

JULY 2020

LA

ISSUE 68

DOWNTOWNER[®]

THE INSIDER GUIDE TO DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

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Love & support for the people
who make our city exceptional



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

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RISING UP

BLM & COVID-19 RESOURCES

Written By Dakota Nate & Janica de Guzman
Photographed By Andrew Castanon @andycasta_
Grace Liang @hellogracious

Community has always been at the heart of what we do and in the midst of one of the most uncertain and remarkable times we've faced together as people, we stand with the Black Lives Matter movement and are here to share resources that offer relief for protestors and those affected by Covid-19. Take a look at a few organizations making our community a better place.

(Continued on Page 4)



Next stop: more rail in DTLA.

We're building three new subway stations in downtown LA.

During the Coronavirus outbreak, we continue our work to create more mobility options for LA County. 1st St will be closed between Alameda and Central Av to complete essential work for the Regional Connector Transit Project through August.

Details at metro.net/regionalconnector.



The Bail Project

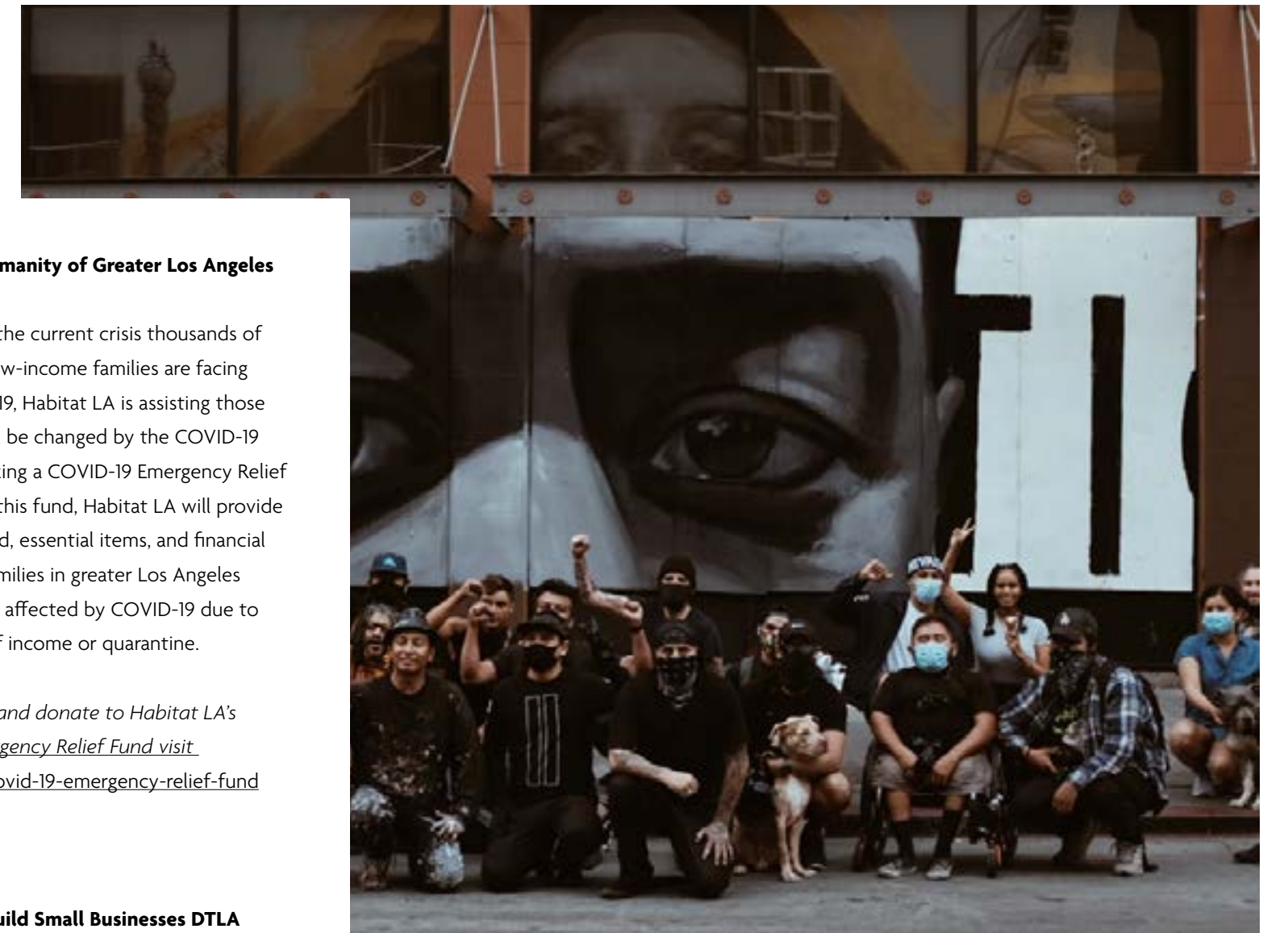
Posting bail for over 10,000 people who then returned to court without any need for detention. The Bail Project is the product of the The Bronx Freedom Fund, the first-of-its-kind nonprofit, revolving bail fund in the country. The Bail Project is currently focused on freeing those incarcerated under minor charges such as those due to arrests during recent protests throughout Los Angeles. They are also working hard to keep the spread of COVID-19 under control in jails by taking direct action such as urging a prioritized immediate release for people who are most vulnerable and citing and releasing those charged with misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors.

To learn more about The Bail Project visit bailproject.org

People's City Council Freedom Fund

Organized by Albert Corado, this fund will go towards anything from legal support, to bail, fines, and court fees for arrested protesters. The fund will also be allocated towards medical bills and transportation for injured protesters, medical supplies and PPE for Community Medics, and direct monetary support to Black Lives Matter Los Angeles.

To learn more and donate to People's City Council Freedom Fund visit gofundme.com/f/peoples-city-council-ticket-fund



Habitat for Humanity of Greater Los Angeles (Habitat LA)

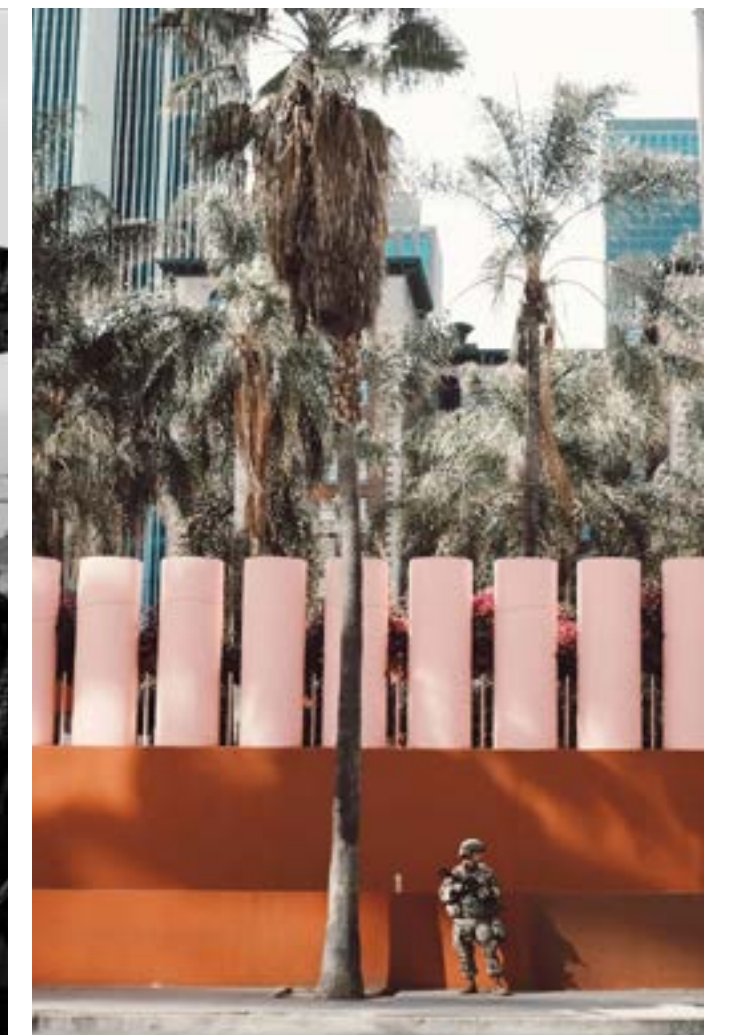
In response to the current crisis thousands of low and very low-income families are facing due to COVID-19, Habitat LA is assisting those whose lives will be changed by the COVID-19 virus by organizing a COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. Through this fund, Habitat LA will provide emergency food, essential items, and financial resources to families in greater Los Angeles who have been affected by COVID-19 due to sickness, loss of income or quarantine.

To learn more and donate to Habitat LA's COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund visit habitatla.org/covid-19-emergency-relief-fund

Protect & Rebuild Small Businesses DTLA

A grassroots spreadsheet created by Samantha Becker with help from Claudia Olivera, Dulce Vasquez, and Cecilia Najar to aggregate DTLA businesses affected by looting. The neatly organized document shares ways volunteers can help rebuild. "I wanted the BLM movement to continue strong and forcefully, by any means necessary, which meant that I and the other members of the Downtown community would be there to help anyone who got caught in the crossfire in the days afterwards," says Samantha Becker.

To volunteer or recommend a business visit https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WQQhSOHqB8hbNysvviZZTMQ5WQwRD4c_LL0TdliqyZo/edit#gid=0





COMFORT LA

MAINTAINING A SENSE OF SOUL

Written By **Dakota Nate**
Photographed Courtesy of Comfort LA

Let's face it, we could all use a little extra comfort right now. This last month in particular with Covid-19 and a necessary spotlight on racial injustice, we're highlighting black-owned restaurants and giving them the attention they deserve.

For Comfort LA, there was hardly a lapse in service once stay-at-home orders came in so hot that it made most restaurant owner's heads spin. Even for an eatery that relied so greatly on human interaction to drive their own personal brand of community and their family-like atmosphere, a large portion of Comfort LA's business pre-Covid was takeout. However, it doesn't mean that they've gone without a challenge in losing their dine-in business. Considering the fact that three shifts have turned into one, it's been extremely important to owners, Mark Walker and Jeremy McBryde, that they make sure that their loyal staff doesn't suffer a financial loss or are put out of the job completely. Especially the employees they have given second chances to such as the formerly incarcerated. They are not only given a job, but are given the chance to better their lives beyond the kitchen through mentorship to build their finances, and hopefully one day, their own businesses.

"If you think of the concept of adjusting, it's like, 'Oh, we play basketball, but now we have to change into football players.' It's not as simple as you think." Says co-owner Mark Walker. "We did what was best to try to give everybody something, anything, until things go back to normal."

Mark and Jeremy met years ago and it was



practically kismet. The pair got along as if they'd known each other their whole lives, and where Mark was more privy into the business side of things, Jeremy's passion for food by influence of his family's home cooking brought the idea for Comfort LA to life.

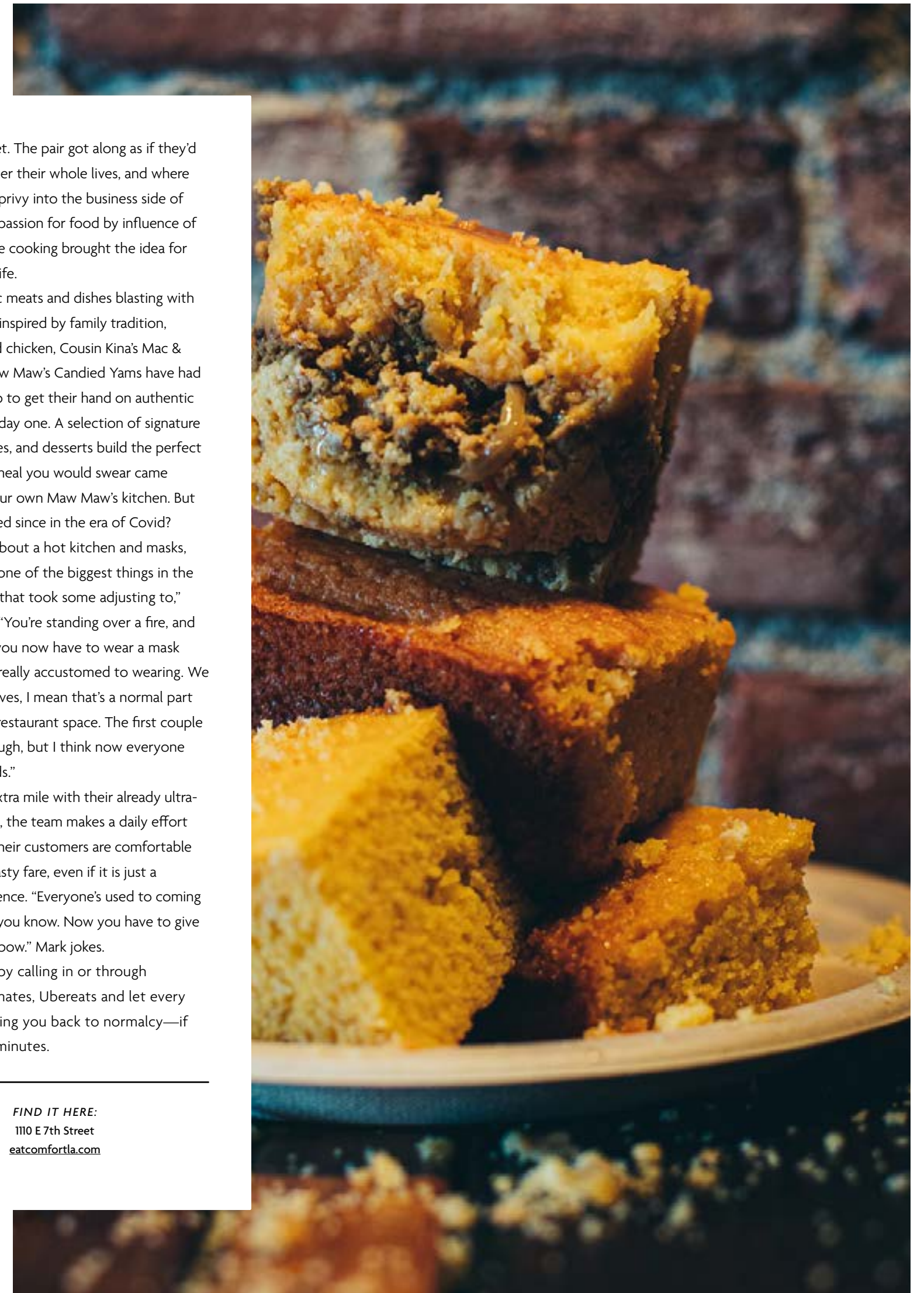
With organic meats and dishes blasting with flavor and love, inspired by family tradition, their crispy fried chicken, Cousin Kina's Mac & Cheese, and Maw Maw's Candied Yams have had patrons lining up to get their hand on authentic soul food since day one. A selection of signature sauces, beverages, and desserts build the perfect structure for a meal you would swear came straight from your own Maw Maw's kitchen. But what has changed since in the era of Covid?

"You think about a hot kitchen and masks, that's probably one of the biggest things in the kitchen at least that took some adjusting to," mentions Mark "You're standing over a fire, and on top of that you now have to wear a mask that you're not really accustomed to wearing. We always wore gloves, I mean that's a normal part of being in the restaurant space. The first couple of days were rough, but I think now everyone fully understands."

Going the extra mile with their already ultra-hygienic routine, the team makes a daily effort to ensure that their customers are comfortable ordering their tasty fare, even if it is just a curbside experience. "Everyone's used to coming in and hugging, you know. Now you have to give everyone the elbow," Mark jokes.

Order now by calling in or through Grubhub, Postmates, Ubereats and let every luscious bite bring you back to normalcy—if only for a few minutes.

FIND IT HERE:
1110 E 7th Street
eatcomfortla.com





EAT

A

COMFORT LA
1110 E 7th Street
eatcomfortla.com

B

9TH ST RAMEN
111 W 9th Street
9thstramen.com

C

WOODSPOON
107 W 9th St.
eatwoodspoon.com



CITY STREETS

FREEWAYS

LA RIVER

M METRO RAIL STATIONS

*MAP SIMPLIFIED & NOT TO SCALE

DOWNTOWN FAVORITES

- 1 BOHEMIAN HOUSE OF ESPRESSO & CHAI**
548 S Spring St r110 — bohemianchai.com
Rooted with a passion for the community and exceptional coffee and teas, this black-owned coffee shop has a special place in many Downtowner's hearts. If you're feeling peckish, the menu offers healthy options like avocado toast, hummus wrap, and fresh salads.
- 2 ENDORFFEINE COFFEE**
727 N Broadway — endorffine.coffee
Science meets the soul. Endorffine brews the perfect cup of coffee. Owner, Jack, was a former biochemist and is now personally brewing every cup of coffee with precision and passion. Stop by for a cup or pick up a growler of cold brew for your fix at home.
- 3 MILK + T**
310 E 2nd St. — milkandt.com
DTLA's first self-serve boba bar proudly serving "fart free milk tea" with lactose-free milk options. With Instagrammable presentation, their unicorn-inspired 'Electric Feel' drink is known to break the ice, not the wind.
- 4 POPPY & ROSE**
765 Wall St. — poppyandrosela.com
Some people start their day with a cup of coffee, others start with a hearty serving of buttermilk fried chicken & waffles—these people come to Poppy & Rose. This black-owned casual eatery serves classic American comfort food for breakfast, brunch & lunch.
- 5 LOKELS ONLY: LOKEL MARKET**
200 S Los Angeles St. — lokelonly.com/lokel-market
Your one-stop, pick-up spot for pre-ordered meals during Covid-19. Lokels Only has gathered some of the best local restaurants and food trucks in one central location for takeout. Their changing lineup includes meals from Lobsterdamus, Ninong's Cafe, Hot Chicken LB and more.
- 6 BIG MAN BAKES**
413 S Main St. — bigmanbakes.com
Sweet cravings come and go but Big Man Bakes is here to stay. Serving the community since 2009, this black-owned cupcake spot has been treating Downtowners to moist carrot cake, red velvet or double chocolate cupcakes from their cozy space on Main St.
- 7 INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF MUSIC**
821 S Los Angeles St. — ihomi.com
Looters robbed IHOMI of their inventory but not their spirit. They have reopened and are stronger than ever to provide musical instrument needs. Discover guitars, percussion instruments, recording equipment, accordions and whatever you need to revive your musical soul.
- 8 NEIHULE SALON**
607 S Olive St. — neihule.com
If quarantine has pressured you into trimming your own bangs or growing out your roots, it might be time to head to the salon. Luckily, Neihule is now accepting reservations for haircuts and other salon services with LA Public Healthy guidelines in place.
- 9 URBAN RADISH**
661 Imperial St. — urban-radish.com
When people were stockpiling toilet paper, Urban Radish made it their mission to provide Downtowners their grocery essentials in a safe, comfortable environment. They provide gloves and a sanitation station for every customer to browse their selection of organic produce and meats. Order online for pick-up or delivery.



CHRISTOPHER JAY HELLER

THE (NOT SO MAD) HATTER OF DTLA

*Written By Dakota Nate
Photographed By Robiee Ziegler*

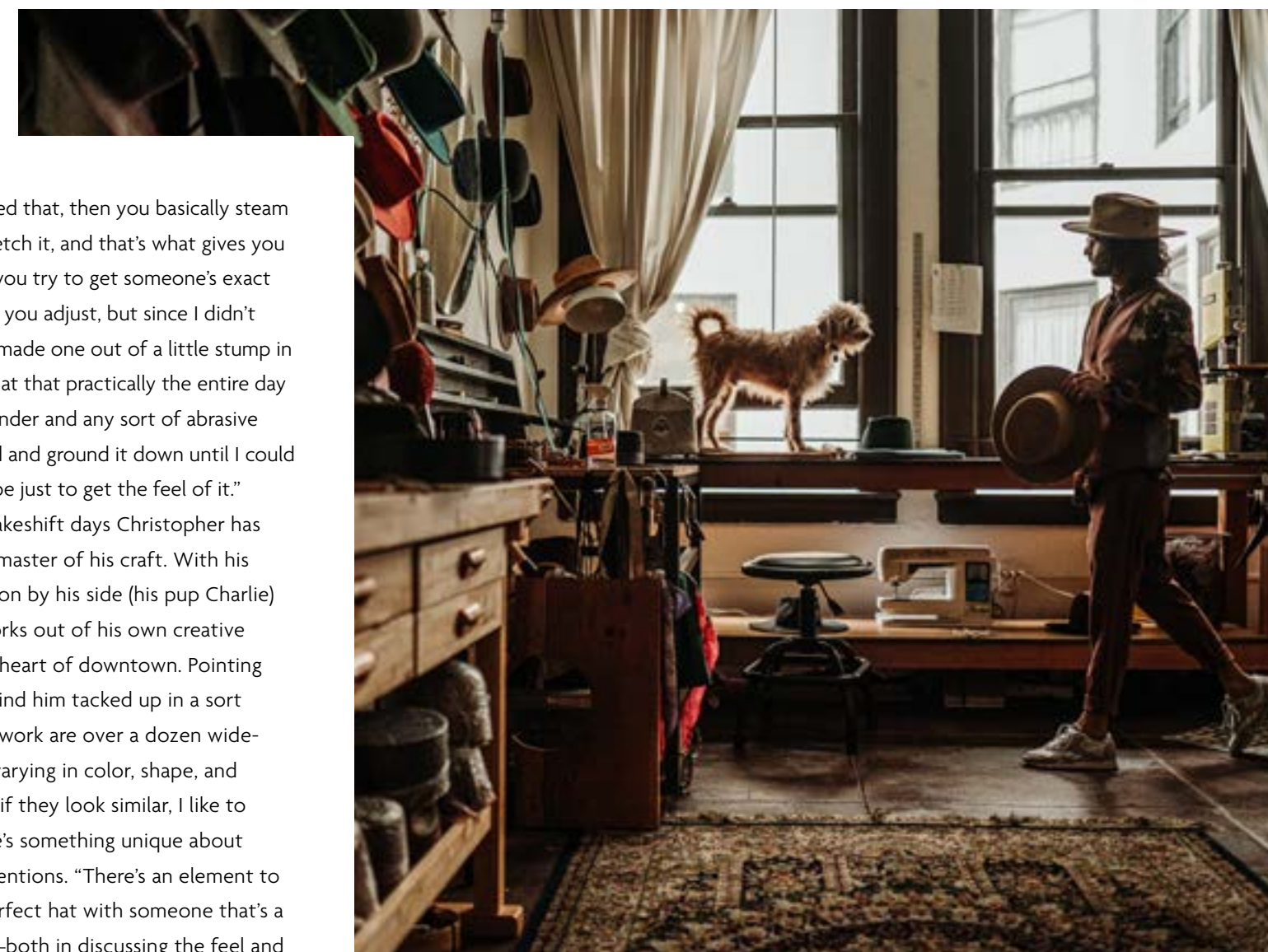
There is certainly an allure when it comes to something custom or one-of-a-kind that has a very specific appeal to it. It's the same reason people make their own clothing or shop at vintage stores: It feels good to break from the modern norms of fast fashion and swap it out for a piece that no one else in the room will have.

For hatmaker, Christopher Jay Heller, something just clicked the first time he found himself behind a sewing machine.

"I taught myself how to sew, fell in love with it, and I couldn't stop sewing," says Christopher. "I started tearing apart clothes and figuring out how they were made and then making my own patterns. That started everything really."

After first specializing in bowties, Christopher soon found himself designing bowties for music videos and celebrity clients. What turned him onto hats you may ask? All it took was having his first custom hat that was shaped precisely to fit the shape of his head to set off a lightbulb, and boy was it destiny. A new fondness had been ignited just like that, and all it took was Christopher falling deeply in love with another hat that he couldn't afford at the time to inspire him to start a whole new venture. From there all he needed were the tools and some practice.

"For my first one, I didn't have a hat block, which is pretty much the primary tool of hat-



making. You need that, then you basically steam the felt and stretch it, and that's what gives you your first fit. If you try to get someone's exact size, from there you adjust, but since I didn't have one yet, I made one out of a little stump in my backyard. I sat that practically the entire day with a metal grinder and any sort of abrasive tool I could find and ground it down until I could get an oval shape just to get the feel of it."

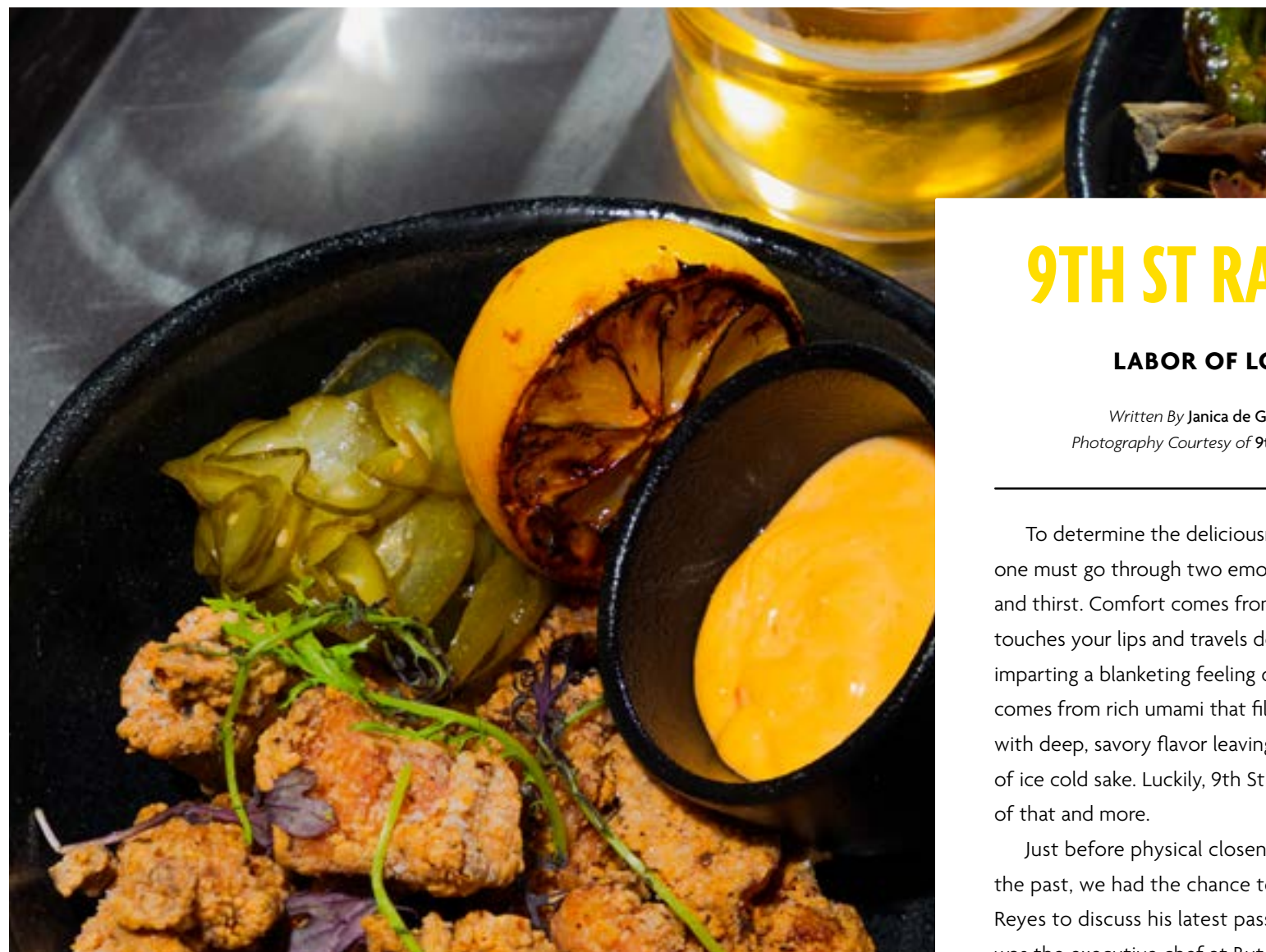
Since his makeshift days Christopher has evolved into a master of his craft. With his trusty companion by his side (his pup Charlie) Christopher works out of his own creative paradise in the heart of downtown. Pointing to the wall behind him tacked up in a sort of mural of his work are over a dozen wide-brimmed hats varying in color, shape, and material. "Even if they look similar, I like to think that there's something unique about them all," he mentions. "There's an element to creating the perfect hat with someone that's a little intimate—both in discussing the feel and style, as well as the details."

You may be asking yourself, how does a business such as Christopher's thrive in the wake of a global shutdown? Since many of his clientele are in different states and countries, Christopher was already prepared to handle his services virtually and extends an invitation to Skype or FaceTime for anyone unable to visit in-person.

"I've been having a lot more thoughtful conversations with people," says Christopher, "and have come up with some of my best work yet because of it."

To see more of Christopher's work and inquire about a custom order, follow him on Instagram, [@christopherjayheller](https://www.instagram.com/christopherjayheller)





9TH ST RAMEN

LABOR OF LOVE

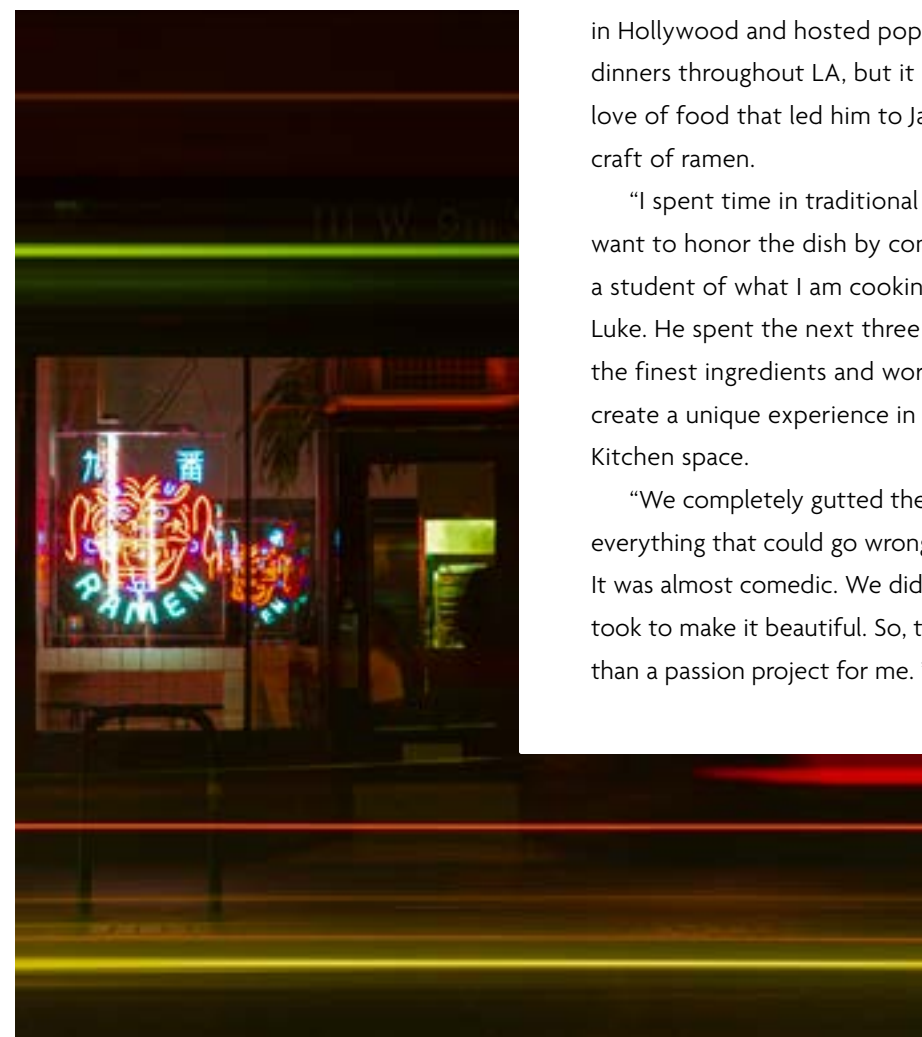
Written By Janica de Guzman
Photography Courtesy of 9th St Ramen

To determine the deliciousness of ramen, one must go through two emotions: comfort and thirst. Comfort comes from hot broth that touches your lips and travels down to your belly, imparting a blanketing feeling of warmth. Thirst comes from rich umami that fills your mouth with deep, savory flavor leaving you craving a sip of ice cold sake. Luckily, 9th St Ramen does both of that and more.

Just before physical closeness was a thing of the past, we had the chance to visit Chef Luke Reyes to discuss his latest passion: ramen. He was the executive chef at Butchers & Barbers in Hollywood and hosted pop-up cannabis dinners throughout LA, but it was his genuine love of food that led him to Japan to learn the craft of ramen.

"I spent time in traditional ramen shops. I want to honor the dish by continually being a student of what I am cooking," said Chef Luke. He spent the next three years sourcing the finest ingredients and worked tirelessly to create a unique experience in the former Chu's Kitchen space.

"We completely gutted the entire place and everything that could go wrong, went wrong. It was almost comedic. We did whatever it took to make it beautiful. So, this is much more than a passion project for me." said Chef Luke.

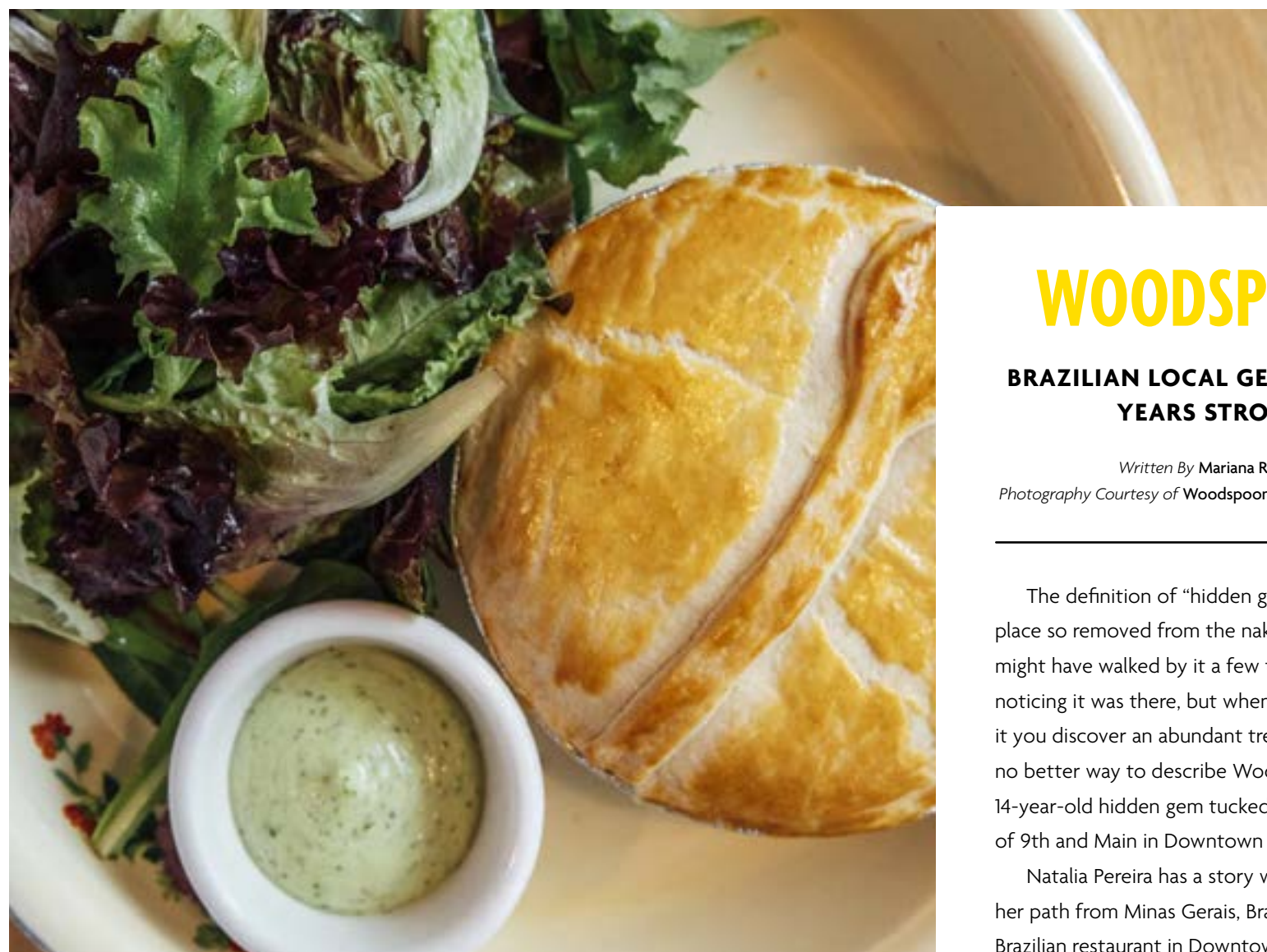


Unfortunately, the team only had one month to present their ramen to diners in-person as the global pandemic threw another curve ball at them. They quickly considered the safety of their employees and customers and pivoted to take-out, delivery service and are now slowly re-opening according to CDC guidelines.

Thankfully, ramen is one of the few dishes that tastes just as wonderful when reheated at home. Their most popular offering is a 36-hour pork tonkotsu ramen. It's a labor intensive process split into two 18-hour parts by roasting, boiling, and stewing a whole pig until it breaks down into a gelatinous pot of soup. The broth is muddy in color, thick with flavor, and the backbone of this exceptional ramen. Each serving is highlighted with tender pork toppings and springy noodles that slurp back whipping a splatter of oil along your chin and across the table. If pork isn't your preference, 9th St Ramen offers a vegan, chicken or lamb option. All invoke slurping, sucking, and guzzling—an involuntary reaction to delicious ramen.

For no-heat fare, try their Hiyashi chūka options which are chilled Japanese noodle dishes centered around Wagyu Tataki or Spicy Crab & Tomato. Think: ramen without the broth. It has all the flavor without the sweat. To satisfy your thirst, they have a selection of natural wines and small-production sake that delicately cut through rich, lingering flavor so every bite is just as good as your first.

FIND IT HERE:
111 W 9th Street
9thstramen.com



WOODSPOON

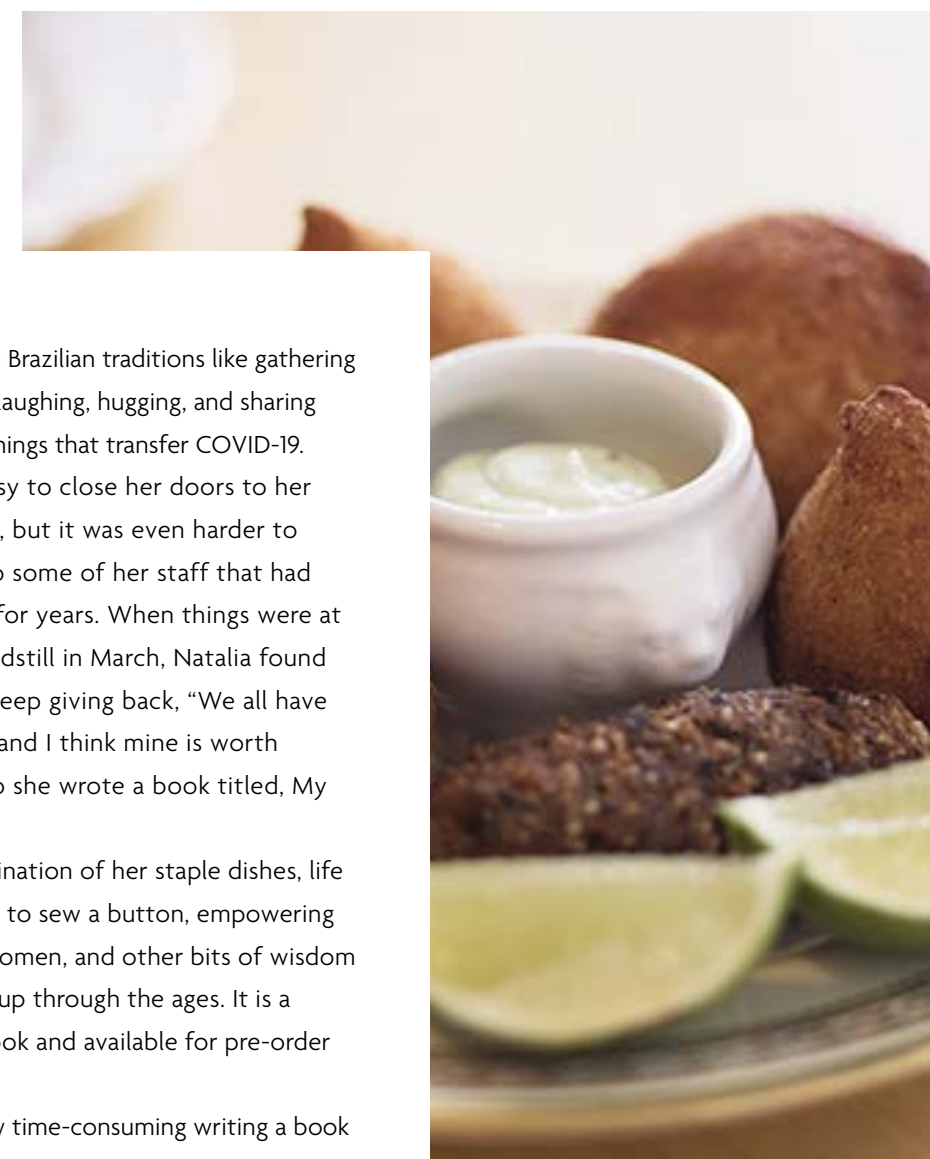
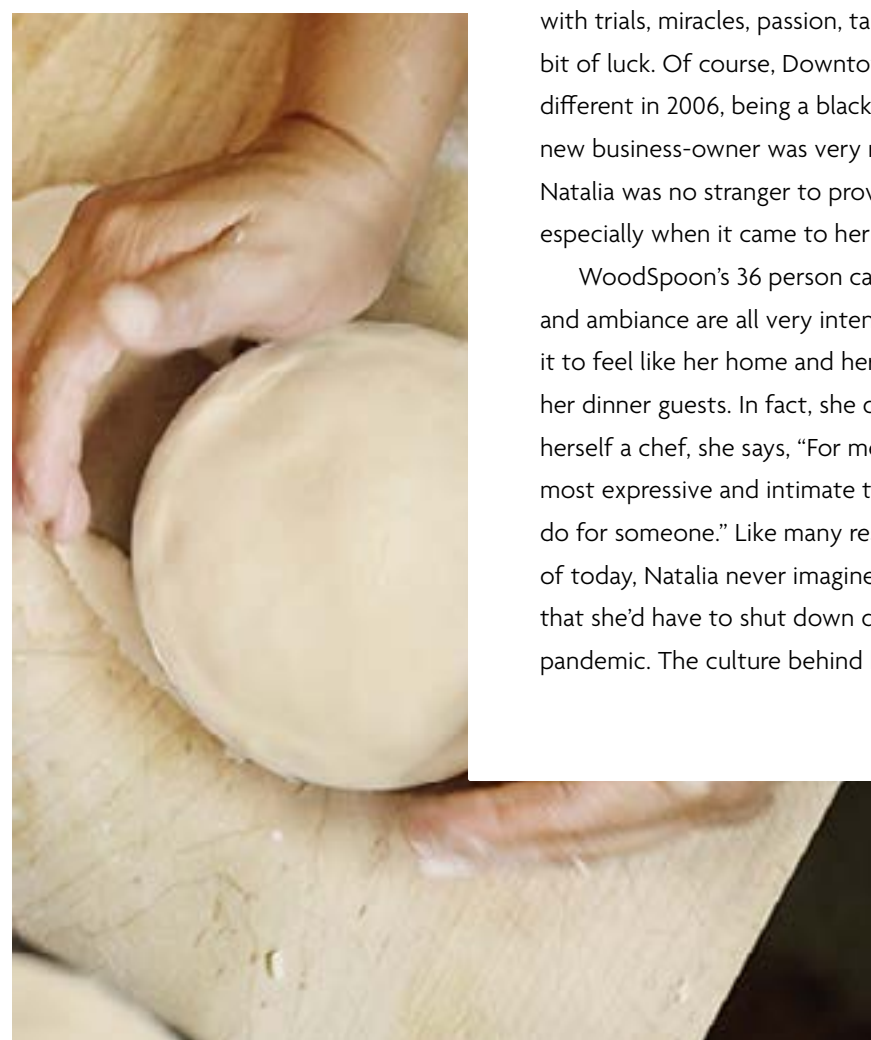
BRAZILIAN LOCAL GEM GOING 14 YEARS STRONG

*Written By Mariana Ramos
Photography Courtesy of Woodspoon, Kort & Logan Havens*

The definition of “hidden gem” refers to a place so removed from the naked eye that you might have walked by it a few times without noticing it was there, but when you finally visit it you discover an abundant treasure. There is no better way to describe WoodSpoon, the 14-year-old hidden gem tucked into the corner of 9th and Main in Downtown LA.

Natalia Pereira has a story worth telling, her path from Minas Gerais, Brazil to owning a Brazilian restaurant in Downtown LA, was filled with trials, miracles, passion, talent, and a little bit of luck. Of course, Downtown was much different in 2006, being a black woman and a new business-owner was very rare. However, Natalia was no stranger to proving people wrong especially when it came to her cooking.

WoodSpoon’s 36 person capacity, location, and ambiance are all very intentional- she wants it to feel like her home and her patrons are all her dinner guests. In fact, she doesn’t even call herself a chef, she says, “For me, cooking is the most expressive and intimate thing you could do for someone.” Like many restaurateurs of today, Natalia never imagined in 14 years that she’d have to shut down due to a global pandemic. The culture behind her concept



revolves around Brazilian traditions like gathering in cozy spaces, laughing, hugging, and sharing plates- all the things that transfer COVID-19.

It wasn’t easy to close her doors to her regular patrons, but it was even harder to say goodbye to some of her staff that had been with her for years. When things were at somewhat standstill in March, Natalia found a new way to keep giving back, “We all have a story to tell, and I think mine is worth sharing,” and so she wrote a book titled, My Life In Recipes.

It is a combination of her staple dishes, life advice like how to sew a button, empowering messages for women, and other bits of wisdom she has picked up through the ages. It is a coffee table book and available for pre-order on her website.

Despite how time-consuming writing a book can be, Natalia did not let WoodSpoon fade into the background. She has been working alongside 3 of her employees with a new adjusted menu for takeout and delivery, “Brazilians we don’t use microwaves, I like to cook and serve fresh!” So for her to-go meals, she recommends heating things up on a stovetop, “Simply separate the ingredients and put the stove on low heat.”

Natalia plans on reopening in July, but no date has been set yet. In the meantime, you can catch her on Zoom teaching how to cook delicious Brazilian meals and laughing it up with attendees.

FIND IT HERE:
107 W 9th St.
eatwoodspoon.com



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