

CHUCK KLEIN PRODUCTIONS

145 East 16th Street New York, NY 10003

Tel (212) 505-7090 Fax (212) 473-5085

www.ckponline.com

Los Angeles Area Restaurant Guide

Dear Convention Attendee,

We look forward to seeing many of you at the CTAM Digital Conference in Los Angeles. As our LA Guide goes to press, we are already preparing some exciting projects for the National Cable Show in New Orleans.

As a reminder, time moves on quickly! Since it costs no more to start speaking with us earlier vs. later... you should call us soon if you are thinking about a new exhibit, promotional event (large or small), or some kind of traffic building stunt at the NCTA in New Orleans. We are certainly aware of current budget restraints in our industry... and, we can and will make the most of your promotional dollars. Together with our NOLA affiliate, White Oak Productions, we are hooked into the best local support, materials, and talent that the city has to offer at the most competitive prices. We can provide everything from spokespeople and models to imaginative hospitality suites,

to the mega parties that have made us famous. The sooner you start to move, the more options you have.

Okay...now for the info you really want... the LA restaurant news. We're happy to report that there's something for everyone in this huge and food-loving part of the world... and if you're willing to drive a little way, your choices are truly unlimited. Obviously, there are certain real specialties of the region- a host of Pacific Rim offerings, some great Mexican food, terrific Southwestern-influenced fare, and lots of intriguing fusions of several International Cuisines, inspired by the great regional ingredients to be found in lush California.

You can expect lots of experimentation, combined with lots of tradition here-, which is always an interesting combo. And, of course the easy access to great wines, and the menus they inspire is a terrific bonus. From seafood to junk food, LA has got it covered. We hope you enjoy our recommendations, and we'd like to hear from you about anything you especially loved or loathed. Plus, we're always interested in any new finds you come across (in any city) that are not currently in our guide. Let us know what you think of our recommendations as well as to clue us in on your favorites around the country. Phone, fax or email your thoughts to guide@ckponline.com.

Our web site www.ckponline.com is up and running. You will find our various Restaurant Guides posted there, as well as some background on what we've been doing, and whom we've been doing it for.

Here's hoping you have a great meal.... and an even better conference!

Chuck Klein Shelley Babcock

While we have tried to make specific comments in the brief reviews, ratings, from K – KKKKK, are overall ratings, most heavily influenced by the food, but which includes other factors such as ambiance, décor and service. Keep in mind that in Los Angeles, as everywhere, restaurants and clubs can open and close, change hours, dark nights, credit card policies, and even move with very short notice. Many restaurants are closed Sundays and Mondays, or even Tuesdays. So do call each place that you plan to try and, of course, feel free to mention Chuck Klein Productions.

Abbreviations: (BH) Beverly Hills; (CC) Century City; (DT) Downtown; (MW) Mid Wilshire; (SM) Santa Monica and The Beach; (WH) West Hollywood; (WLA) West Los Angeles

Agio – 8478 Melrose Ave., (WH) 323-655-6333 KKK \$\$\$: Huge Hollywood scene at this sleek Tuscan Italian. One of the partners is Robert De Niro! Excellent thin-crust pizzas and vibrantly-sauced, *al dente* pastas are the specialties...along with the eye-candy lining the bar.

Arnie Morton's of Chicago - 435 So. LaCienega, (WH) 310-246-1501 KKK+ \$\$\$+: Contender for the Best Steak in Town Award. Morton's West Coast addition offers their 24-oz. porterhouse, the famed New York strip, and a glorious double-cut filet mignon for serious beef lovers. Also notable... their giant veal and lamb chops and succulent hunks of prime rib. This steakhouse has the classic mahogany paneling with not-so classic waiters who wheel out slabs of beef, veal and live lobsters on carts in lieu of a menu. Expensive, but worth it! Open for dinner only.

Asia de Cuba – Mondrian Hotel, 8440 Sunset, (WH) 323-848-6000 KKK \$\$\$: The food is Latin Fusion and the scene is way hot. Pretty people and rum drinks abound.

Atlas Supper Club - 3760 Wilshire Blvd, (MW) 213-380-8400 KK+ \$: The decor of this jazz and supper club is 1930's MGM Musical, heavy on elegant Kitsch and fantasy. All the performers have a thing for Billie Holiday. Menu is a combo California / Pacific New Wave. While we hear the food is somewhat so-so, the ambiance, good time, and icy martinis are all said to be delicious.

Authentic Cafe - 7605 Beverly Blvd, (Fairfax) 323-939-4626 KKK- \$: Hot, hip and affordable Pacific-New Waver. Food is imaginative, setting is funky, crowd is cool. This American-Southwest-Chinese restaurant has a line day in and out for very large portions of very good food at very cheap prices. No reservations, no alcohol, and it's always packed.

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Balboa – 8462 Sunset in the Grafton on Sunset Hotel, (WH) 323-650-8383 KKK \$\$\$: Big steaks and beautiful people, courtesy of the folks who created the fabulously successful Sushi Roku. The crowd is rock n' roll raunchy, and the menu is retro supper club. Jumbo shrimp cocktails, sensational Caesar Salads, and great big slabs of beef slathered with exotic rubs and sauces are the big draws here. Try the 35-day dry-aged Bone-In Filet...it's glorious.



Barney Greengrass - Barney's New York, 9570 Wilshire Blvd., (BH) 310-777-5877 KKK \$\$\$: In New York, this winner is known as The Sturgeon King. And now it's known in Beverly Hills. The salmon, sturgeon, sable and cod will bring tears to the most seasoned deli lovers' eyes.

The Belvedere - Peninsula Hotel, 9882 Little Santa Monica Blvd. , (BH) 310-788-2306 KKK+ \$\$\$: A fine restaurant in a great hotel. This, like many of the hotel dining rooms we have reviewed here, is a perfect place for a business breakfast or lunch on the veranda. You also won't go wrong with any of the Franco-Pacific specialties at dinner. By the way, the bar is one of the most active in Beverly Hills, but beware cigars seem to be the rule, not the exception, for both sexes.

Bombay Cafe – 12021 Pico Blvd., (WLA) 310-473-3388 KKK \$: The best Indian kitchen in town has moved to a cheery, more spacious area on Pico Blvd. Fans salute the explosive array of flavors and spices used brilliantly in every dish. Have the fiery Shrimp Shah Jhinga or the Murgh Pakoras (fried chicken with tomato chutney). Try *Frankies*, a Bombay street burrito filled with curried vegetables, lamb or chicken. The homemade chutneys are divine.

Ca'Brea - 346 S. La Brea Ave., (LaBrea) 323-938-2863 KKK \$\$\$: An excellent, moderately priced trattoria situated on two floors with many small and private dining rooms. So, *take your meeting* over a plate of their succulent Osso Buco or perhaps the Homemade Venetian Spaghetti with Lobster, Clams, Shrimp, and Porcini Mushrooms. Then, close over Crema di Vaniglia (vanilla cream custard covered with soft, rich caramel.) So popular for Industry dining, it's been nicknamed *The Commissary*. The owners have scored again with **Ca' Del Sole (4100 Cahuenga Blvd., 818-985-4669)** a charming North Hollywood restaurant concentrating on Venetian specialties.

Cafe Pinot -700 W. Fifth St., (DT) 213-239-6500 KKK+ \$\$\$: Joachim Splichal's downtown show in the gardens of the LA Public Library. Best meals come from their giant rotisserie. Recommended: Duck Leg Confit, Grilled Calf's Liver, and Mustard-Crusted Roast Chicken. While it's not Patina (that's in a league of it's own), it does the Pinot empire proud.

California Pizza Kitchen - 207 S. Beverly Dr, (BH) 310-275-1101 KK+ \$: The original of this highly successful chain. The trick here is choosing from the many thin-crust designer pizzas.

Campanile - 624 S. La Brea Avenue, (LaBrea) 323-938-1447 KKK+ \$\$\$: Charlie Chaplin would never recognize his 1928 home, but he would surely enjoy eating here. Famous for divine, crunchy home-baked bread by Nancy Silverton and inspired Cal-Med creations of chef-owner Mark Peel. So good it has groupies! It's adjacent to the co-owned La Brea Bakery so don't go back to your hotel empty handed.

Canter's - 419 N. Fairfax Ave, (Wilshire) 323-651-2030 KK+ \$\$\$: First things first...Canter's is one of the few LA eateries that's open 24 hours. This barn of a NY style delicatessen has been serving corned beef and pastrami since 1928. Fresh baked goods, matzo ball soup, knishes, "you want it, they got it!" Late is when the *for-real* rock n' rollers come by for a nosh.

Cassell's Hamburgers - 3266 W. 6th St., (New Chinatown) 213-387-5502 KK \$: The neighborhood is crummy but the burgers are yummy at this 30-year old tradition on 6th Street. Decor is yellowish (from old age, not beef grease, I'm sure. The place is surprisingly spotless). The Formica tables and bridge chairs are low-maintenance so the bucks go into the Colorado steer beef that's imported daily. A free, unlimited fixin's bar offers the usual, plus homemade mayo and dressings. Also fresh potato and egg salads, veggies, sliced fruit and cottage cheese. Lunch only, til 4 PM.

Celestino Italian Steakhouse – 8908 Beverly Blvd., (WH) 310-858-5777 KKK \$\$\$: The Celestino on the marquee is *Celestino Drago*, so we're not talking chopped liver here. Lots of temptation on this menu...like the appetizer of grilled Treviso radicchio with fried Scamorza cheese. The beef is a special Piedmont breed, famed for its low cholesterol and intense flavor. For dessert, try the creamy Panna Cotta.

Cha Cha Cha - 656 N. Virgil Ave, (Silver Lake) 323-664-7723 KKK \$\$\$: Not in a great neighborhood, but known for serving the very best Caribbean food anywhere on the West Coast. Try the very spicy Black Pepper Jumbo Shrimp or the other Jamaican, Haitian, Cuban or Puerto Rican inspired specialties. Caribbean music and funky decor in the enclosed courtyard complete the experience. It's fun, try it.

Chaya Brasserie - 8741 Alden Dr., (BH) 310-859-8833 KKK+ \$\$\$: The spectacular cuisine is Pacific New Wave with a French kiss and an Asian caress. It's hot and celeb-heavy, but still gracious to one and all. The room is lovely, with clean lines and tall, interior trees. Great grilled items like Soy Marinated Hawaiian Tuna and Long Island Duckling. The Lobster Ravioli with Pesto-Cream Sauce is heaven. The choicest tables are on the outside terrace.

Checkers - Wyndham Checkers Hotel, 535 S. Grand Ave., (DT) 213-624-0000 KKK+ \$\$\$: Comfortable leather chairs, gentle lighting and widely-spaced tables offer frenzied business folk a soothing place to unwind, relax and talk over some very good food. Visually, this is our favorite downtown room. Cuisine is American-New French. We look forward to trying the new menu, created by the newly installed Chef Tony. He's supposed to be terrific. And as always, there's the "award-winning" Checker's Martini.

Chianti - 7383 Melrose Avenue, (Melrose) 323-653-8333 KKK \$\$\$: An old-fashioned Italian so old-fashioned that the chefs yell at each other in Italian. Romantic and dark (a flashlight is provided for reading the menu). Excellent service, excellent food. Especially good at Chianti: black tortellini filled with fresh salmon and the Lamb Capriccio.

Chianti Cucina - 7383 Melrose Ave., (Melrose) 323-653-8333 KKK \$\$\$: Next door to Chianti, you'll find trendy Chianti Cucina. It's ultra new-school, bright white, younger, hipper and louder than the former. Slip into something Armani for this one.

Chinois on Main - 2709 Main Street, (SM) 310-392-9025 KKKK \$\$\$: Stellar Pacific New Waver from Spago starman, Wolfgang Puck. Gorgeous people, gorgeous food...noisy, exotic, delicious and fun. Although it doesn't look like much from the outside, the inside is great looking. The salads and the sashimi appetizer are exquisite and light and the entrees are rich, heavy and a delight. Give the Cantonese duck or barbecued salmon a try, you won't be sorry.

Cicada – 617 S. Olive St., (DT) 213-488-9488 KKK \$\$\$: On the ground floor of the art deco Oviatt Building (circa 1928,) Cicada is a treat for the eye, as well as the palate. You enter thru Lalique glass doors, pass thru 2-story-high carved wooden columns, then check out the beautiful balcony bar that overlooks the dining room. The cuisine is modern Italian, and very fine, indeed. We especially like the risotto-crust oysters and the pappardelle with lobster. Reservations a must.



Ciao Trattoria - 815 West Seventh Street, (DT) 213-624-2244 KKK \$\$: Quite good Italian at very reasonable prices. Very rich and garlicky food served in a wonderful room. The perfect place for a visitor who's spending his or her own bucks.

Ciudad - 445 S. Figueroa St., (DT) 213-486-5171 \$\$\$ KKK: And excellent choice for a snazzy downtown lunch or dinner, Ciudad's bill of fare pays tribute to the cuisines of great Latin meccas like Barcelona, Havana, and Buenos Aires. Chef-owners Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken (creators of Santa Monica's campy Border Grill,) have scored again. Start with a mojito...an eye-popping cocktail made with rum, lime, sugarcane and mint. Then, try one of the tangy appetizers like the Honduran Ceviche laced with coconut, cilantro and fresh pineapple. Follow with Papas Rellenos...potatoes stuffed with oxtail stew. Mildly over the top décor adds a bit more spice to this downtown delight.

Clifton's Cafeteria - 648 S. Broadway, (DT) 213-627-1673 KK \$: Odds are, if you ask an older bellman at your hotel, he'll fondly remember going to Clifton's on a Sunday with his dad. This 40's landmark sits on a bustling downtown LA corner that has seen better days. The décor (for no particular reason) was designed to put you in the mind of a South Sea Island cartoon. The steam tables feature everything under the sun, and must be browsed to be believed. Although simple, the food is quite tasty and satisfying. So, if you miss the old fashioned cafeteria, or your high school's lunch line, come on by. Breakfast is your best choice. Open 6:30 AM-7 PM.

Dan Tana's - 9071 Santa Monica Blvd., (WH) 310-275-9444 KK+ \$\$\$: A dark, clubby Hollywood classic that still does a great steak and a cool late-night bar scene. They also serve up a phenomenal Chicken Parmesan and a melt-in-your mouth whitefish. Gracious service provided by veteran Hollywood waiters who have seen it all.

Delmonico's Seafood Grille - 9320 W. Pico Blvd., (WLA) 310-550-7737 KKK \$\$\$: Ultra-fresh seafood, expertly prepared. Hefty portions of steamed clams and oysters, cracked crab, fish stews and grilled seafood all served in big booths that make conversation and relaxation doable. Always a famous face or two on hand. Just excellent... and a good buy.

Diaghilev - Wyndham Bel Age Hotel, 1020 N. San Vicente Blvd., (WH) 310-854-1111 KKKK \$\$\$: If you love caviar, chilled vodka, and being pampered beyond belief, this is one of the great ones in LA. The food and decor are a lush Franco-Russian. You'll dine like royalty on Truffled Chicken Kiev, Braised Veal in Raspberry Sauce, Moist Salmon Croquet in Pastry, or blinis topped with vodka and caviar. Reserve early. Very expensive, but also very special.

Drago - 2628 Wilshire Blvd., (SM) 310-828-1585 KKK \$\$\$+: Upscale Sicilian, presided over by star chef Victor Drago, might just serve the best pasta in town. Also offering a "collectors" list of grappas." A striking restaurant serving unique dishes like a pasta flavored with dried, salted roe. If you love eggplant, you can choose from at least a dozen different preparations. Lots of famous faces are among the regulars.

El Cholo - 1121 S. Western Ave., (WLA) 323-734-2773 KKK \$-: It's been workin' for 68 years. This Mexican classic has spawned six locations. It gained a reputation in the '20s by serving huge portions of good basic Mexican fare and wonderful margaritas. It still does.

Engine Co. No. 28 - 644 S. Figueroa Street, (DT) 213-624-6996 KK+ \$\$\$: A converted firehouse becomes a comfy, clubby bistro serving grilled seafood, steaks, meatloaf, stews, great mashed potatoes and the other good comfort stuff. Popular spot for business types with an exceptionally busy bar.

Fatburger - 7450 Santa Monica Blvd., (WH) 323-436-0862 KK\$: (NOTE: FATBURGER [the original La Cienega shop] has moved...and is now located on Santa Monica Blvd.) We love Patina, but can't come to LA without a stop at Fatburger for a cholesterol fix. This primo stand attracts all sorts of characters from actors/actresses to musicians to execs to others all day and night for great burgers... crisp on the edges, please.

Fenix at the Argyle - Argyle Hotel, 8358 Sunset Blvd., (WH) 323-848-6677 KKK+ \$\$\$+: Great affordable Cal-French in a beautiful art deco room with stunning views of Hollywood. Try the fried oyster and spinach salad scented with anise, and the pecan-crust chicken breast. Ooh-la-la!

5 Dudley - 5 Dudley Ct., (Venice) 310-399-6678 KKK \$\$\$: Two former Pinot Bistro chefs created this tiny gem in Venice Beach. It's said they do the best Monkfish in town- cooked in a cylinder of crisped potato. We loved the giant lamb shank on a bed of saffron risotto. Excellent Caesar Salads and Soups. Go see what everyone's talking about. Beer and wine only.

Four Oaks - 2181 N. Beverly Glen Blvd., (BelAir) 310-470-2265 KKKK \$\$\$+: This is the creation of super chef Peter Roelant. A romantic canyon hideaway (that once housed a Brothel,) where you can literally eat under a canopy of trees... by candlelight, of course. The food is simply wonderful... one critic from a major LA paper, who takes pride in being tough, admitted he was brought to tears by an appetizer of Lavender Smoked Salmon with Crisp Potatoes and Horseradish Creme Fraiche. Serving lunch, dinner and a Sunday Brunch. One of our personal favorites.

Fred 62 - 1850 N.Vermont Ave., (Brentwood) 213-667-0062 KK \$: Décor is heavy on the lime green, and the ambience is way cool at this "open all night" diner that gives classic counter food a new dimension. Nice to know you can get a truly good corn dog or a tofu scramble and a glass of fresh carrot juice surrounded by people who look really, really good.

Gardens - Four Seasons Hotel, 300 S. Doheney Dr., (BH) 310-273-2222 KKK \$\$\$+: Most Beverly Hills hotels offer excellent dining and this one is no exception. Although you can find more interesting alternatives, you won't go wrong here for breakfast or lunch. Menu offers tasty fare like the foie gras with mache and a hint of tangerine essence, the hot smoked salmon glazed with blossom honey, and the violet mustard-crust rack of lamb. If you're in the mood for dessert with a kick, check out the champagne and pinot noir ice cream floats.

Geoffrey's - 27400 PacificCoast Hwy., (Malibu) 310-457-1519 KKK \$\$\$+: Gorgeous ocean views...and terrific California Eclectic cuisine provided in abundance at this Malibu cliff top hideaway. Great place to sip martinis while watching the sun set. Sundays, you can cruise the PCH, and pull in here for a spectacular brunch. Reservations a must.

Ginza Sushi-Ko - 218 N. Rodeo Dr., (BH) 310-247-8939 KKK \$\$\$: A very good restaurant whose main claim to fame is that it's the most expensive restaurant in LA. At about \$300 per person for sushi, you tell me if it's worth it. Devotees claim it's "Like eating at the chef's house."

Granita - 23725 W. Malibu Rd., (Malibu) 310-456-0488 KKK+ \$\$\$+: Wolfgang Puck meets the Little Mermaid in this colorful fantasy by the sea. Food is typically imaginative and Mediterranean seafood is the specialty. Try the Grilled Atlantic Salmon on Roasted Chino Corn Salsa or the Alaskan Spot Prawns with Saffron Risotto and Crispy Ginger. Enjoy a sorbet or a granita... both are bursting with flavor. The famous Puck pizza is served as well. Noisy, crowded, and definitely fun.

The Grill - 9560 Dayton Way, (BH) 310 276 0615 KKK+ \$\$\$: Old-time "man-food" served here. Many think of it as Peter Luger West, especially the agents from William Morris and CAA, who lunch on the big, beautiful steaks and chops daily. By the way, the bread and chopped salad are winners too.



Guelaguetza – 3337 W 8th St., (DT) 213-427-0601 KKK \$+: On a Saturday afternoon, this Koreatown Oaxacan restaurant is always crowded. It has all the Oaxaca dishes you've read about in travel magazines – handbag-size empanadas stuffed with bright orange zucchini blossoms, giant Oaxaca pizzas called clayudas, terrific banana leaf-wrapped tamales. *Then* there are the moles: complex, time-consuming creations that sometimes include as many as 50 ingredients. One trip to this little neighborhood joint, and, like us, you will hurry back to enjoy the hospitality and good cooking.

Il Pastaio - 400 N. Canon Dr., (BH) 310-205-5444 KKK \$: Some say that Giacomino Drago defined the '80s LA version of the trattoria at Drago. Il Pastaio is the '90s version with lower prices, but still excellent pizza and pasta at this noisy and crowded Beverly Hills spot. Reminds you of the cozy and casual neighborhood cafes found all over Italy.

The Ivy - 113 N. Robertson Blvd, (BH) 310-274-8303 KKK \$\$\$+: Cal-American cuisine for the cool and famous. It's best known for homey items like lime chicken salad, crab cakes, barbecued fresh vegetables and incredibly good meatloaf. The down side here...service can hinge on your star status. We hear attitude o'plenty is served daily. Expensive.

JiRaffe – 502 Santa Monica Blvd., (SM) 310-917-6671 KKK \$\$\$: There's lots of buzz about this new, upscale bistro at the beach. Intense flavors, lots of fresh vegetables and a ton of imagination make the Franco-California cuisine spectacular. Unusual pastas...like a butternut squash agnolotti with brown butter sage sauce and squash chips...are just for starters. Entrees are lush...like the roasted Chilean Sea Bass with a ragout of Salsify, Chanterrelles, and Pearl Onions. Beer and wine only.

Joe's - 1023 Abbot Kinney Blvd., (Venice) 310-399-5811 KKK+ \$\$\$: This small Venice pearl is the creation of Chef-owner Joe Miller, who, quite simply, loves to cook. Two 4-course prix fixe menus offered nightly for about \$30 and \$40... or you can order a la carte. The food is homey and satisfying. Try starters like Arugula Salad with Grilled Scallops Wrapped in Bacon, then the Roasted Quail with Pear and Cornbread Stuffing or Braised Lamb Shank with Eggplant Gnocchi. The Blueberry and Peach Cobbler is a perfect finish to a grand meal.

Jozu – 8360 Melrose Ave., (WH) 323-655-5600 KKK \$\$\$: Specializing in creative Cal-Asian cuisine that's drawing raves *and* crowds. Great appetizers...especially the crisp Sonoma quail with tangerine glaze. Delicious entrees include a roasted Chilean Sea Bass with ponzu sauce and cabbage salad, and a grilled marinated chicken with yellow curry and pad Thai noodles. Food presentations are lovely, and so is the clientele. Offers a fine selection of Pacific Rim wines, along with some very nice cognacs and vintage ports.

La Cachette - 10506 Santa Monica Blvd., (CC) 213-470-4992 KKK \$\$\$: We haven't been here yet, but friends rave about this French spot in Century City. It's both elegant and comfortable and, given the fact that the chef is from L'Orangerie, we anticipate the best.

Langer's - 704 S. Alvarado St., (DT) 213-483-8050 KK+ \$+: The famous downtown deli that does it all...the chopped liver, the great pastrami, the stuffed kishka, *the whole matzo ball*, so to speak. Only open until 4PM, and if you call in your order and ETA, they'll have it waiting at the curb, with your change.

La Serenata De Garibaldi – 1842 E. 1st St., (ELA) 323-265-2887; 10924 West Pico, (WLA) 310-441-9667; and 1416 4th St., (SM) 310-656-7017 KKK+ \$\$\$: (Good news... the original East LA location is remodeled and BACK!) A huge following for awesome seafood done funky East LA- style. Considered one of the top Mexican spots in town. Unbelievable combinations like Fish Tacos in a Green Tomatillo Sauce, Salmon Fillet done Cozumel-style with Basil, Chives and Chiles, and Halibut con Mole. For dessert, cool down your palette with their perfect, homemade flan. For those who find the 'hood intimidating, try the new location in Santa Monica.

Lavande – Loew's Santa Monica Beach Hotel - 1700 Ocean Ave., (SM) 310-576-3181 KKK \$\$\$: Created by former Citrus Chef Alain Giraud and said to be "the first great oceanfront restaurant in Southern California history." Superb Provencal cuisine. Recommended: the Roast Squab with Lavender, the garlicky Squid and Potato Stew, and the Provencal Daube of Beef, simmered with tiny black and green olives. For dessert, the vacherin cheese with lavender ice cream and strawberries is a must.

Lawry's Prime Rib - 100 N La Cienega, (BH) 310-652-2827 KKK \$\$\$: This is where it started. "This restaurant is such an institution that reviewing it is as pointless as critiquing Disneyland." (*LA Magazine*) Prime rib prepared perfectly and carved at the table from a silver cart. They stick to the basics and do it well.

Le Dome - 8720 Sunset Blvd., (WH) 310-659-6919 KKK+ \$\$\$+: Lots of film and especially music industry movers do power meals here. Cuisine is French and first-class. Try the Cockles in White Wine and Shallots or the Veal Tortellini with Prosciutto, Sun-dried Tomatoes, Peas and Parmesan Sauce. Service, style, view and decor are top-rated... All reasons why those in the "biz" have treated Le Dome as their personal clubhouse for decades.

Locanda Veneta - 8638 West Third St., (WH) 310-274-1893 KKK+ \$\$\$: Local critics rate the regional Italian food here on par with Valentino. Unfortunately, it's quite small and gets pretty noisy with its closely spaced tables. However, \$ for \$, many consider this upscale neighborhood-style place a major player.

L'Orangerie - 903 N. La Cienega Blvd., (WH) 310-652-9770 KKKK \$\$\$: Spectacular Classic French in a setting rated "LA's Most Beautiful" by *Zagat*. Cocktails are served on a romantic flower-decked terrace. Try the Daurado en Croute de Sol. Do dress up. Take it from us... this one is very special.

Maple Drive - 345 N Maple Dr., (BH) 310-274-9800 KKK \$\$\$+: Although Dudley Moore's place is a lunchtime favorite of celebs, you might enjoy its simple, but good, American menu at dinner as well. Some feel prices are high for such items as meatloaf, chicken, matzo ball soup, and chili. However, it is good and can be fun.

Matsuhisa - 129N. La Cienega, (BH) 310-659-9639 KKKK \$\$\$: For sure, the best sushi, sashimi and Japanese seafood in LA.... some say "the best in the U.S." Chef-owner Nobuyuki Matsuhisa is hailed as a creative genius and combines his years in Japan and Peru to achieve a truly brilliant and original style. There's a 25-page menu of cooked seafood. Favorites include Broiled Sea Bass with Black Truffles and Dungeness Crab tossed with Chiles and Cream. Service is excellent here but not everyone loves the decor (stark,) and the lighting (bright). And here's great news... Matsuhisa has ventured out to Malibu with **Nobu Malibu, 3835 Crosscreek Rd., at PCH 310-317-9140**

McCormick and Schmick's - First Interstate Towers (Now called Library Towers) 633 Fifth St., (DT) 213-629-1929 KKK \$\$\$+: Fresh seafood (caught by their own fishing fleet) and a warm, clubby atmosphere with a bustling bar makes this a Downtown favorite. (There are other locations

around LA.) A daily happy hour features both appetizers and cocktails at \$1.95. Private booths and private dining rooms attract an upscale business clientele.



Melisse – 1104 Wilshire Blvd., (SM) 310-395-0881 KKKK \$\$\$: Chef Josiah Citrin (formerly of Jiraffe) does wonderful things for formal French dining at this recently launched and elegantly appointed newcomer. Critics and foodies alike adore the truffles, the foie gras, the amazing cheese course, and the tasting menu is said to be the only way to go. Expensive...but worth it.

Moomba – 665 No. Robertson Blvd., (WH) 310-652-6364 KKK \$\$\$: Moomba is a restaurant and a nightclub, and it's this season's place to see and be seen...if you can get in. A cool downstairs lounge features perfect Cosmopolitans, candlelight, exotic bar food, some really good pick-up lines, and a huge Hi Definition TV where regulars gather to watch stuff like *Sex and the City*. There's outdoor dining on the patio, and some nooks and crannies that you can only enter if you're on the list. Cuisine is Cal-Asian, and menu includes lots of tartares and ceviches, not to mention a very yummy foie gras.

Morton's - 8764 Melrose Ave., (WH) 310-276-5205 KKK+ \$\$\$+: Recently changed their chef and moved their location across the street, this longtime show biz Mecca is famous for steaks, stars, and Hollywood czars. Lots of deals done here. Also good... the fresh Soft Shelled Maryland Crab, Lime Grilled Free-range Chicken, and Lobster-stuffed Sweet Corn Pancakes. Caution: service here may be commensurate with your celebrity.

Musso and Frank - 6667 Hollywood Blvd., (Hollywood) 323-467-7788 KKK \$\$\$: Near the Paramount lot, movie folk galore made this Hollywood old-timer (circa 1919) home of the first-ever *power lunch*. Still grilling great steak, still turning out a to-die-for chicken pot pie, and still the only spot serving fried smelt west of Chicago. Along with a Martini against which all others must be judged.

Nate n' Al's - 414 N. Beverly Dr., (BH) 310-274-0101 KKK \$\$\$+: *The Beverly Hills* version of a NY Jewish Deli. A huge menu offers the works... real chopped liver (made with schmaltz,) giant corned beef and pastrami sandwiches on fresh-baked rye, crunchy potato pancakes, and blintzes stuffed with everything. Big comfortable booths for reading the trades over breakfast and take-out counter for those on the run. *Everyone* shows up here, sooner or later.

Nic's Restaurant and Martini Lounge, 453 North Canon Dr., (BH) 310-550-5707 KKK \$\$\$: The latest place from Larry Nicola (*of Nicola's*) brings you a hip, happening lounge and dining room, in addition to a cool sidewalk café. Try the oysters sautéed on spinach with garlic and walnuts, and don't leave without enjoying one of Scooter's (the pastry chef) desserts... like the flourless chocolate cake and the tongue-tingling pineapple tarts. Live jazz band weekends.

Nick and Stef's – 330 South Hope St., (DT) 213-680-0330 KKKK \$\$\$: From the creator of Patina comes a contemporary composition of the American steakhouse with blonde and dark wood, olive and teal upholstery and a wrap around outdoor patio. Minimal and luxurious...this is the perfect setting for dry aged New York strip loin steak or grilled double cut pork chop. How about the grilled Atlantic salmon steak with roasted beets, intense horseradish cream and garlic mashed potatoes? Polish it all off with lemon meringue pie with lemon zest sauce.

One Pico - Shutters, 1 Pico Blvd., (SM) 310-587-1717 KKK+ \$\$\$: A great restaurant that's right on the beach so you get a gorgeous sunset with a perfect fireplace. You won't get complex dishes here, but will enjoy simple fare served fresh and prepared perfectly.

Original Pantry Café – 875 S. Figueroa St., (DT) 213-627-6879 KK \$: Pot roast, stewed chicken, and creamed tuna galore are served with gusto at LA's most enduring (since 1924) and famous greasy spoon. And if you get a middle of the night craving for a gigantic portion of *gravy-something*, you're in luck. The Pantry is open 24 hours a day.

Pacific Dining Car - 1310 West Sixth St., (DT) 213-483-6000 KKK \$\$\$+: It's a 70-year-old downtown institution and it's open round-the-clock. Politicians, lawyers and Dodgers fans all enjoy prime, aged beef cooked over a mesquite and charcoal fire. Fresh seafood, veal and lamb are also specialties of the house. Lots of authentic railroad décor (including brass luggage racks complete with luggage overhead) make for a warm and whimsical ambiance. Just a quick cab from downtown hotels for a power breakfast, lunch or dinner. Anglophiles note... High Tea is served daily from 3PM to 5:30 PM.

The Palm - 9001 Santa Monica Blvd., (WH) 310-550-8811 KKK+ \$\$\$+: The *primo* NY steak house goes Hollywood. The walls are covered with 70's-ish celebrity caricatures, the booths are packed and the waiters talk fast – so try to keep up! Besides great beef and chops (served with French-fried O-rings and paper-thin potato slices,) you'll find the biggest and best Nova Scotia lobsters. For a mega-cholesterol booster, top off your meal with a hunk of their fabulous Bronx cheesecake. Expect to see the same warm and personable waitstaff that you know from NYC.

Pane e Vino - 8265 Beverly Blvd., (WH) 323-651-4600 KK+ \$\$\$: Inhale and enjoy the smell of garlic and fresh-baked bread. A celebrity-intensive café with a rear entrance that allows stars to sneak in for a plate of grilled veggies and some very fine risotto.

Patina - 5955 Melrose Ave., (Melrose) 323-467-1108 KKKK \$\$\$: Top of the *pop* in LA. - Everyone loves Patina, and for all the right reasons. Fans say the inspired New Cal-French creations of Joachim and Christine Spichal evoke gastronomic Nirvana. The restaurant itself is luxuriously low-key and, despite its popularity (rated No. 1 by *Zagat*), you always get a warm welcome here instead of a whole lot of attitude. Go for dinner...lunch is only served on Tuesdays.

Phillippe the Original – 1001 N. Alameda St., (DT) 213-628-3781 KKK \$: Here's the main thing...they say this is the place that invented the French Dip Sandwich (in 1918.) Now if you're one of those folks that shares our devotion to combos of meat and bread drizzled with pan-juice gravy, this is your kinda place. The sandwiches here are beef, lamb or pork...and flavors are enhanced by a special house-made mustard that regulars slather on in abundance. More good news...you can French Dip for just about \$4.15. Also real fine is their gooey coconut custard cake. What *more* can they do right?

Pink's Famous Chili Dogs - 709 N. La Brea Ave., (Melrose) 323-931-4223 KK+ \$: Bet you can't eat just one! Pink's is the home of the sloppiest, greasiest, best and most satisfying chili dog in town, and even devout vegetarians have been known to fall off the produce wagon for a couple of these. Just a corner stand with a few tables... so plan to eat standing up or in the car and ask for LOTS of napkins.

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Pinot Hollywood - 1448 N Gower, (Hollywood) 323-461-8800; Pinot Bistro - 12969 Ventura Blvd., (Studio City) 818-990-0500 KKK+ \$\$\$: Two renditions of the French Bistro, done Angeleno style, conceived by the restaurant geniuses who created Patina. More affordable but still super-trendy and oh-so-authentic. Pinot fans are understandably passionate. Especially good: the caramelized onion tart with salmon and crème fraiche, and osso buco with pearl button barley.



Polo Lounge and Grill - Beverly Hills Hotel, 9641 Sunset Blvd., (BH) 310-276-2251 KKK \$\$\$: The food is good, not up to the prices however. You should come by to see what has been done to restore this landmark hotel. It is beautiful. We suggest you come for a cocktail and some guacamole or one of the new appetizers: shrimp and scallops stir-fried with sweet chile sauce and shredded papaya, then move on for dinner. By the way, sorry, the beauty at the bar that's been smiling at you is probably not in love.

R-23 - 923 E. Third St., (DT) 213-687-7178 KKK+ \$\$\$: Sporting cardboard furniture, this place is bare, spare and hard-to-find, but for sushi purists and visiting Japanese, it's rated a perfect "Zen."

red - 7450 Beverly Blvd., (WH) 323-937-0331 KK \$: You can tell by the lower-case spelling, that this place is pretty hip. Expect straight-forward American food... lots of vivid red décor... and a beyond cool crowd. Noisy, trendy, young and fun. Very Hollywood!

Regent Beverly Wilshire - Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel, 9500 Wilshire Blvd., (BH) 310-274-5200 KKK+ \$\$\$+: Get out your *Who's Who* because everybody who's anybody (especially in show biz and fashion,) turns up here. According to the *Hollywood Reporter* this gorgeous restaurant is the hottest lunch in town and the *Conde Nast Traveler* Reader's Poll places it in the top 3 nationwide. Menu is Cal-Continental. Favorites include Grilled Norwegian Salmon with Chinese Mustard, Herb-crusting Chilean Sea Bass with Jumbo Asparagus and Saffron Flowers, and Wood-Fired Filet Mignon Bordelaise. Fabulous flambeaus and divine soufflés. There is dancing and a live jazz trio on Friday and Saturday nights. Look good when you go!

Reign - 180 No. Robertson, (BH) 310-273-4463 KKK \$\$\$: For soul food that's upscale to the max...check out football star Keyshawn Johnson's new place on Robertson. (For a way more affordable soul splurge, see our next listing...Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles) If you like your green tomatoes deep-fried and your pork chops smothered, but don't want to leave Beverly Hills, this is the place for you. Don't leave without trying the Banana Pie...it's the real deal, with a crust made from Vanilla Wafers. Expensive.

Roscoe's Chicken and Waffles - 1514 N. Gower St., (Hollywood) 323-466-7453; 5006 W. Pico Blvd., (La Brea) 323-934-4405 KK+ \$+: Not for the weak of heart, Roscoe's serves up inspired soul food treats that are guaranteed to clog every artery. If you enjoy your chicken smothered in gravy and onions, served with waffles or grits and homemade biscuits, this is THE place. We love the cinnamon flavored maple syrup. It's m-m-m, m-m-m, good! The original Gower St. location is best. It's near CBS Studios and attracts some celebrities.

Saddle Peak Lodge - 419 Cold Canyon Rd., (Calabasas) 818-222-3888 KKK+ \$\$\$+: You want rustic? This is it. This romantic lodge in Malibu is from another era. Settle into the handsome, hand-made furniture and dine on fresh salmon dishes as well as exotic game. Beware, the walls here are adorned with the ancestors of those that sacrificed themselves for your meal. Skip the dining room in favor of the lush secluded back patio. This dressy restaurant can be an experience, but it's also a trek.

Shiro - 1505 Mission St., (Pasadena) 626-799-4774 KKKK \$: If you love a challenge, try getting a table here. The French-Japanese cuisine is said to be incomparable, but it's rated "the toughest reservation in town." However, the catfish is said to be "an exquisite masterpiece" flavored with ginger spices and ponzu sauce. Luckily, there's Little Tokyo. Dinner only.

Sofi - 8030 W. Third St., (WH) 323-651-0346 KKK \$+: Authentic Greek cuisine... everything tastes especially good if your table is in the romantic garden patio. *Gourmet* declares this one "a winner." *Buzz* concurs. Our friends give it mixed reviews but can't fault the patio.

Spago - 176 No. Canon Dr., (BH) 310-385-0880 KKKK \$\$\$: Reserve well in advance (at least 2 weeks). The place that made Wolfgang Puck a star. Glorious gourmet pizzas baked in wood-burning ovens, topped with exotic goodies like duck sausage, leeks, artichokes, shitake mushrooms... even lox and sour cream. Great pastas like Black Pepper Fettuccini with Louisiana Shrimp, Roasted Garlic and Basil Ratatouille. And much, much more (like Roasted Cumin Lamb on Lentil Salad, Grilled Alaskan Baby Salmon or an incredible Caesar Salad). Plus, celebs galore. It truly deserves all the hype.

The Standard - The Standard Hotel, 8300 Sunset Blvd., (WH) 323-650-9090 KK \$: At this ultra-cool hotel by the folks who gave Hollywood the fab Chateau Marmont, there's an all night retro-look coffee shop that does a super-fine cheeseburger at zero-o'clock in the morning. You should see the place, in any event. It rocks.

Sushi Roku - 8425 W. Third St., (Hollywood) 323-655-6767 KKKK \$: You'll definitely need to make a reservation at this stylish sushi palace. You'll feel like you're in a fashion shoot with its stonewalls, pale bamboo veneer tables and all the grays and blacks. The chef, Hiro Nishimura, (who comes from R23) serves up octopus sashimi, seafood ceviche, fried baby squid, and tempura. Dessert is the easy choice: pass on the green tea ice cream and have the profiteroles (a dessert that knows no borders).

A Thousand Cranes - New Otani Hotel, 120 S. Los Angeles St., (DT) 213-253-9255 KKKK \$\$\$+: When the hustle of the convention starts to get to you, this could be the eye of the storm. This dining room at the New Otani overlooks a public Japanese Garden, which seems a million miles away from the business chaos on the other side of the sound-damping waterfalls. Want to sample a variety of dishes? Try the *California Kaiseka*, which means many courses.

Tommy's - 2575 W. Beverly Blvd., (Rampart Blvd.) 213-389-9060 KK \$: For a junk-food fest that some swear is the best, get in line at Tommy's. Burgers so juicy and greasy they ooze, cheese-dogs to die for (if they don't kill you first) and chili hot enough to melt your fillings keep Tommy's fans loyal for life. It's 24/7.

Traxx - Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., (DT) 213-625-1999 KKK \$: New addition to the circa 1939 Spanish Mission-style Union Station. Cuisine is Asian/Italian/California fusion. The restaurant's design takes advantage of the soaring architecture of this historic site. The bar is well-stocked with single malt

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Scotches and 100% blue Agave tequilas.



Valentino - 3115 Pico Blvd., (SM) 310-829-4313 KKKK \$\$\$\$: Some call Valentino's creator, Pierro Selveggio, the *Godfather of California-Italian Cuisine*. Top-rated by *everyone*, with food called *brilliant, lovingly created, and wildly imaginative*. In its early days, Pierro himself drove to the airport to pick up the day's Porcini mushrooms and white truffles. A notable wine cellar is heavy in imaginative Italian finds and a recipient of the Wine Spectator Grand Award. For gourmet Italian in LA, Valentino is it.

Water Grill - 544 S. Grand Ave., (DT) 213-891-0900 KKK+ \$\$\$+: Next to the Biltmore and across from Checkers, this is one of the best seafood houses in town. This sprawling place, with its huge raw bar, couldn't be more comfortable as it offers the best and freshest clams, oysters, crabs and shrimp. The Black Linguine topped with Calamari is especially good as is the Rock Shrimp and Bay Scallops in a Spicy Sauce. The wine list is first rate, as is the chocolate bread pudding. If you're staying downtown, Water Grill and Café Pinot make it all worthwhile.

Windows, Steaks and Martinis, Transamerica Center (AKA TOWER) - 1150 Olive St., (DT) 213-746-1554 KKK \$\$\$: Located atop the Transamerica Center and offers a 360° view of LA. Check out the city, the mountains, *and* the ocean while enjoying the finest custom-aged certified Angus beef amidst classic 60's décor. If beef is not what you're after try the Pacific swordfish, Maine lobster, Atlantic salmon, or the sea bass. The perfectly mixed and chilled martinis are a plus.

1/25/02