. That is hard to do."

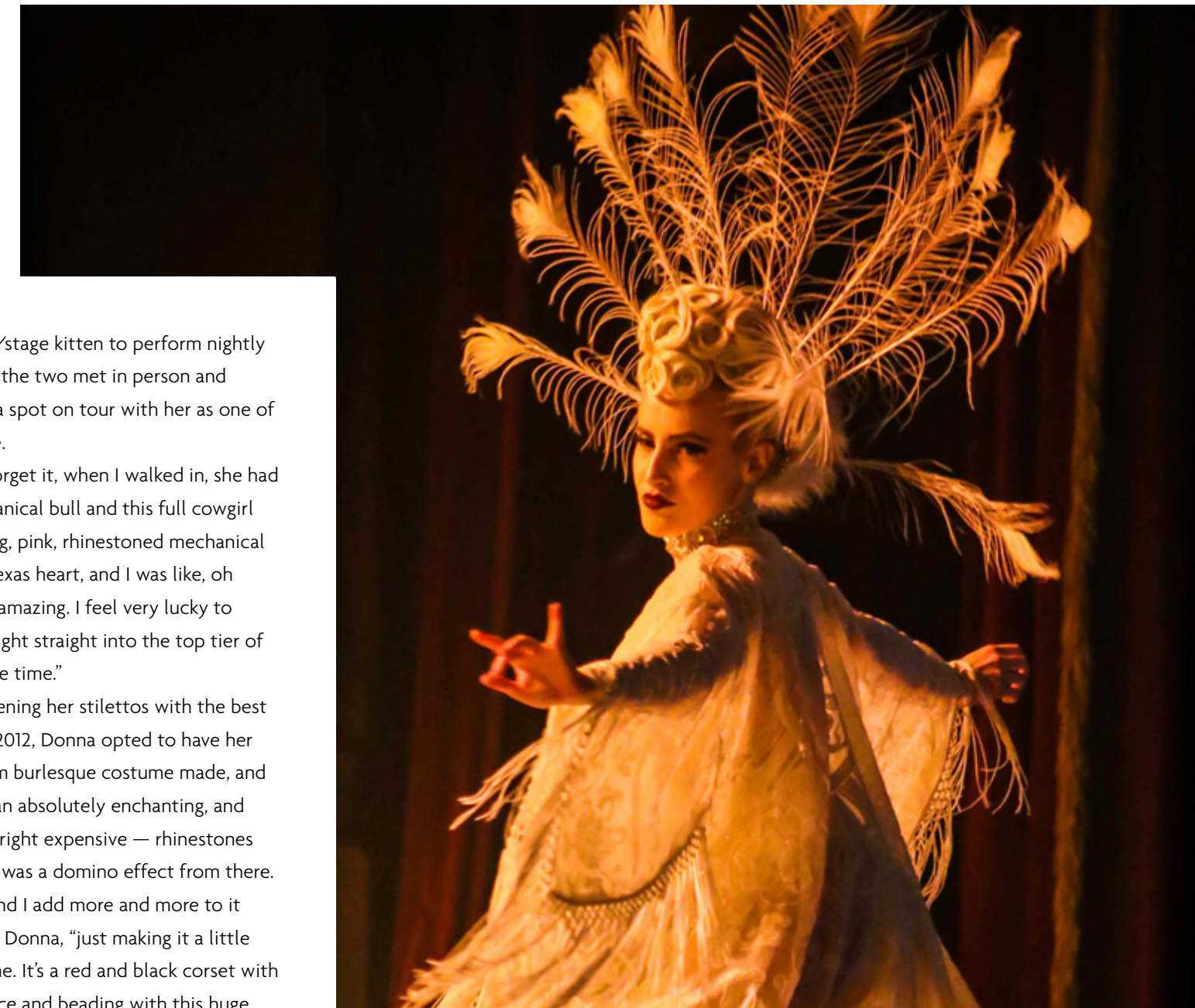
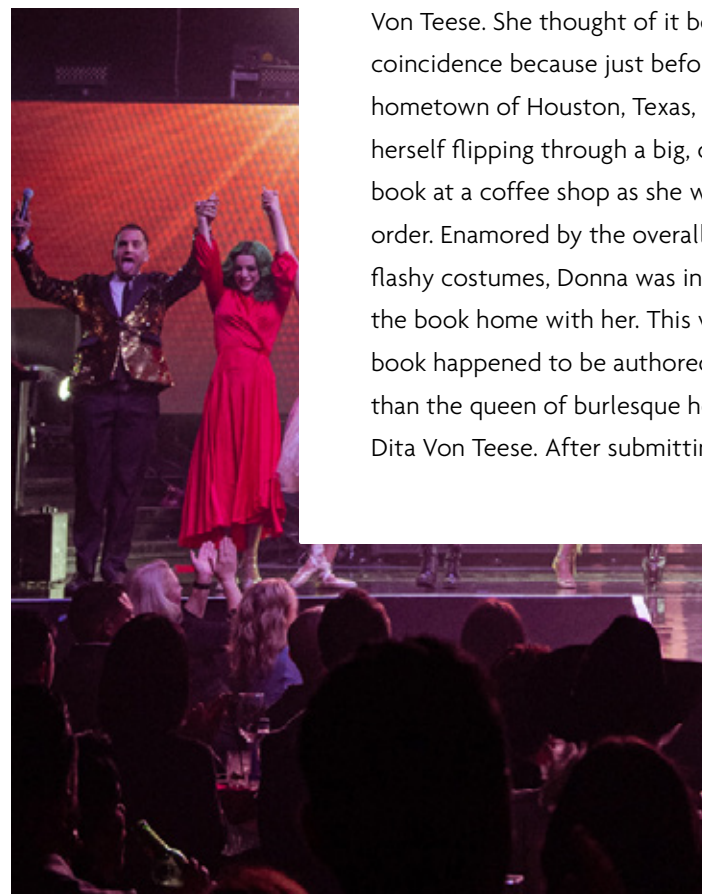
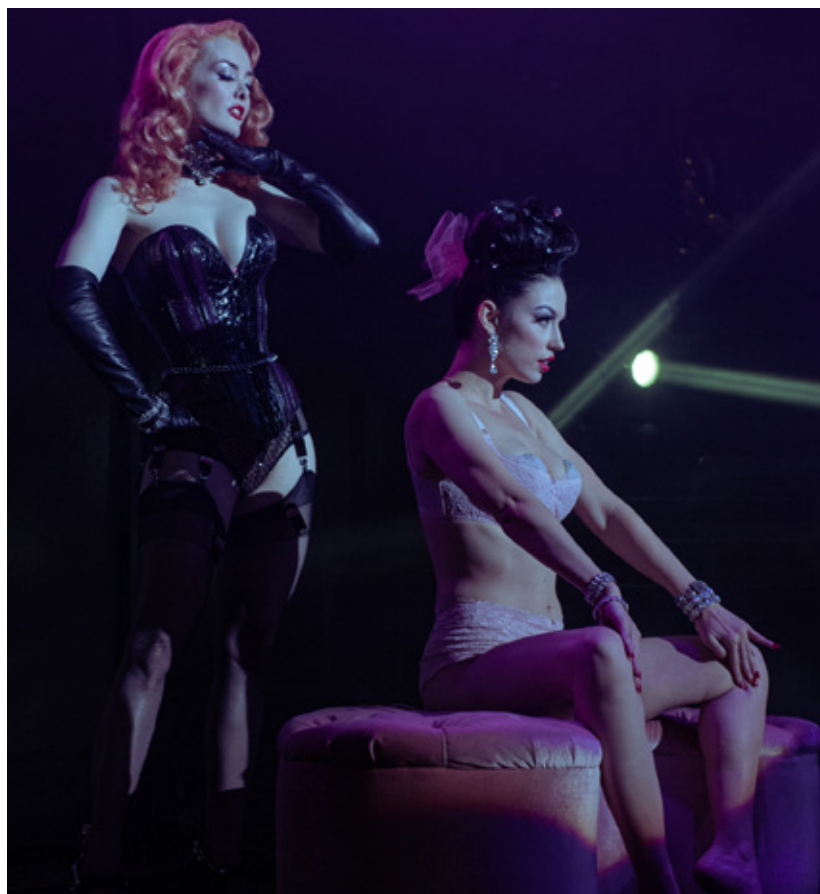
(Continued on Page 4)





A Houston native who's been dancing just about as long as she's been walking, Donna Hood is the instrumental mastermind behind Tease If You Please. Dancing all through high school and college, after school, Donna became an office manager at a dance studio she frequented which was popular for their hip hop classes. Upon receiving a phone call from Randy Jackson's management to inquire about holding America's Best Dance Crew auditions in the studio, Donna quickly assembled a dance crew and made it all the way to LA. This is when it hit her: Maybe it's time to take a leap. When she was done with the show, she went back home and put her all into saving enough money to make the move. Soon after meeting her goal, she found a roomie, packed her things, and drove straight back to The Golden State.

About a month into living and working in LA, Donna got a call from her agent at the time who then asked her if she'd ever heard of Dita Von Teese. She thought of it being a funny coincidence because just before leaving her hometown of Houston, Texas, Donna found herself flipping through a big, colorful picture book at a coffee shop as she waited for her order. Enamored by the overall glamour and flashy costumes, Donna was inspired and took the book home with her. This very picture book happened to be authored by none other than the queen of burlesque herself, Miss Dita Von Teese. After submitting to a role as a



touring dancer/stage kitten to perform nightly alongside Dita, the two met in person and Donna landed a spot on tour with her as one of her Vontourage.

"I'll never forget it, when I walked in, she had this pink mechanical bull and this full cowgirl outfit — this big, pink, rhinestoned mechanical bull after my Texas heart, and I was like, oh my god, this is amazing. I feel very lucky to have been brought straight into the top tier of burlesque at the time."

After sharpening her stilettos with the best of the best, in 2012, Donna opted to have her first real custom burlesque costume made, and by real, we mean absolutely enchanting, and probably downright expensive — rhinestones aren't cheap. It was a domino effect from there. "I still have it and I add more and more to it each year," says Donna, "just making it a little better each time. It's a red and black corset with black French lace and beading with this huge floor-length floral bustle and a silk collapsible tophat." Donna decided that she was going to take that one burlesque costume she had and the few that she was able to throw together, and go back home, because there was a bar in Houston called Prohibition where she could perform a proper solo gig. Donna's friend David shot a video of the show, and she sent it off to anyone who may be interested.

(Continued on Page 6)





A gentleman who owned a local venue by Disney Concert Hall First & Hope reached out to Donna upon viewing the video and invited her to come by and look at the space. Upon entering, they walked through a curtain in the venue to a small theatre that could seat maybe 90 people max. This is where the idea of a full show was proposed to Donna, since the owner had yearned to host a classic burlesque show for quite some time. She was offered a space in a theatre for a show, and the rest is history. Donna just needed a name. While brainstorming with her girlfriends, the word “tease” was thrown into the mix, and while flipping through the channels on the TV, she landed on Disney’s *The Aristocats*, and more importantly, the tune that goes “We are Siamese if you please!” The lightbulb went off in Donna’s mind. Showtime. She pulled together a team of the best of the best and got down to brass tacks.

After outgrowing a number of theatres around DTLA such as *The Globe* and *Exchange*, the show is bigger and better than ever. On Saturday, November 16th, the future of *Tease If You Please* is to be unveiled before the public eye at the historic, 1000-seat *Palace Theater*, a place where Houdini himself once graced the stage in infamy. With an entirely new program

of dazzling acts by familiar faces such as Miss Miranda and Jessabelle Thunder, 24 other performers are to strut the stage, including back-up dancers, and the ringmaster herself — Donna Hood. How did she assemble the perfect team, you may ask?

“Some people just have star quality,” exclaims Donna. “You can feel them the second they enter a room. You know when you know. Right now is the strongest the cast there’s ever been. Everybody’s different in their own way — different races, sizes, styles. There’s so much diversity involved, and burlesque is really just like a celebration of humanity.”

Since this is their biggest show of the year, not a single solo performance is to be seen at the TIYP 6th year anniversary show, so expect all of the showmanship and then some — unveiling fun new props and new performers. Seats are going FAST, but luckily, all there is left for you to do is put on a sexy little number, grab your honey by the hand, and head to the box office — or to their website for tickets, since it’s 2019 and we can do that — and tease if you please!

**FIND IT HERE:**  
740 S Broadway  
globetheatre-la.com





# DRINK

A

## ANGELENO WINE COMPANY

1646 N Spring St.  
angelenowine.com



# EAT

B

## ARTESANO TAMALERIA

819 Santee St.  
artesanotamaleria.com

C

## BURRATA HOUSE

324 S Hill St.  
burratahouse.com

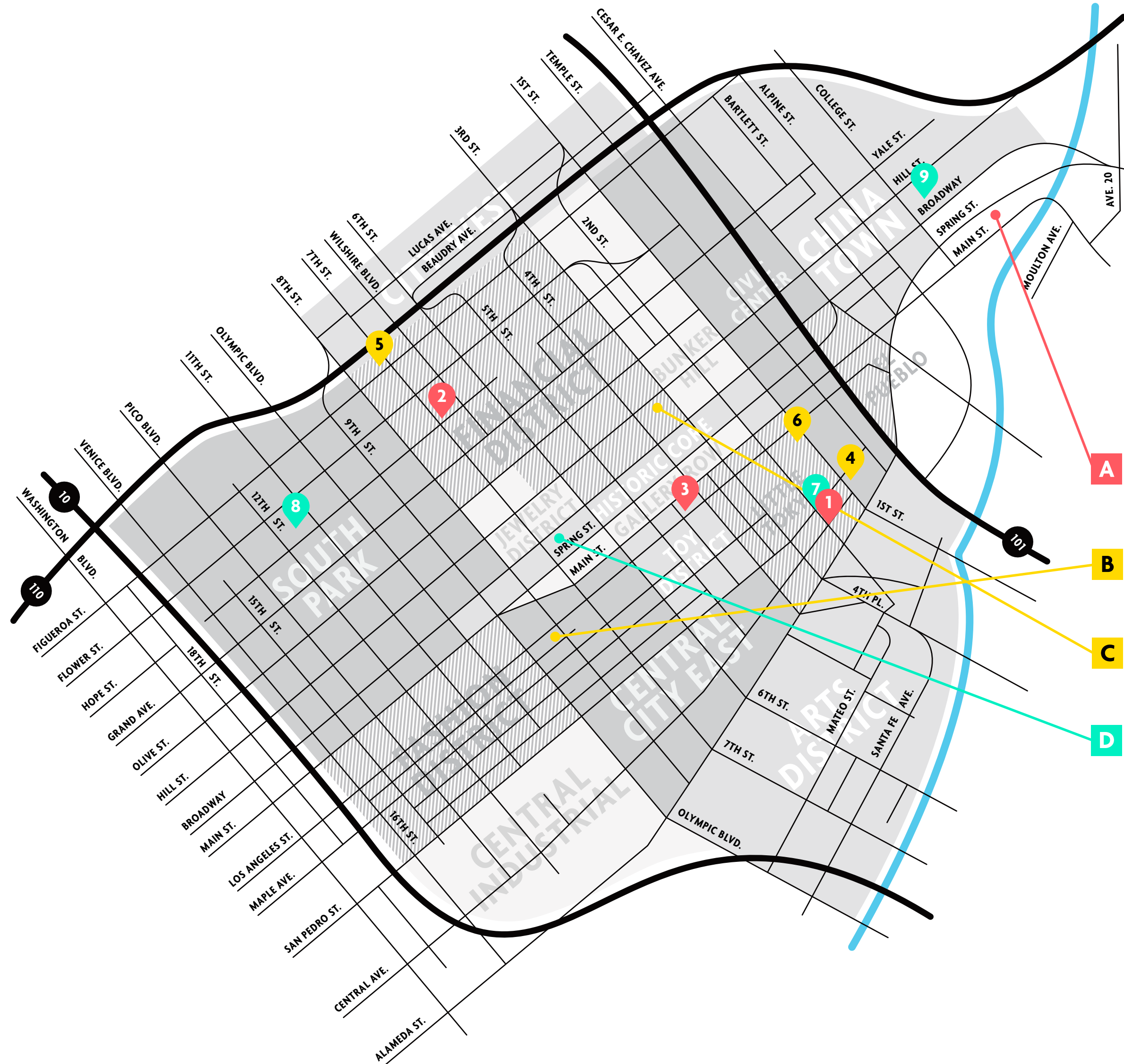


# MOVE

D

## TEASE IF YOU PLEASE

740 S Broadway  
globetheatre-la.com



**CITY STREETS**

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**FREEWAYS**

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**LA RIVER**

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**M METRO RAIL STATIONS**

\*MAP SIMPLIFIED & NOT TO SCALE

# DOWNTOWN FAVORITES

1

## TWINKLE BROWN SUGAR

131 S Central Ave. — twinklebrownsugar.com  
Adorable boba tea shop in Little Tokyo. Glass jars to sip out of, all sorts of fun things to try, and drinks that are made in colors not found in nature.

2

## SHOO SHOO, BABY

717 W 7th St. — shoobaby.com  
A bar that embraces its feminine energy in a place where women are celebrated. Men are of course invited, but the space embraces the feminine. Quality drinks, extensive beer list, and a cool vibe abound.

3

## BLACKSMITHS DTLA

117 Winston St. — blacksmithsla.com  
Located across the street from Indian Alley and a Shepard Fairey mural, Blacksmiths divides its cocktail selection into "brunch" and "not brunch". Our kind of place.

4

## KABUTO

323 E 1st St. — kabutofriedchicken.com  
Spicy and traditional Japanese fried chicken that you can order by the piece and in sets. Local, free-range, vegetarian-feed jidori chicken. The restaurant features sides such as curry mac and cheese, garlic noodles, cream corn, and kinpira gobo.

5

## OCHO MEXICAN GRILL

735 S Figueroa St. — eatocho.com  
Fast-casual insanely delicious Mexican food that includes grilled mahi mahi burritos, bowls with carnitas or tiger prawns, and grilled steak tacos.

6

## AZAY

226 E 1st St.  
Chef Akira Hirose, formerly of Maison Akira in Pasadena, has opened a restaurant in Little Tokyo in a building that has been in his wife's family since 1946. Chef Akira has been an active presence in Little Tokyo's community for many years, and the desire was to open a space in a neighborhood he has a strong connection to.

7

## JASON MARKK

329 E 2nd St. — jasonmarkk.com/pages/los-angeles  
Sneakerheads know Jason Markk as THE premium shoe cleaner, and their flagship drop off shoe care store is...well...just about as LA as you can get. If you got the kinds of shoes that need a \$75 deep cleaning, you probably know about this place already.

8

## THE KING CIGAR LOUNGE

1117 S Hope St. — thekingcigarlounge.com  
Cigar lounge featuring high-end cigars, a knowledgeable staff, and a state of the art filtration system that keeps the air inside and out of the building clean and breathable for those partaking and those just walking by.

9

## NOUS TOUS

454B Jung Jing Rd. — nousous.co  
This Chinatown artist-run gallery is known for its unique exterior design in the Chinatown Central Plaza. You literally can't miss it. There's always a captivating show going on, and community events such as Sunday morning yoga and women's-only Al Anon meetings on Monday.



## ARTESANO TAMALERIA

### NOT YOUR ABUELA'S TAMALES

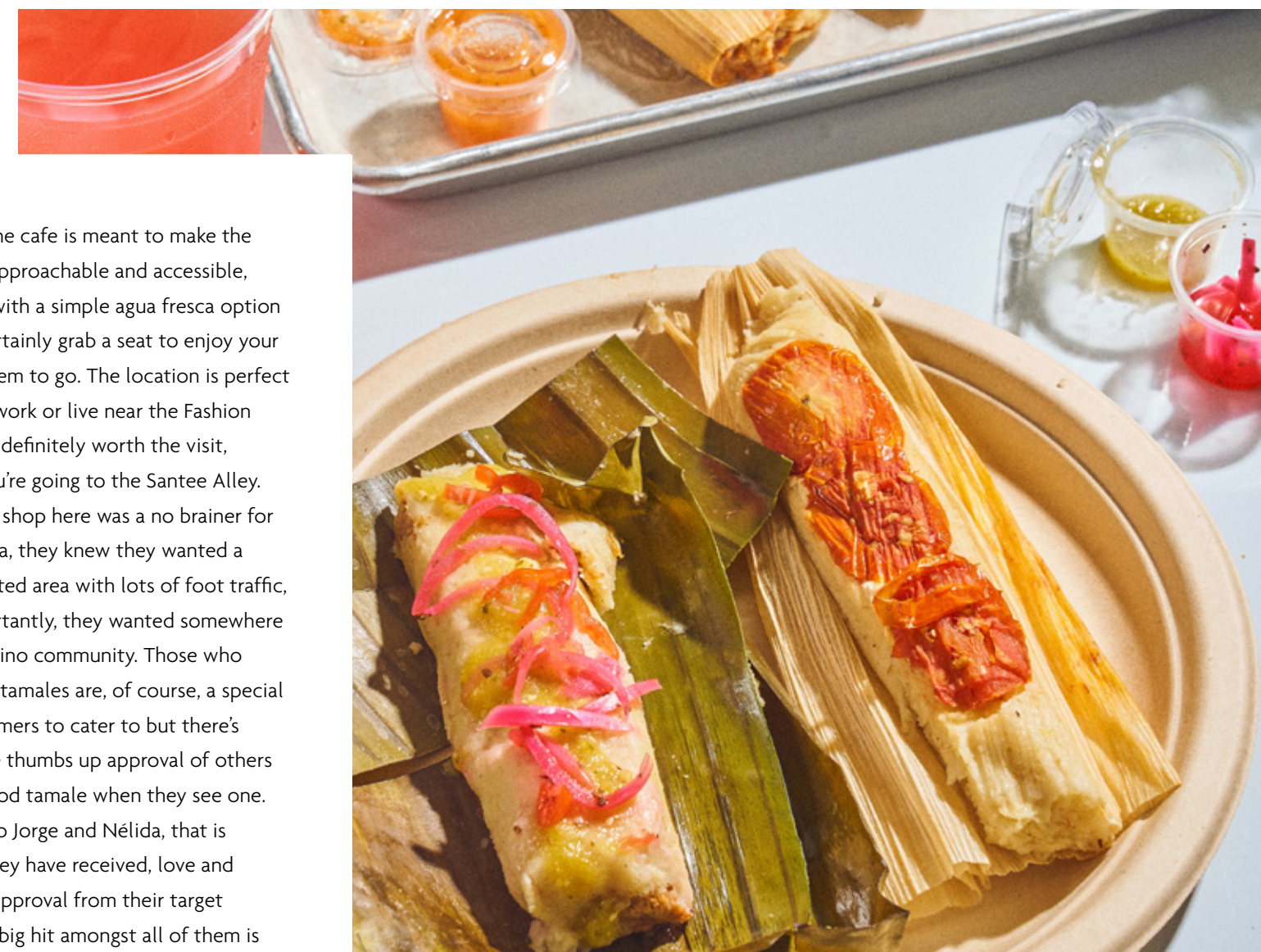
Written By Mariana Ramos  
Photographed By Jack Strutz

Downtown LA's Fashion District houses some of the best Latin/Spanish/Mexican focused restaurants in the entire Los Angeles area. From mom and pop places like Sonoratown to the high-end dining you get at DAMA, we have it all, and you can now add a new tamale cafe to the list.

Artesano Tamaleria lives up to its name—they sell some seriously artisanal tamales inside a cute but casual atmosphere, you have to admit a tamaleria is rare even for Downtown LA.

Stepping inside the small but open cafe you almost feel lighter, it's so well lit and color-coordinated it makes you feel at peace, and actually relaxes you. That's what owners Jorge and Nérida intended, what they didn't expect was the rush of customers who are now regulars, some coming twice a day for their tamales. Their grand opening is coming soon in November but they've already begun fulfilling catering orders for Thanksgiving.

"We didn't invent anything, but we do think we reinvented the way tamales can be enjoyed." Their tamales are made with vegetable shortening instead of pork lard so they're a lot lighter and easier to digest, AKA you can eat multiple ones without getting sick. They have all kinds of options for vegans, carnivores, lactose intolerant, vegetarians, those with a savory tooth, and even two sweet ones you can enjoy as dessert.



The set up of the cafe is meant to make the tamales more approachable and accessible, they're served with a simple agua fresca option and you can certainly grab a seat to enjoy your meal or take them to go. The location is perfect for those who work or live near the Fashion District, but it's definitely worth the visit, especially if you're going to the Santee Alley.

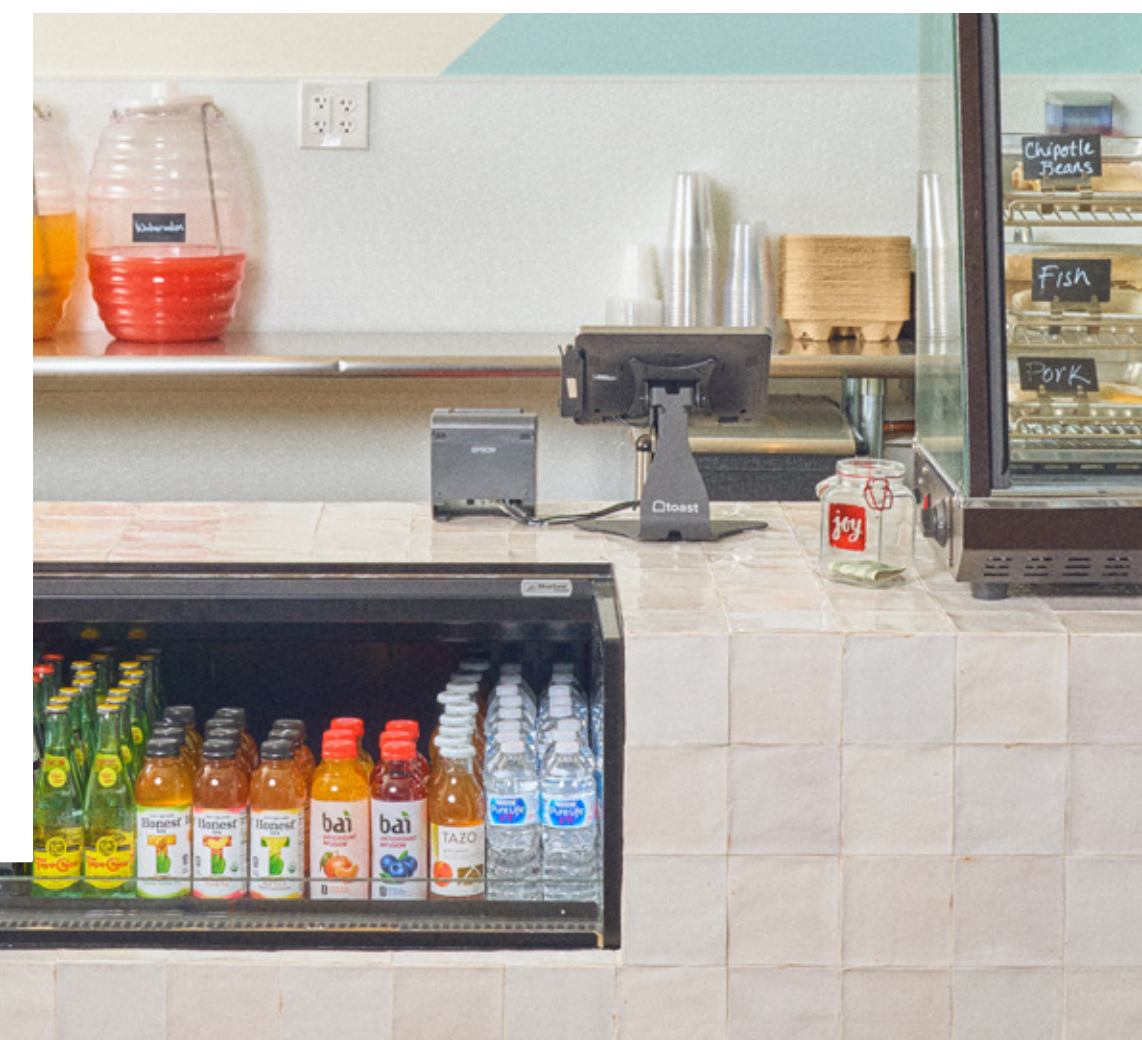
Opening up shop here was a no brainer for Jorge and Nérida, they knew they wanted a densely populated area with lots of foot traffic, but more importantly, they wanted somewhere known for a Latino community. Those who have never had tamales are, of course, a special crowd of customers to cater to but there's nothing like the thumbs up approval of others who know a good tamale when they see one.

According to Jorge and Nérida, that is exactly what they have received, love and an outpour of approval from their target audiences. The big hit amongst all of them is the chipotle beans tamale, which happens to be vegan, and adored equally by people who are and aren't vegan.

Artesano Tamales not only bring people together, but they also bring cultures together, "We have a customer who is Asian, we proudly served him his first tamale ever and now he's hooked," says Nérida as she passed me my favorite tamale of them all—fish.

Don't be afraid to step outside the box DTLA, heck maybe switch it up once in a while and do Tamale Tuesday instead of Taco Tuesday (or really go all out do both!) You can begin by visiting, what will soon be, your favorite tamaleria.

FIND IT HERE:  
819 Santee St.  
artesanotamaleria.com





## ANGELENO WINE COMPANY

### DRINK TO REMEMBER

Written By Linda Hosmer  
Photographed By Jack Strutz

There's a little quiet courtyard tucked away from the busy passageway of vendors on Olvera Street. It's part of the Avila Adobe and if you look up, your eyes will catch a dangling hint of a Los Angeles long gone, a Los Angeles steeped in luscious vines. We're talking about the clusters of grapes you'll randomly find all around, clusters begging for your curiosity to peel back the rich and juicy history of winemaking in the heart of what we now know as Downtown Los Angeles.

To better understand it all, let's take a trip back in time. Let's cross the street and replace our glorious Union Station, with a 400-year-old Sycamore tree, El Aliso. We've crossed into the 1830s and we're captivated by the 60-foot tall tree and its thick bouquet of branches. At its aging feet, you'll spot a brand new commercial winery belonging to Jean-Louis Vignes. There's yet to be a population boom so vines outnumber people and wine production is flowing. "We used to be a city of vines, our first city seal was a bunch of grapes and we were making 2 million bottles of wine a year, three years before Napa even had their first commercial winery," says Angeleno Wine Company's co-owner Amy Luftig Viste.

You read that right, before Napa, before Sonoma, Los Angeles was the OG California wine country. Cool, right? And even though it's a fact that feels like a lost memory, Jasper Dickson and Amy Luftig Viste are ready to remind you of our history one sip at a time inside their cozy downtown wine tasting room. Welcome to Angeleno Wine Company.

You might recognize Jasper right away, if you've ever picked up a bottle at Silver Lake Wine. He worked there for a decade and says he credits the popular wine shop and its supportive owners with Angeleno Wine Co.'s existence. "If there was no Silver Lake Wine, there'd be no Angeleno Wine."

And he's right because he met Amy, his partner in wine, at Silver Lake Wine in 2015. Amy and her husband were regulars and with every visit her interest in wine and winemaking grew, so she started studying up. "UCLA has



an awesome wine studies program and so I went and was taking that seriously. Then I started a group called Bottle Babes, which was a group of about 20 women. We met every couple months or so and it was really a way to try and demystify wine in a really fun, and non-judgmental way," says Amy.

Next thing you know the two are at Barbrix enjoying bottomless mimosas (as one does!) and Angeleno Wine Co. was born. "We wrote a business plan over the next couple of months, we shopped it to a bunch of traditional banks who either didn't respond or turned us down," says Amy.

So they kicked off a Kickstarter to find Angeleno Wine Co. a home. "Our goal was to raise 25k, by the end of it we got like 36k. Very humbling," says Jasper. But now they faced archaic zoning restrictions which limit where a winery is allowed to operate. Add a tight budget to that and you're left with very little options. But after three years of searching, they found this sliver of DTLA called Mission Junction, just north of Chinatown, where the landlord of a 1925 building on Spring Street said yes! And as of July 13th of this year, Angeleno Wine Co.'s tasting room has been open to the public, Saturdays 12pm-8pm and Sundays 12pm-6pm.

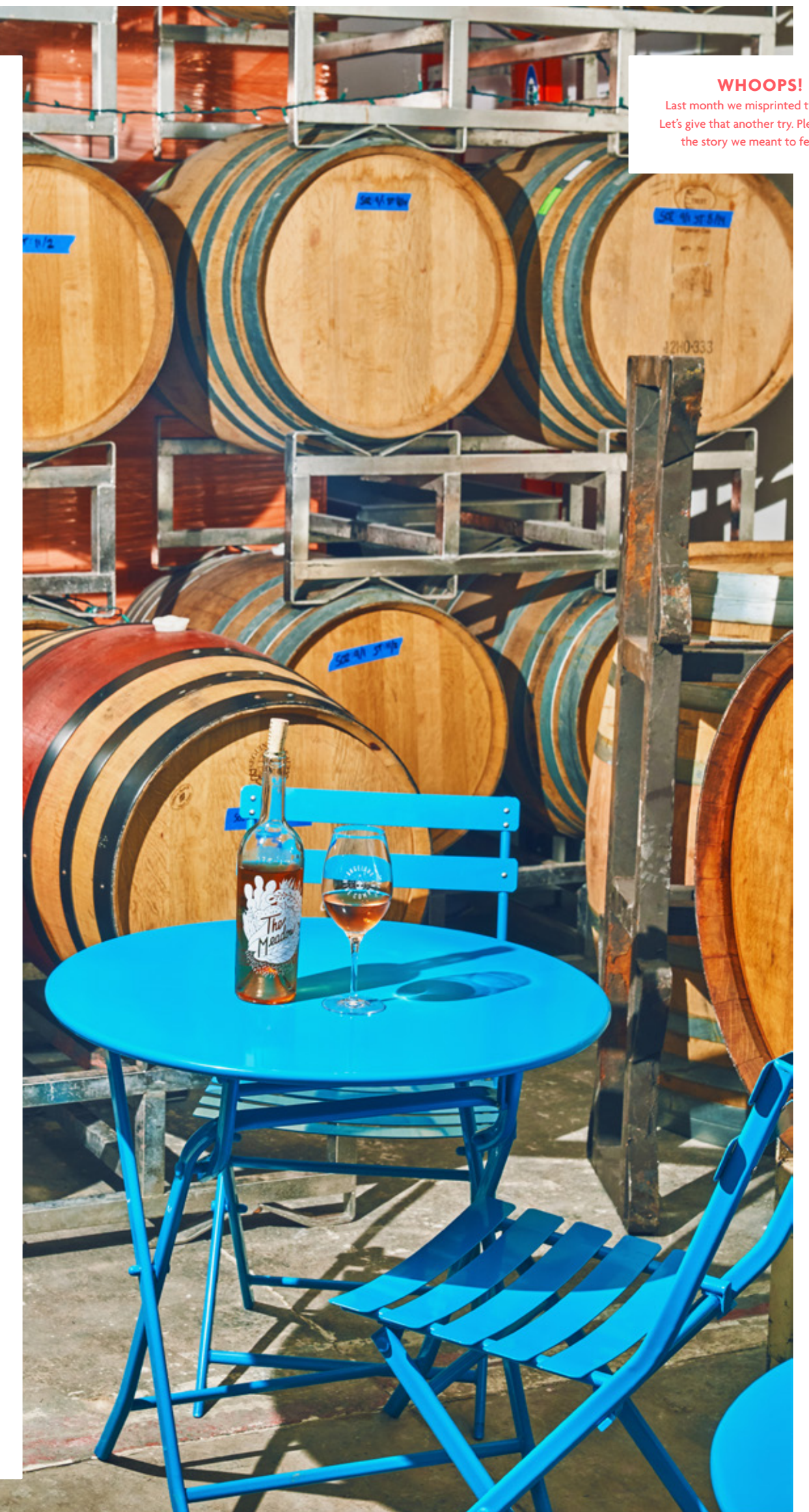
When you show up, you'll quickly become a part of this small and scrappy wine family. This truly is a small business. "We do everything by hand so we pick the fruit ourselves, we process it here, barrel-age it and even bottle it here. There's so much love that goes into it," says Amy.

And that fruit you're drinking is picked an hour away in Agua Dulce at the Alonso Family Vineyards farmed by Juan Alonso himself. Before Dickson ever met Alonso, he tasted his Tannat, a rare grape varietal he was surprised to learn was growing in Los Angeles County. Dickson never forgot how delicious it was, so he went in search of Alonso for Angeleno and the rest is history. You'll even spot Alonso's face looking on from behind the tasting room bar in a beautifully bright mural painted by Brian Lee.

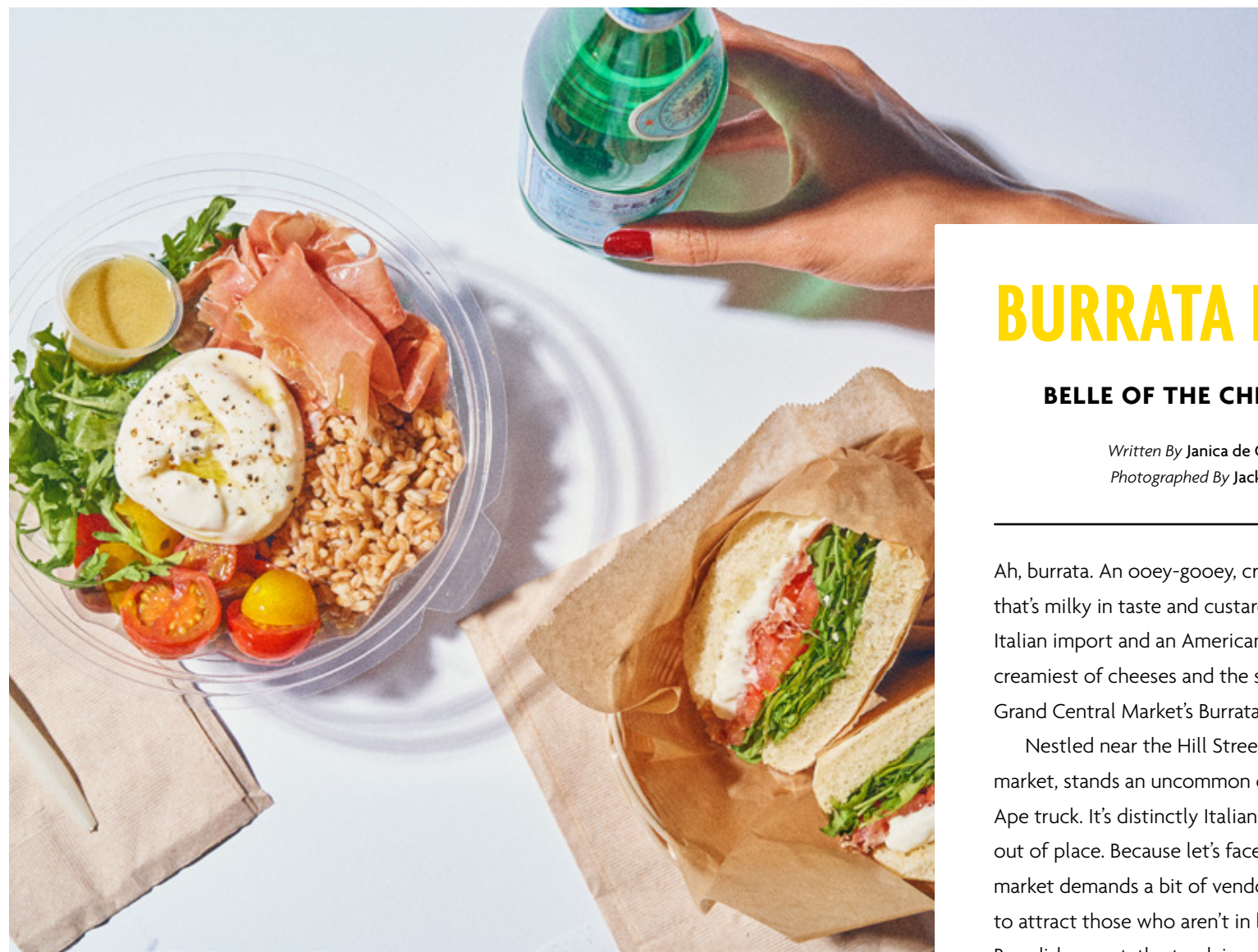
Here's a list of the wines you can taste at Angeleno: a silky Grenache, a light and crushable Grenache/Tempranillo blend (Bike Path), a refreshing Rosé (The Meadow in the prettiest, hoardable bottle) and their latest release — Amber — an orange wine (Albariño blended with other Spanish white grapes).

But what's the fun in reading about wine. Just go in, meet Jasper and Amy and taste it all for yourself.

**FIND IT HERE:**  
1646 N Spring St.  
angelenowine.com



**WHOOOPS!**  
Last month we misprinted this story. Let's give that another try. Please enjoy the story we meant to feature.



## BURRATA HOUSE

### BELLE OF THE CHEESE BALL

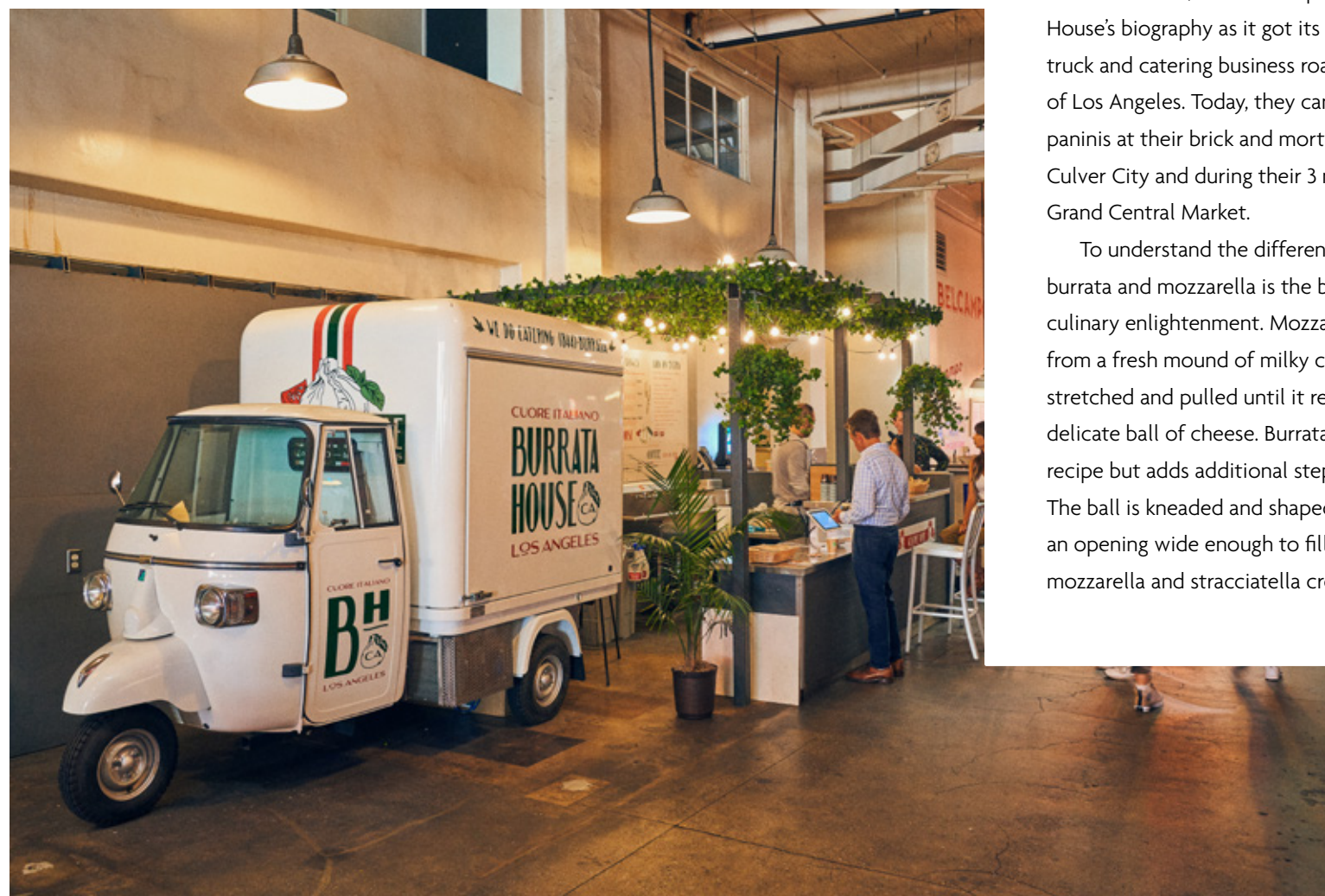
*Written By Janica de Guzman*

*Photographed By Jack Strutz*

Ah, burrata. An ooey-goey, cream-filled cheese that's milky in taste and custardy in texture. An Italian import and an American luxury — it's the creamiest of cheeses and the star of the show at Grand Central Market's Burrata House.

Nestled near the Hill Street corner of the market, stands an uncommon object — a Piaggio Ape truck. It's distinctly Italian and appropriately out of place. Because let's face it, the bustling market demands a bit of vendor-peacocking to attract those who aren't in line for Egg Slut. Brandish or not, the truck is part of Burrata House's biography as it got its start as a food truck and catering business roaming the streets of Los Angeles. Today, they can be found pressing paninis at their brick and mortar location in Culver City and during their 3 month pop-up at Grand Central Market.

To understand the difference between burrata and mozzarella is the beginning of culinary enlightenment. Mozzarella is made from a fresh mound of milky curds, continuously stretched and pulled until it resembles a shiny, delicate ball of cheese. Burrata follows that same recipe but adds additional steps for extra credit. The ball is kneaded and shaped until there is an opening wide enough to fill with ribbons of mozzarella and stracciatella cream. Once filled,



the rotund and water balloon-like ball is knotted at the top to seal in all the lactiferous delights. The result is the Russian Doll of cheeses. The belle of the cheese ball. The glorious creamy burrata cheese.

Though this cheese is not as rare to find on a menu as white truffle, it is considered a specialty dish that's gaining in popularity. Mattia Sorgini, owner of Burrata House and former manager of Factory Place Group (Factory Kitchen, Officine Brera, and Sixth & Mill) is making burrata readily available for Downtowners anytime they have a craving. He and his team offer a menu featuring paninis and bowls highlighting burrata, Italian cured meats & fresh local vegetables. Their burrata is sourced from Di Stefano Cheese, the family who first introduced burrata to the United States and the same suppliers to Nancy Silverton's Osteria Mozza.

Order the Crudo panini for layers upon layers of salty prosciutto, peppery arugula, and fresh tomatoes piled-high then meticulously topped with a cold serving of burrata. The cheese's flesh is sliced open to allow cream to ooze out and cascade into the layers of the sandwich. The saltiness of the cured meats is immediately cut by the milkiness of the cream, and the piquant bite of the arugula is complemented by the sweetness of ripe tomatoes. For \$13 you can mentally transport yourself to the cobblestone streets of Rome before having to clock into after your lunch break.

**FIND IT HERE:**  
324 S Hill St.  
[burratahouse.com](http://burratahouse.com)



# CELEBRATE

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Blocks



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