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LA

ISSUE 65

# DOWNTOWNER<sup>®</sup>

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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RED HERRING

A FORMER EAGLE ROCK FAVORITE LANDS IN THE HEART OF DTLA

Written By Dakota Nate

Photographed By Robiee Ziegler

As we finally finish out the decade, leaving behind the mundane and unnecessary while embracing the growth and inspiration to come for 2020, we find ourselves reflecting on how much Downtown Los Angeles has changed over the last ten years. The juxtaposition of the raw, gritty streets that have been walked along for over a century mixed with modern elegance, Michelin-starred restaurants, and an unmatched air of artistic energy is what makes DTLA one of the most unique urban pockets in the country — or even the world.

Red Herring first took up shop in Eagle Rock back in 2016 along Colorado Blvd serving up elevated comfort food. Chef Dave Woodall, formerly of Josiah Citrin and Raphael Lunetta's Lemon Moon in Santa Monica and later moving through larger chains as an executive chef, opened the original Red Herring location with the intent to create an excellent dining experience that was close to his heart and done the way he always believed in after working his way up for so many years in the kitchen.

"That was a great way of getting into real entrepreneurship and actually having a staff and learning the value of really caring about your employees" says Dave. "When you manage somebody else's staff, it's kind of like much more stick and much less care. When it's actually your staff, your family, you want them to want to be there, you want them to be happy. You want them to get something back. Nobody lives to work. They need to have a reason for what they're doing other than just survival."

(Continued on Page 4)



Next stop: more connections in DTLA.

Beginning January 10, 2020, expect westbound 1st St to be closed between Vignes St and Alameda St, through April 2020 in downtown LA. This major milestone marks the transition to the final phase of construction for the Regional Connector Transit Project and brings this project one step closer to completion.

Plan ahead and use alternate routes to avoid delays. Learn more at metro.net/regionalconnector.







Dave's wife, Alexis Martin Woodall, an Emmy-winning TV producer who's made a name for herself with hit shows like Glee and American Horror Story, is co-owner of Red Herring. She and Dave met back in college and have been together ever since. They're the kind of husband-wife team that could make anyone envious. Couple goals? Oh, yeah. After college, Alexis came out to LA to make movies, and Dave followed in 2003 to pursue loftier culinary dreams. The rest is history.

We're sure that like most major leaps in life, there's not a right or wrong time — you just have to jump. Red Herring was doing wonderfully making a name for itself and thriving in Eagle Rock, but when the pair was approached by developers hinting at a Downtown location, they thought at first glance it was too good to be true, but the developers delivered.

"What do you grow into other than something bigger and scarier? If you don't feel somewhat intimidated by the choices you make in life, you're probably playing it a little too safe," says Dave.

The chic, design-forward space is 3,300 square feet of beauty. Marissa Zajack, who led the design of the restaurant, is a good friend of the Woodalls. She and Alexis met while working on Running With Scissors in 2005. From brass accents to pink velvet and a stop-you-in-your-tracks mural by Mike Wilcox that splashes the back wall, you can feel your eyes widen as you gaze around the room.

"Watching her process jive with what we were doing, and her design kind of mirroring and dovetailing with what we're doing in the kitchen along with our service model and what we needed to make the space what we wanted it to be is amazing. Art is a very solitary thing, you're creating for yourself, but design is creating for someone else," says Dave.

Now, let's get down to what you're hankering for: The food. The cuisine essentially echoes their former location, but with a DTLA twist. Since they've moved into a part of town with different expectations for a complete dining experience, it made sense to offer more variety. Red Herring offers up sophisticated small dishes at a lesser price, so one has more of a chance to try a bit of everything.



"Down here, people are accustomed to more and they aren't thrown off by strange ingredients and things you might not see every day. They're excited about it, so it's a real opportunity to expand what we're doing. We're taking that same comfort food model and we're polishing it."

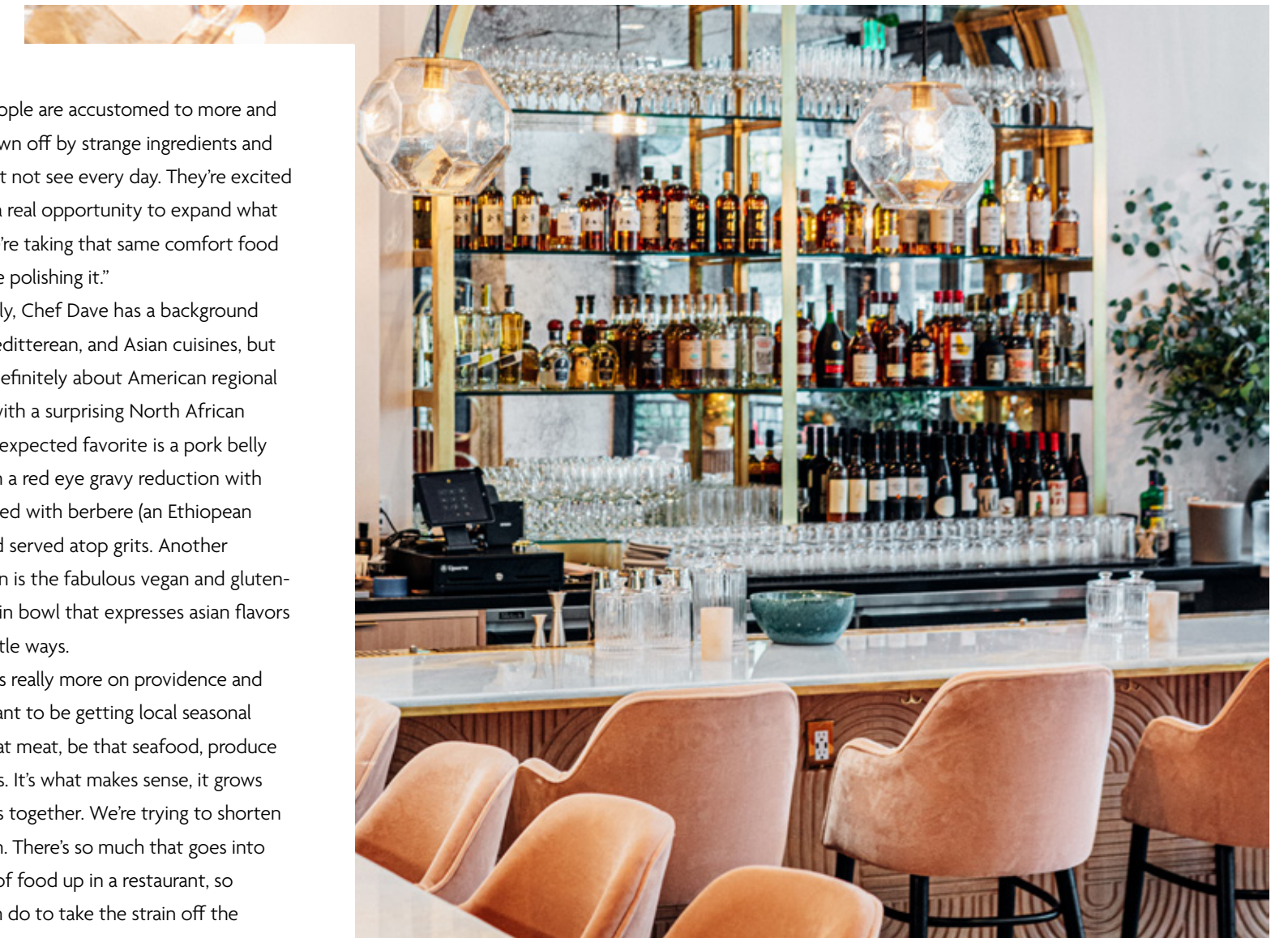
Professionally, Chef Dave has a background with French, Mediterranean, and Asian cuisines, but Red Herring is definitely about American regional comfort food with a surprising North African spice panel. An expected favorite is a pork belly dish glazed with a red eye gravy reduction with peanuts, accented with berbere (an Ethiopian spice blend) and served atop grits. Another notable mention is the fabulous vegan and gluten-free ancient grain bowl that expresses asian flavors in solid, yet subtle ways.

"Our focus is really more on providence and sourcing. We want to be getting local seasonal products, be that meat, be that seafood, produce — whatever it is. It's what makes sense, it grows together, it goes together. We're trying to shorten the supply chain. There's so much that goes into putting a plate of food up in a restaurant, so anything we can do to take the strain off the system that supports that process, it's going to be more efficient, more ecological, and more sustainable in the long run."

The bar program has been spearheaded by Justin Kim who crafted libational goodies such as Good, Grape, Grand, Wonderful, made with Plymouth gin, lemon juice, simple syrup, and concord grapes, and a monthly rotating cocktail, The Red Herring, with all proceeds from this cocktail being donated to several food banks and shelters in the area. A small, yet thoughtful wine list features mostly California wines with a few appearances by natural and European varieties.

Red Herring will begin with serving dinner only, but brunch hours begin in early 2020. Whether you're a longtime fan of the original location, or have yet to discover what all the hype is about, be sure to fit dinner at Red Herring into your dining schedule for the new year. You won't regret it.

**FIND IT HERE:**  
770 S Grand Ave.  
redherringla.com







# RIKE

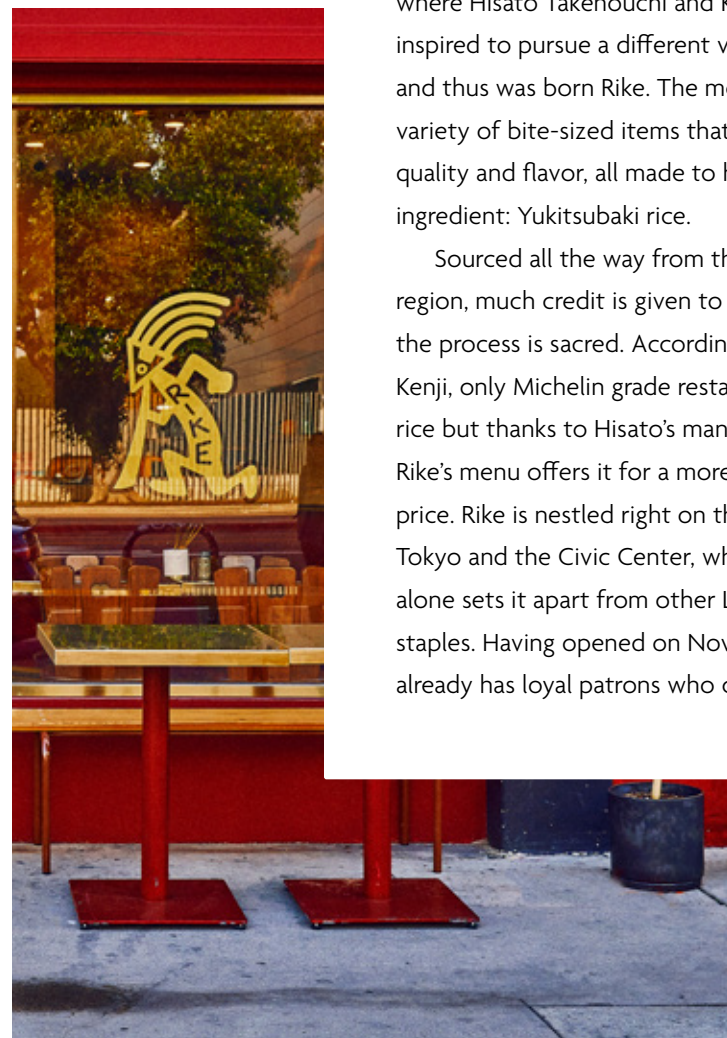
## AWARD-WINNING RICE BAR OPENS UP IN LITTLE TOKYO

Written By Mariana Ramos  
Photographed By Jack Strutz

DTLA residents familiar with the booming scene from Little Tokyo and Japanese restaurants know that rice is a big, gigantic deal. The grain has been Japan's most important crop for well over 2000 years and the quality is unmatched. A recent boom in rice-focused cuisines in DTLA has been on the rise in popularity. A new player is in town and they have some serious game.

Rike is the brainchild of co-founders of Nana-Nana, an accessory/fashion brand from Tokyo, Japan. They expanded to Los Angeles where Hisato Takenouchi and Kenji Sunaga were inspired to pursue a different venture in cuisine, and thus was born Rike. The menu offers a variety of bite-sized items that are packed with quality and flavor, all made to highlight the main ingredient: Yukitsubaki rice.

Sourced all the way from the Uonuma region, much credit is given to its cultivators and the process is sacred. According to Hisato and Kenji, only Michelin grade restaurants use this rice but thanks to Hisato's many connections, Rike's menu offers it for a more than reasonable price. Rike is nestled right on the edge of Little Tokyo and the Civic Center, where the locale alone sets it apart from other Little Tokyo staples. Having opened on November 1st, Rike already has loyal patrons who come everyday



for lunch—and you know us Downtowners, once we find a good thing, we stick to it.

At Rike, you're welcomed by a simple concept: you order at the counter greeted by Chef Christopher and his friendly staff and have a seat along the bar that is surrounded by Rike's minimally accented decorations of gold. Everything is part of the concept; Hisato and Kenji even hired a music director to have specially curated music playing at Rike. Traits of rare quality and simplicity are continually echoed from their menu, to the art on their walls, and even Rike's logo.

They've collaborated with giants from the Tokyo art and fashion scene to one of the biggest French graphic designers in the world, So Me and Cali Thornhill Dewitt, thanks to their connections through Nana-Nana. "We've been very fortunate," Hisato says, as their pride is reflected in everything about Rike.

You will fall in love with the quality of the rice, that is a guarantee. You can take some home with you (Rike sells it by the bag), but it's the surprising attention to care and quality of the menu that'll have you coming back. Trust us, there's no way you can make Chef Christopher's delicacies at home. Not many people can boast about their rice the way Rike can. They've turned a high-end product into an approachable, affordable, and well-thought out concept, and that's why it is a dining opportunity that can't be missed.

FIND IT HERE:  
228 E 1st St.  
[instagram.com/rike\\_losangeles](https://www.instagram.com/rike_losangeles)





# DRINK

A

## RED HERRING

770 S Grand Ave.  
redherringla.com



# EAT

B

## RIKE

228 E 1st St.  
instagram.com/rike\_losangeles

C

## M. GEORGINA

777 Alameda St. Suite #114  
mgeorgina.com

D

## BAFFO STREET FOOD

830 Traction Ave.  
instagram.com/baffostreetfood



# MOVE

E

## CAGES

1926 E 7th Pl.  
cagesdtla.com

**CITY STREETS**

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**FREEWAYS**

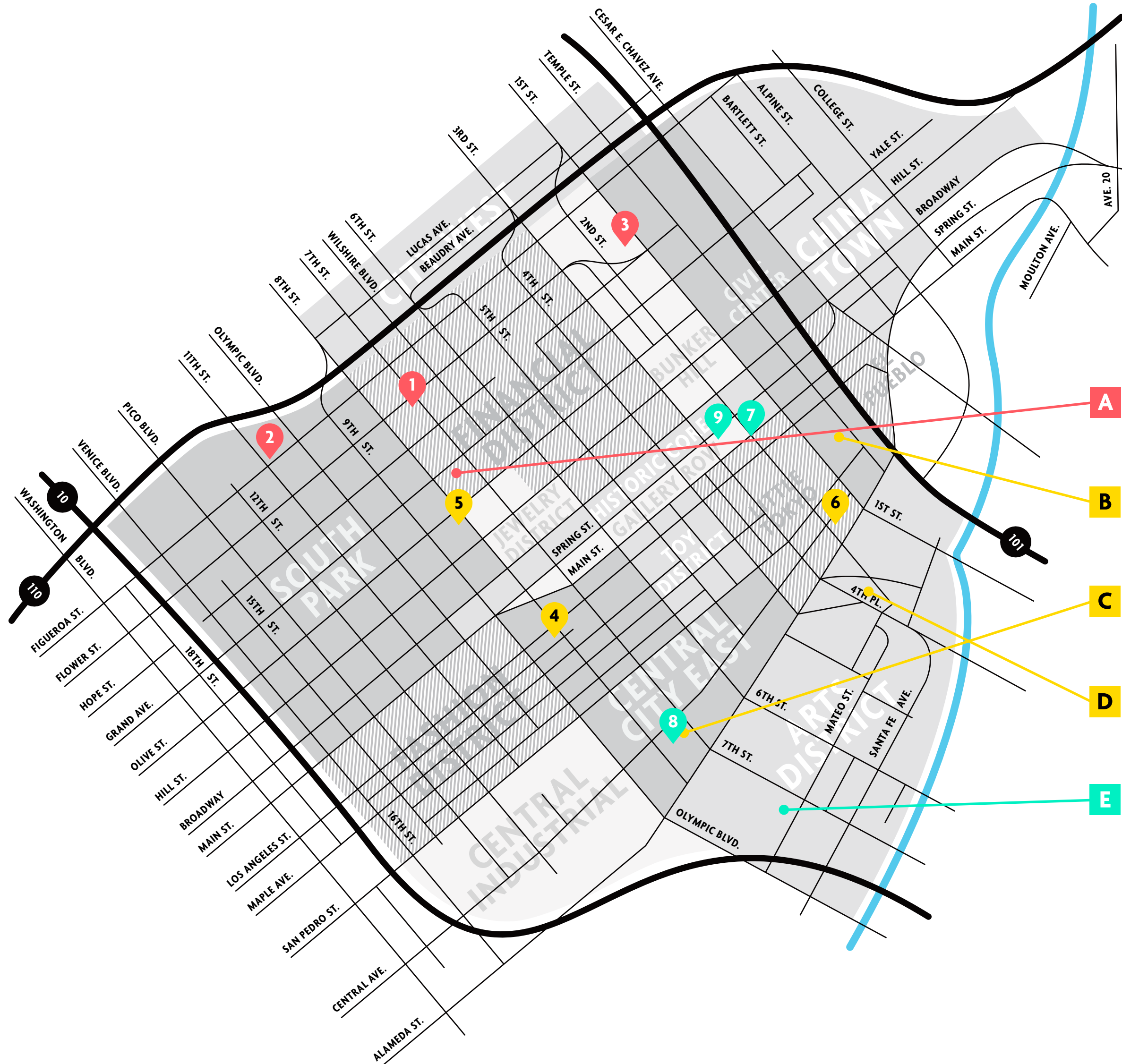
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**LA RIVER**

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**M METRO RAIL STATIONS**

\*MAP SIMPLIFIED & NOT TO SCALE



# DOWNTOWN FAVORITES

1

## VIDEO VORTEX

700 W 7th St, Suite U240B — [videovortex.com/los-angeles](http://videovortex.com/los-angeles)  
The Alamo Drafthouse is a movie nerd's paradise, but lest we forget their bar-slash-video rental shop in their lobby. There's a reason the word "Drafthouse" is in the theater's name, with 48 beers on tap, 40,000 (!!!) Blu-rays to rent, and a banging cocktail list inspired by their favorite movies. Bonus points for the menus, found in old VHS boxes.

2

## TOM'S WATCH BAR

1011 S Figueroa St. B101 — [tomswatchbar.com/location/los-angeles](http://tomswatchbar.com/location/los-angeles)  
Tom's Watch Bar is the place to go whenever your team's sportsball extravaganza is playing on TV. Take advantage of their U Pour taps, the kind where you're allowed to serve yourself a beer.

3

## CAFÉ PERSONA

714 W 1st St. — [cafepersonala.com](http://cafepersonala.com)  
Inspired by her mother's dream to tell the world that it is loved, Tammy Hong opened Café Persona with the mission to serve high quality food and coffee to all. The açai bowls are beautiful, and so is their view of Disney Hall.

4

## SONORATOWN

1415 S Hill St. — [sonoratown.com](http://sonoratown.com)  
Number Five on LA Times 101 Best Restaurants of the Year, Sonoratown's tacos are seriously legit. Credit the flour in the tortillas that co-owner Jennifer Feltham drives up from Mexico several times a year. Yes, there's always a line. Yes, it's worth it.

5

## THE EXCHANGE

416 W 8th St. — [freehandhotels.com/los-angeles/the-exchange](http://freehandhotels.com/los-angeles/the-exchange)  
Melissa Perello, who has a Michelin star for Octavia up in San Francisco, has opened M. Georgina in ROW DTLA. Expect California fresh cuisine coming out of the wood-burning ovens from this celebrated chef.

6

## SHIN-SEN-GUMI HAKATA RAMEN

132 S Central Ave. — [shinsengumigroup.com](http://shinsengumigroup.com)  
Shin-Sen-Gumi's Little Tokyo outpost stands tall in a neighborhood of killer ramen joints. Of course their ramen is outstanding, but don't ignore the rest of the menu and the delicious Japanese dishes available.

7

## PORTAL

229-263 E 2nd St. — [akikoyamashita.com/Portal](http://akikoyamashita.com/Portal)  
In 2015, visual artist Akiko Yamashita gave DTLA a lovely gift in the form of Portal, a neon light tunnel in Little Tokyo's Weller Court plaza. Do it for the 'gram, then stay for the people watching.

8

## BODEGA

1320 E 7th St. M2 Suite 150 — [bdgastore.com](http://bdgastore.com)  
Row DTLA's super secret sneaker shop, Bodega also has locations in Boston and Tokyo, but their LA version is their largest. Major street cred if you can find the entrance. (We still can't.)

9

## SPRING STREET COMMUNITY GARDEN

220 S Spring St. — [springstreetcommunitygarden.org](http://springstreetcommunitygarden.org)  
Come get your hands dirty from nine until noon on Saturdays and Sundays in this precious community garden. A lovely way to reconnect with Mother Earth, get to know your neighbors, and see the literal fruits of your labor grow in this urban jungle we call home.





## M. GEORGINA

### STAR-STUDED HOPEFUL

Written By Janica de Guzman  
Photographed By GL Askew II

When most people receive a phone call from a blocked number, they let it go straight to voicemail. Melissa Perello is not like most people. She answered a phone call from a blocked number to unknowingly receive news about winning a Michelin star. Receiving a Michelin star is the chef equivalent to winning an Olympic gold medal or becoming your mentor's mentor. Melissa has led both of her San Francisco-based restaurants, Frances and Octavia, to earn a coveted star. Now she brings her award-worthy culinary craft to Downtown LA debuting as M. Georgina.

"The more time I spent in Los Angeles, the more I realized how much I enjoy it. The energy and food scene is very exciting and I am inspired by the amazing chefs and quality of product available," says Melissa.

M. Georgina is her third restaurant and the newest attraction added to The Row's urban sanctuary. Upon entry, a wood-fired oven burns mercilessly as it greets you with passionate cooking. Natural, wood decor complements the austerity of concrete walls while the exposed kitchen is neatly organized as if Marie Kondo tidied it up herself.

"I want people to feel comfortable and appreciated while enjoying a delicious meal. The staff is our family and we want to treat you like family as well," says Melissa.

M. Georgina is named after her paternal grandmother, Mary Georgina. Though she never had a chance to meet her, her homage to the restaurant would have any grandmother smiling down from the heavens. The California-inspired



menu features fare sourced from local farmer's markets and executed with superior flavor on familiar favorites. One standout dish is the Wood Baked Black Cod, a buttery fish accented with creamed escarole, anchovies, chiles, black pepper, and baked in the wood oven, allowing the dish to take in the oaky flavors.

Brussel sprouts have been an "it" vegetable since the beginning of the millenium. It's the socialite of vegetables seen on many menus throughout LA; we've become disenchanted by its beauty yet we cannot get enough of them. Melissa's take on the baby buds reinstates our love for them. Her Warm Brussel Sprout Salad features peeled apart sprouts that create a leafy bed, tossed in a horseradish pancetta vinaigrette, topped with chanterelle mushrooms, and perfectly crisp pancetta.

Bar director, Adam Flamenbaum spearheads the adventurous cocktail menu. "Our cocktails are meant to flow seamlessly and act as an extension of the kitchen. We put an emphasis on using fresh herbs and produce to bring to Chef Melissa's menu to life," says Adam.

The Perennial Spring is a frond-adorned, gin-based cocktail that features herbaceous fennel and thyme liquor. It looks like Christmas, tastes like spring and feels like a very good time. The Sunshine Row tips its hat to The Row featuring vodka, blanc vermouth, apricot kernel, turmeric, and lemon. It resembles the color of Orange Tang and is served in a delicate cocktail glass. Everything M. Georgina has to offer is an elevated version of foods we know and reimagined to flavors we'll love. It's a space that's romantic enough to bring your date, yet comfortable enough to bring your boss. Whoever you bring—bring an appetite and a designated driver.

FIND IT HERE:  
777 Alameda St. Suite #114  
mgeorgina.com







## CAGES

### A WORLD UNTO ITSELF

Written By Abel Horwitz  
Photographed By David Richardson

Welcome to Anhedonia, a dystopian city where emotions have been outlawed. The world is one of black and white, where citizen's hearts are locked away in cages. The sky is overcast and gray, and if anyone shows any sign of emotion they are quickly reprogrammed.

You've entered Anhedonia through the back alley in the Arts District. You are there to witness the execution of the criminal Woolf, who is guilty of the crime of falling in love.

Welcome to the live stage show CAGES, the next step in theatrical entertainment. Welcome to a new world.

CAGES was created by Woolf (CJ Baran) and The Wondershow (Benjamin Romans), two friends who met through their mutual careers in music.

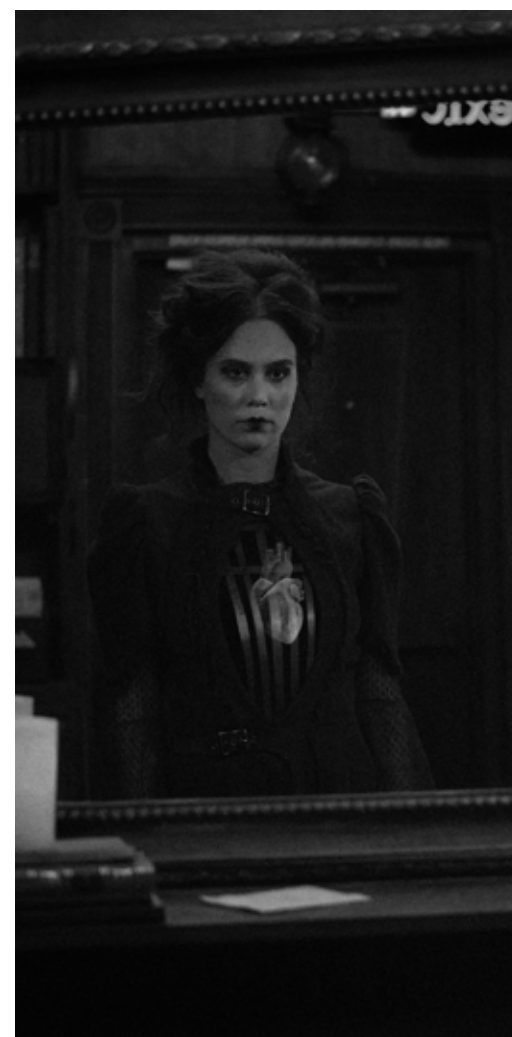
Inspired by immersive theater, Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals, and 1920's German Expressionist films such as "Metropolis" and "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," the two spent countless nights writing music to tell their story.

"We made 10,000 mistakes," says Romans, "and we worked backwards. We had an idea, and then we needed to figure out the technology."

"We were trying to disrupt," says Baran. "We were trying to do something no one else has done before, especially on the technical side."

After entering into the secret world you are allowed to roam around the bar, where mixologists pour cocktails and the citizens of Anhedonia lurk in the shadows. There are easter eggs and hidden moments for those willing to be patient and observe. For the rest of us, the cocktails are outstanding.

When it is time for the performance to start you are led into a theater that the team built



out specifically for this production. The show is a technological spectacle that truly must be seen to be believed. Through the use of projection mapping, backlit screens and a top notch soundsystem, you experience something halfway between an EDM concert and a Broadway musical.

There's a back screen, like a standard movie screen, and then a transparent front screen that the actors play in between. Projections create a 3D effect between the two screens, which is a visual feast for the eyes.

Woolf is the main character in the saga, a kind of hipster Hunchback of Notre Dame hidden away in the town's clocktower. Throughout the show he interacts with a small group of supporting players, but mostly performs against projections and images on the screens.

During the show Romans plays music live in the wings of the stage. Mirrors positioned over his keyboard show that he is actually playing the keys while Baran is so precise with his vocals and movements, it's hard to believe that he's actually singing the whole time. (He is.) The music is catchy and inventive. This is not your run of the mill musical.

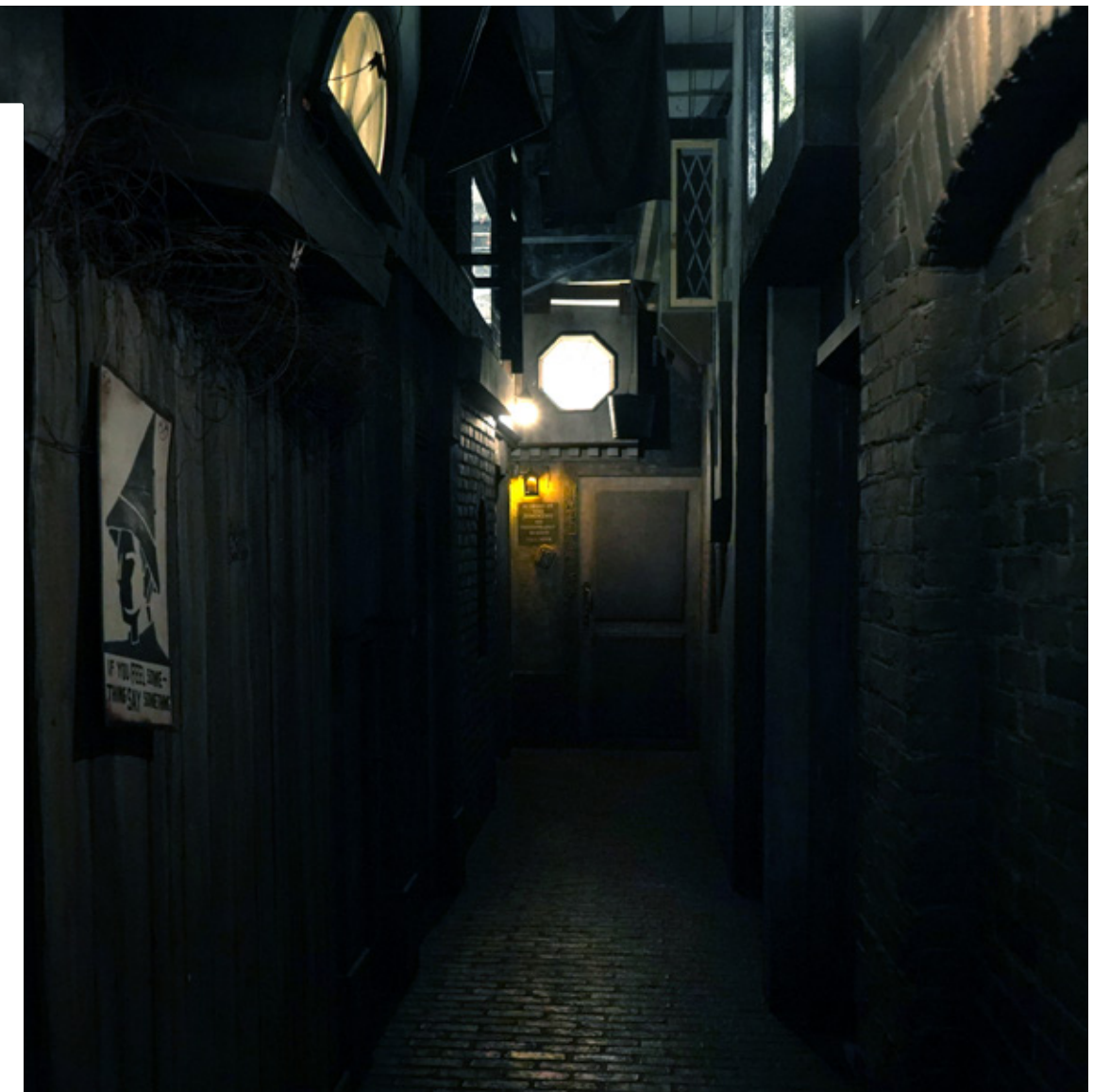
CAGES is new. CAGES is different. CAGES is trippy and surreal and magical, and quite different than any other kind of performance you have ever seen.

The show is releasing tickets slowly and deliberately, relying on word of mouth and social media to market. They ended 2019 with a month of sold out shows, and are anticipating high demand for 2020.

"We have people who've come back, like, ten times," says Baran.

"It's like 'Field of Dreams'" says Romans. "We built it, and people came."

FIND IT HERE:  
1926 E 7th Pl.  
cagesdta.com







# BAFFO STREET FOOD

WITH LOVE, FROM ITALY

Written By Mariana Ramos  
Photographed By Rebekah Lemire

Did you know Los Angeles doesn't have a Little Italy? Unlike most other major cities in the United States, L.A. lacks a central Italian community. However, that doesn't necessarily mean it lacks Italian food; there's plenty to go around and in DTLA, Baffo is a must for Italian fare.

Nestled in the Arts District, Baffo has been redefining the approach to Italian cuisine and culture. Separating itself from the fancy, white cloth, upscale joints one might find in Beverly Hills or otherwise, Baffo brings the quality of Italian ingredients down to Earth. It all comes together in an outdoor atmosphere true to L.A.'s beloved food truck scene.

Chef Matteo Bizzotto moved from Italy with little knowledge of L.A. five years ago. Baffo is his first job, establishment, and project. With his culinary background primarily influenced from being in Italian kitchens, he says his food is a mix of home and California cuisines. He splits his time between being a dad and a business owner both in L.A. and in Assolo, Italy where he owns a bar, but Baffo (being his L.A. baby) gets all his attention. Given how difficult it is to procure some of the more authentic and original Italian products, he has adjusted his menu to fit the L.A. food scene, offering a vegan dish, burgers, and delicious fries.



The creativity of the menu shines through dishes Chef Matteo has experimented with such as a fish burger that is an absolute must-try. The menu doesn't change often; he has some classics that have been staples since he opened Baffo in his vintage airliner three years ago, "The roast beef and the Baffo Blast have been around from the start. The roast beef is a favorite of many customers."

The food is also substantial, the sandwiches are big, and you're getting a lot of bang for your buck here. The food is prepared promptly and on any given day you'll even find Matteo himself behind the grill. He has a small two-person team and he loves working in his little alley behind Arts District Brewing Co. The loyal regulars that come by for lunch have always enjoyed his warm and welcoming ambiance that is true of Italian culture.

Chef Matteo has a simple vision and philosophy for Baffo, "I want to see people happy, and I don't want it to cost them a lot of money. I think my prices are reasonable for the quantity. I like to serve people and see them enjoy a meal. It's an Italian tradition to eat together, smile, and love."

The future looks promising for Baffo, as an established outdoor dining destination for locals. Chef Matteo hopes to move into a brick and mortar within the Arts District. He'd love to stay in the community that has given so much to him, "As soon as rent prices go down," he joked. Next time that you're looking for some Italian loving and want more than a plain old pizza, head over to Baffo and get a taste of what true Italian hospitality is all about.

FIND IT HERE:  
830 Traction Ave.  
instagram.com/baffostreetfood



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