

OCTOBER 2009

THE WHO'S WHO

Foodies, pay attention: Here are the people and places you need to know in LA's hotter-than-ever dining scene.

FROM GOURMET COFFEE purveyors to the city's favorite taco truck, LA has no shortage of interesting personalities and major talent when it comes to wining and dining. Since it's simply impossible to mention everyone of note, we picked some of our latest favorites and classic icons.

THE RESTAURATEURS

Suzanne Goin and **Caroline Styne** (AOC, Lucques and Tavern), **Warner Ebbink** (Dominick's, Little Dom's and 101 Coffee Shop) and **Susan Feniger** and **Mary Sue Milliken** (Border Grill and Ciudad) have the magic touch. Their restaurants have captured the hearts of hungry Angelenos, and it seems every project they undertake makes our LA dining lives better. "Caroline and I really do pour our hearts and souls into the restaurants and try to create places where we would want to hang out and eat," says Goin. "The goal is to touch people and become a joyful part of their lives."



FROM LEFT: Suzanne Goin, Mary Sue Milliken, Warner Ebbink, Susan Feniger and Caroline Styne

Manhattan Beach-raised entrepreneur Ebbink, who previously ran Swingers diner, sticks to one simple philosophy: "You can't cater to the hot Hollywood crowd because they come and go," he says. "I want to please the neighborhood crowd."

Pioneering chef-owners Feniger and Milliken are celebrating nearly 30 years on the LA scene. "There's something about the openness of this city," says Feniger, who struck out on her own this year with the world-influenced restaurant Street. "From the beginning there was always a willingness to try new things, and I was drawn to it. There's a freedom here."

THE MAITRE D'



Part consigliere, part therapist and the arbiter of who will get which coveted booth on a particular night, it's general manager and maitre d' **Craig Susser's** job to run the house and field the 150 nightly phone calls that come in at Dan Tana's, the spot to see and be seen. "You set the tone and energy level for the place," says a tuxedo-clad Susser—who joined Dan Tana's in 1987 as a waiter and bartender—of his duties. "The chef's been here for 20 years; Mike the bartender's been here for 40; the waiters have been here forever, and we're lucky to have a lot of regulars," he says. And while the West Hollywood hot spot (which turns 45 this month) is known for its service and consistent food, at the end of the day it's all about the people. "I hear about their problems and celebrate their successes," says the Brooklyn-born Susser, who likens the regulars to family. "You can celebrate, commiserate or mourn here."

9071 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, 310-275-9444;
dantanasrestaurant.com

THE BREWMASTERS

Did you know that Fazenda Esperanca's Natural Moca coffee takes 15.2 minutes to roast? Lamill Coffee CEO **Craig Min** is all about the minutiae when it comes to sourcing and slow roasting the finest coffee from around the globe. Nearly 10 years ago the La Cañada native took his dad's coffee biz in a new direction, and with the help of his Reno-born wife, **Jean Shim-Min**, set out to rebrand Lamill. Today its coffee—sourced from 21 different countries—is considered LA's finest and is served everywhere from Providence to the Montage Hotel. Last year the couple opened an opulent Silver Lake coffee shop, Lamill Coffee Boutique, that serves artisanal coffee via tableside barista service. "Our guests are very discerning and aware of the craft that goes into our products," says Min, who drinks between 10 and 15 cups of coffee in a given day. "Among the vast complexities of flavor, body and aroma each of our coffees yield, the common denominator has to be the elegance that lies in every cup."



1636 Silver Lake Blvd., Los Angeles, 323-663-4441;
lamillcoffee.com

THE LEGEND



She was Wolfgang Puck's pastry chef at Spago in the formative 1980s, opened Campanile with Mark Peel and Manfred Krankl, founded La Brea Bakery in 1989 when there was no artisan bread to be found in LA and wrote seven cookbooks. Then in 2006 Nancy Silverton opened her first restaurant since departing Campanile: Pizzeria Mozza. An instant hit, Osteria Mozza followed in 2007 (you're lucky to get a reservation at either), and earlier this year she debuted Mozza2Go with partners Mario Batali and Joe Bastianich. One of the country's prolific pastry chefs and bakers, Silverton sold her interest in La Brea Bakery in 2001 (she remains involved) and escapes several times a year to her home in Umbria. "Angelenos love authenticity, and at my restaurants and La Brea Bakery we always try to accept that challenge and give them food that tastes like where it comes from," says Silverton, an LA native who began cooking in her college dorm in Sonoma. "We win their trust, then we try to find new dishes or ingredients—maybe something they haven't tasted before—and expand their palates a little bit further."

Pizzeria Mozza, 641 N. Highland Ave., Los Angeles, 323-297-0101; mozza-la.com; Osteria Mozza, 6602 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, 323-297-0100; mozza-la.com; Mozza2Go, 6610 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, 323-297-1130; mozza2go.com

THE SOMMELIER

When Brian Kalliel started his career at M \acute{e} lisse 10 years ago, it was as head bartender. Today Kalliel is one of the city's top sommeliers, suggesting unique wine pairings from both boutique and high-end vintners (there's a focus on French and California wines) to complement chef Josiah Citrin's French fare. With more than 800 selections on the wine list, it's easy for even seasoned diners to feel intimidated, but the Detroit native's easygoing personality helps people relax instantly. "Being the bartender was probably the greatest lesson in being a sommelier because you learn how to talk to people," says Kalliel, a Silver Lake resident who became the restaurant's wine director in 2003. "I don't bore people with a lot of alcohol facts. I like to talk down and dirty about wine."

*1104 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, 310-395-0881;
melisse.com*





THE BLOGGER

After a life-changing meal at Per Se in New York in 2004, Food GPS blogger **Joshua Lurie** decided he had to share his love of good food with the world. One of the city's top food and drink blogs, foodgps.com has 200-plus reviews of Los Angeles restaurants (everywhere from Rustic Canyon in Santa Monica to Noodle House in Monterey Park), along with breaking restaurant news and a drinks section. "It's a lot better than being at a desk for 10 to 12 hours," says Lurie, who previously worked as a writer's assistant and researcher for shows like Jag and NCIS. "One of the only downsides is I'm always hunting for the next place," he says, "so I'm not always able to eat at my favorite restaurants."

Visit foodgps.com

THE MOVEABLE FEAST

LA has always loved its taco trucks but Kogi BBQ cofounders chef Roy Choi, **Mark Manguera** and his wife, **Caroline Shin-Manguera**, took things to the next level in 2008 with their Korean-style tacos and high-tech approach. "It's a real representation of the carefree spirit of LA," says Choi, who alerts followers to the three trucks' locations via Twitter and Kogi's website. "The economy, the hunt, the energy and the quiriness of who we are makes people happy." With offerings like Korean short-rib tacos and kimchi quesadillas, the mobile eatery has developed hard-core fans all over town, and yes, the tasty fare lives up to the hype. "The Korean taco transcends race because it is an amalgamation of culture," says Choi, a Culinary Institute of America graduate and Le Bernardin alumnus. Not up for chasing the truck? You can get items from the Kogi BBQ menu at the Alibi Room six nights a week.

Alibi Room, 12236 Washington Blvd., Los Angeles, 310-390-9300; kogibbq.com





THE GOURMAND

With a cultlike following (that includes more than a few A-list celebs), **Joan McNamara** of Joan's on Third has defined gourmet takeout in Los Angeles since 1998. Freshly baked pastries, epicurean retail items, make-your-own picnic boxes, fine cheeses, seasonally inspired foods and McNamara's jubilant presence keep us coming back for more. "There wasn't anything like this here when we opened," says McNamara, who previously ran a cooking school in New York. "The most rewarding thing to me is we've created a community where we know people's names, and in addition to loving the food or service, people feel they are part of a family."

8350 W. Third St., Los Angeles, 323-655-2285;
joansonthird.com

THE PARTY PEOPLE

With a client list that reads like a who's who of Hollywood (Emmy Awards' Governors Ball, ABC, Directors Guild of America, Entertainment Tonight, Paramount Pictures and more), **Patina Catering** is the go-to food purveyor for intimate luncheons, charity galas, film premieres and awards-show dinners. This experienced team of chefs and party planners—led by executive chef Alec Lestr—make sure events go off without a hitch, and the award-winning, artful food is simply delicious: fig carpaccio with duck prosciutto and Roquefort mousse, anyone?

Call 213-239-2508 or visit patinagroup.com



THE ICON



An LA icon since 1939, Pink's famous chili dogs continue to draw Angelenos and tourists in hordes (we challenge you to find a time when there is not a line outside the La Brea locale). **Paul** and **Betty Pink** started the hot dog stand (a pushcart in those days) and sold their wares for 10 cents apiece. Today 20-plus types of dogs are sold for between three and five bucks and can be served in about 30 seconds. To commemorate its 70th anniversary, beginning on November 7 and continuing until November 14 (seven days), the iconic eatery will be featuring 70-cent hot dogs for 70 minutes starting at 7 PM. "The line you see at Pink's is made up of people who come in limos and pickups alike," says Richard Pink, who runs the family business with his wife, Gloria Pink, and sister, Beverly Pink Wolfe. "I think LA wants to know it has a local restaurant that has not changed with the years," he says. "Pink's has remained true to the fabric of Los Angeles."

709 N. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, 323-931-4223;
pinkshollywood.com

THE CHEFS

We have no shortage of star chefs in this town (hello, Wolfgang), but this talented trio—**David Myers** (Sona, Comme Ça and the upcoming Comme Ça Bakery), **Travis Lett** (Gjelina) and **Michael Cimarusti** (Providence)—represents three of our most exciting talents. Young and wildly creative, they are pushing the culinary envelope, and we can't get enough.

"LA is an awesome city, and we're fortunate to live where we have such incredible products and farmers' markets," says Myers, who worked at Charlie Trotter, Daniel, Patina and Jaan prior to striking out on his own in 2002. "I never wanted to copy the restaurants I worked at," he says. "I wanted to be inspired and evolve and walk my own path."



FROM LEFT: David Myers, Travis Lett and Michael Cimarusti

Prior to serving up crispy duck confit, grilled freerange lamb chops and crispy pizzas at red-hot Gjelina in Venice, Lett was in the kitchen at NineThirty at the W and Tengu. "Our food is straightforward and honest without demanding too much attention," notes Lett, who says having access to the farmers' markets and an open-minded audience are the best parts about cooking in Venice.

"We have strived from day one to be the best we can be on every account," adds Top Chef Masters' Cimarusti, who was the opening chef for Osteria del Circo, chef de cuisine at Spago and executive chef at Water Grill prior to opening his two-Michelin-starred Providence. "I love the LA scene for its diversity of restaurants representing nearly every ethnic cuisine you can imagine," he

says. “Having lived in New York and Paris, I can say this is a truly unique LA phenomenon.”

THE CREATIVE



He’s the man responsible for the memorable looks of Ortolan, Essex Public House, The Bowery, Delux, Osteria La Buca, Kitchen 24 and BoHo, among others. In Hollywood, **Kristofer Keith** and his design and construction group, Spacecraft, reign supreme thanks to his eclectic mingling of Hollywood Regency with modern and bohemian styles. “A lot of people claim they can do anything, but I really can,” says Keith, a North Carolina native who moved to LA in 2001 and doesn’t hesitate to mix and match furnishings or even score a chandelier at Lowe’s. “I set out to eventually take over hospitality design, and so far I haven’t had a failure,” says Keith. His 15 projects in LA include the new burger-and-beer concept Stout as well as Osaka, a Peruvian import. “When I first moved here there was no killer design,” says Keith, who goes out every single night to understand the dining scene and see what’s still missing. “I’ve seen the landscape change so drastically and now there’s really competition to one-up each other when it comes to design.”

Visit spacecraftgroup.com

BY VICTORIA NAMKUNG

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOE SCHMELZER (SUSSER, SILVERTON, KALLIEL); JENN KENNEDY (MIN)