

13 Exciting New Restaurant Openings in LA to Try This Weekend

From the re-opening of a beloved beer bar to immaculate new pastries, LA's restaurant scene is better than ever.

[Ben Mesirov](#)



Photo by Wonho Frank Lee, courtesy of MainRo

Summer technically starts on the solstice in late June, but last weekend it was 96 degrees and there was a child intentionally dumping snow cones on her head at a birthday party in the park, our own Punxsutawney Phil

predicting the early arrival of summer.

So it is fitting that our newest restaurant openings lean into childlike summer fun, with the return of an Echo Park barcade, a new location for fun fast food downtown, and plenty of pizza. But there is adult fun to be had too, with a glitzy new rooftop lounge in West Hollywood, wine and tinned fish near Grand Central Market, and pioneering dude food returning to Fairfax. Here are 13 of the most exciting new restaurants you need to try in LA:



Photo by Wonho Frank Lee, courtesy of MainRo

Hollywood

[The Vinyl District earns another stunner](#) with MainRo, a buzzy newcomer that takes over the former Beso space. The 7,500-square-foot supper club is outfitted with 16 triangular chandeliers that blaze with ultra 4K digital-

mapped screens that move throughout the evening, plus a stage with a dual ornate staircase and walls that are also adorned with ultra 4K screens to simulate a fully immersive lighting and sound experience that blends dining, cocktails, and theater. The food program doesn't cut corners, blending French, Japanese, and Vietnamese flavors in shareable plates like Seabass den Miso and Wagyu Beef Carpaccio, in addition to caviar, sushi, and prime steak options. Leaning into a modern Roaring '20s theme, the cocktail menu is over-the-top without sacrificing strength, featuring craft creations like MainRo (Hennessy XO, Clase Azul Reposado, passion fruit, pernod, dulce de coco leche, and lime) and B. Bardot (Empress Gin, clarified lemon, crème de violette, sage, and champagne). Make a reservation between 6:30–10:30 pm for dinner, or stop by afterwards, until 2 am, for dancing and fun.

How to book: via [OpenTable](#).

Photo courtesy of MIL

Koreatown

Ktown is best known as a late-night dining and drinking neighborhood, a place to share a big table and some [grilled meat](#) with friends and friends of friends. Pastry chef [Jiyoon Jang](#) and [In Hospitality Group](#) are hoping to make the neighborhood a morning destination too, with their new pastry shop MIL, a tiny bakery tucked into fancy neighborhood liquor store [All Good Things](#). Jang, who dove into home baking during the pandemic and then went pro at [Clark Street](#), has created a menu of unique pastries [inspired by her Korean heritage with a modern twist and elevated presentation](#). Her signature pastries on the opening menu include a Marbled Pound Cake infused with the earthy Korean herb Ssuk, Miso and Honey Cinnamon Rolls with white sesame seeds, and a Miso-Garu Cookie, which combines miso with the Korean grain powder misugaru.

How to order: Walk-ins only.

Photo by Wonho Frank Lee, courtesy of Dono

Santa Monica

Depending on how you measure it, per capita or per kilometer, the Basque beach town Donostia-San Sebastian has either the highest or second-highest concentration of Michelin stars in the world, 19 of them spread across 11 restaurants—and that doesn't take into account the city's uniquely spectacular pintxos and txakoli culture. So Chef Brendan Collins has set a lofty goal by naming his new Santa Monica modern tapas restaurant Dono, after the Basque Donostia. The menu doesn't stick exclusively to Basque classics, skipping across Iberia from Catalan Chickpeas to the Portuguese colonial Piri Piri Chicken, up to Galicia for Padrón Peppers and then back to Valencia for a gorgeous Seafood Paella. The wine list is full of Spanish grapes grown on both sides of the Atlantic, and Gabriella Mlynarczyk's cocktail program features several sangrias, riffs on gin & tonic, and plenty of sherry.

How to book: via [Resy](#).

[Carnitas El Momo Boyle Heights](#)*Monterey Park*

Romulo "El Momo" Acosta himself may be retired, but the carnitas joints that bear his name undeniably carry on his legacy, serving tacos double-stuffed with rich bits of pork that are alternately slippery and sticky, a huge porcine bite. They still do things just the way Acosta taught the family members who have taken over for him, using the technique he brought with him from Guanajuato and then perfected over decades in LA. The El Momo empire started with a stand, then added a truck, and now the family's opened their first brick-and-mortar restaurant on an industrial stretch in Monterey Park. You can order by the pound, but tacos are really the thing, and you can specify your cut of pork to be either maciza (pork butt/shoulder), buche (belly/stomach), cueritos (skin), migajas (burnt ends from the bottom of the cazo), or the mixed-meat mashup they call the Aporkalypse.

How to order: Walk in, or order over the phone at 323-627-8540.

[Barbara's at the Brewery](#)

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Lincoln Heights

There may not be an actual brewery at [The Brewery Artist Lofts](#) anymore, but the Lincoln Heights compound once again has a great place to get craft beer—Barbara's at the Brewery just reopened after an extended pandemic closure. The pub first opened in 1999 and it's been one of the area's longstanding hidden gems, a mellow spot with a killer tap list, solid bar food, tons of parking, and a funky ambiance that's a little like an industrial punk artist took over a ski resort's mid-mountain cafeteria. They're back with abbreviated hours for now, running until 11 pm on weeknights and brunch-only on Saturdays, with a new coffee service on weekday mornings for

artists, dancers, and anyone else in the neighborhood who happens to need a caffeine fix in the morning and a punchy IPA in the evening.

How to order: Walk-ins accepted, or order takeout over the phone at 323-612-6200.

Mid-City

The titles “best” and “most popular” do not always go hand in hand, but when you’re talking about Northern Mexico-style flour tortillas in LA, it’s hard to reach any conclusion other than Sonoratown in either category. Now the restaurant from Jennifer Feltham and Teo Diaz-Rodriguez has expanded from its downtown roots and into Mid-City, bringing their mesquite-grilled carne asada and immaculate flour tortillas to San Vicente, just a few blocks east of Fairfax. The area is not hard up for tacos—Leo’s famous trompo spins just a stone’s throw away, among others—but this new Sonoratown will likely serve as a welcome introduction to San Luis Río Colorado-style chivichangas for many residents of Mid-City and points west.

How to order: Walk-ins accepted, or order for pickup or delivery via [Postmates](#).

Photo by Sacha Cosentino, courtesy of Animal

Fairfax

If you asked for a fancy LA meal recommendation in the late aughts or early 2010s, Animal would have been at the top of the list. Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo's stunning debut restaurant brought a sort of elevated dude food to prominence, inspiring legions of shaggy chefs to go for it with the rustic and rich offal-intensive cooking of their dreams. The restaurant matured over the years, refined itself and kept up with the times, staying relevant in the upper echelon of local restaurants until it closed in March 2020 for a pandemic pause that ran long. Now, more than two years later, the doors are open again, with just the sort of interesting cuts you remember—pig's ear, chicken liver, bone marrow, pancreas and more, like a veterinary school final exam in the best possible way.

How to book: via [Resy](#).

Photo by Jeff Minton, courtesy of Bagel + Slice

Highland Park

There was a bit of a tempest in a teapot when chef Brad Kent of York Boulevard's new Bagel + Slice described his precise beliefs about bagel baking last winter, as it sounded like he was throwing shade at some of the already established shops in the neighborhood. But Kent is just a bagel traditionalist, making them to the standard set by the New York Bagel Bakers Union almost 100 years ago. That doesn't mean, though, that everything in the shop is old fashioned—in fact, it's much the opposite. Kent, who co-founded [Blaze Pizza](#) and owns [Olio](#) downtown, is committed to offering quality vegan options on both pizza and bagels, and providing plenty of low-gluten options for those with sensitivities. He is also focused on regenerative agriculture practices, paying above minimum wage, and being a good neighbor in a still-gentrifying part of LA.

How to book: Walk-ins only for now, third-party delivery to come.

Photo by Wonho Frank Lee, courtesy of Melrose Place

West Hollywood

As scene-y hot spots go, it's hard to beat a rooftop with a view in early summer, and new West Hollywood restaurant Melrose Place has all that going for it and more. Chef David Lespron has created a luxurious menu to match the setting, drawing on his experience at Katsuya for some intricate raw seafood preparations, in addition to elevated, California-influenced large format proteins and interesting cocktails.

How to book: via the [website](#).

Photo courtesy of Pijja Palace

Silver Lake

By the end of its run, the rotating [Happy Foot/Sad Foot Sign](#) had pushed beyond charming local landmark and into pop culture cringe, so its eventual removal in 2019 when Dr. Thomas Lim relocated his clinic was more mercy killing than tragedy. Into those auspicious former offices comes something totally different: Pijja Palace, a bright and stylish Indian sports bar with a unique and expansive menu of Indian-Italian bar food. There are pastas with tomato masala and coriander, Kashmiri Red Chili Chicken Wings, and pizzas with vindaloo, tandoori onions, and house-made Goan sausage.

How to book: via [Resy](#).

Photo courtesy of Jollibee

Downtown

The greater Downtown area is already a fantastic neighborhood for Filipino food, with hometown heroes [Lasita](#), [Petite Peso](#), and [Sari Sari Store](#) firmly established, and now the iconic fast food giant Jollibee is joining their ranks with a new location right by the 7th Street Metro. This marks their third location in LA, after East Hollywood and Eagle Rock, with more to come for the international chain. They have more than 5,900 locations in 33 countries, built largely on the back of their Chickenjoy fried chicken sandwich. They also serve a uniquely sugary spaghetti with hot dog pieces, and a zippy peach mango hand pie for dessert.

How to book: via the [website](#) and delivery through [DoorDash](#).

Photo by Wonho Frank Lee, courtesy of Alma Cocina de Mexico

The Grove

Everything is fake at the Grove, from the [snow in winter](#) to its owner's [political affiliation](#). Everything, that is, except for the megamall's new Mexican restaurant, Alma Cocina de Mexico—they are bonafide DF, opened by [Grupo Hunan](#), the powerful group behind 23 restaurants in Mexico's capital city. The multi-tiered restaurant concept starts with a taqueria, bar, and market, on the ground floor, followed by a full-service elevated dinner component in the second-floor dining room coming later in May. The taqueria is open now with a menu of refined classics, including takes on birria de res, barbacoa de borrego, and al pastor, with churros and chocolate for dessert. The bar leans heavily on margarita varieties thanks to a massive tequila and mezcal selection, and the market has cookbooks, salsas, liquor, and more to take away.

How to book: The taqueria, bar, and market are welcoming guests on a first-come, first-served basis. The forthcoming second-floor restaurant will require reservations.

Photo by Kate Vourvoulis, courtesy of Vin de California

Pasadena

About six years after they started their Vin de California label, and about 18 months after the launch of their adjoining [Good Luck Wine Shop](#), LA natives Adam and Kate Vourvoulis have opened their Vin de California tasting room. The space is tiny, and parking can be tough on the flyby stretch of Foothill Blvd in northeast Pasadena, but inside it is as welcoming as can be, a laid-back, fun place to taste their lineup of bright, terroir-driven natural wine that's made in the same building from grapes grown all around California. They're pouring by the glass and selling bottles to go during evening hours

only for now, with more expanded hours to come.

How to book: Reservations via [Tock](#).

[@littlegroundcafe](#)

South Pasadena

South Pasadena's elevated pub [Communal](#) has opened their front patio during the daytime as Little Ground, an offshoot of the owners' Glendale cafe of the same name. They have the usual menu of coffee drinks and pastries, and they also excel at other coffee shop essentials—a lovely, sun-dappled front patio with a brick wall draped in ivy, plenty of tables, good wifi, and convenient power outlets for the remote work crowd. And Communal's bar opens at 5 pm, for the "work" from home crowd.

How to book: Walk-ins only.

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