

FOOD



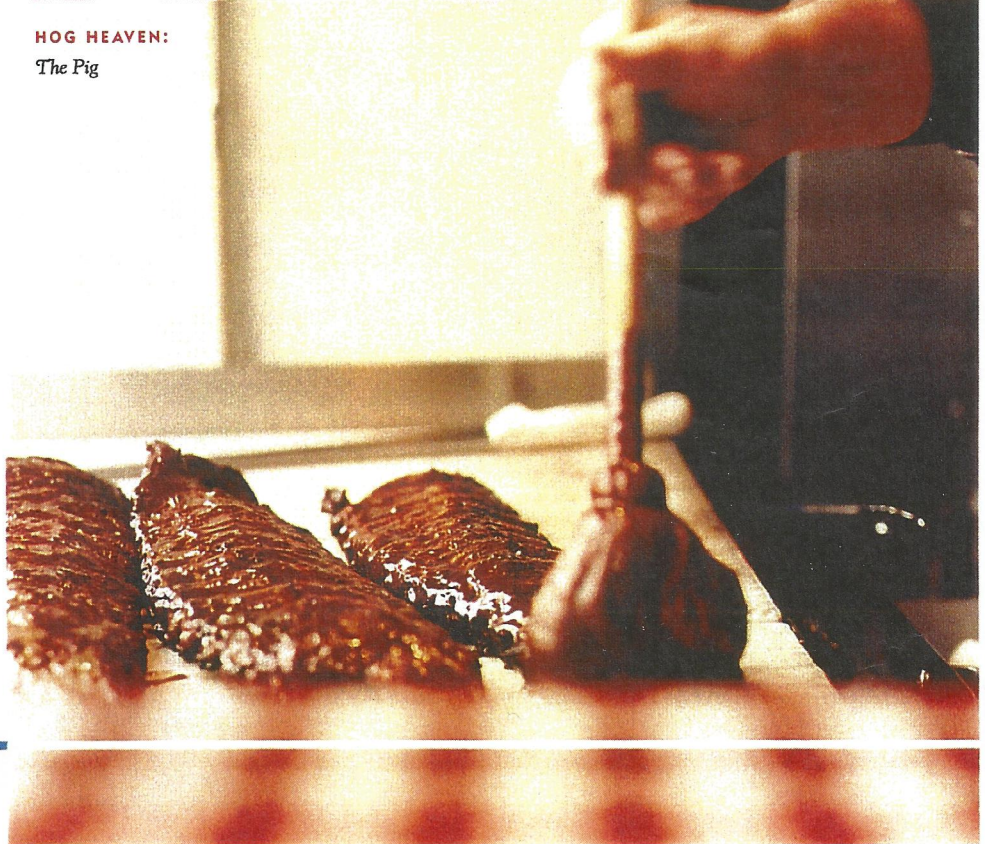
BEST OF L.A.

BBQ

Yes, there are more authentic and venerable 'Q' places than **The Pig**, which just celebrated its first anniversary. But it's hard to beat the convenience—stopping for takeout on the way home from a screening has become a ritual for Hollywood residents. Plus, the Memphis-style hickory-smoked ribs, pulled pork, catfish, and the rest are just flat-out delicious. 612 N. La Brea Ave., 323-935-1116.



HOG HEAVEN:
The Pig



dining out

Vida 1930 Hillhurst Ave. (323-660-4446). D nightly. Fred Eric's eccentric presentations can't disguise the fact that he's still serving some of L.A.'s finest meals. A cantilevered appetizer may look like Frank Gehry designed it, but smart and funny don't preclude delicious. Try the Thai Cobb salad; try the grilled rolled rare tuna; try anything. Full bar. (\$\$\$) California

HOLLYWOOD/MELROSE

Ago 8478 Melrose Ave. (323-655-6333). L Mon.–Fri.; D nightly. At this sleek, highbrow showcase (co-owned by Robert De Niro), incredible pastas are served piping hot and al dente, pizzas come direct from a brick oven, and the entrées—monkfish with creamy polenta, baby rack of lamb—are out of this world. It's hard to go wrong with the desserts. Full bar. (\$\$\$) Northern-Central Italian

Bouchon 7661 Melrose Ave. (323-852-9400). L-D Mon.–Sat. This is as bistro as it gets. Starters include seared foie gras and a delightful onion-and-black-olive tart. Main dishes are standbys with a soupçon of flair: grilled salmon with sorrel sauce, rabbit ragout with prunes, walnut-breaded pork loin. For dessert, try the clafoutis (baked custard with cherries). Full bar. (\$\$) French

Ca'Brea 346 S. La Brea Ave. (323-938-2863). L Mon.–Fri.; D Mon.–Sat. An always happening Venetian-style trattoria from the people who brought us Locanda Veneta. They serve the same sort of pasta and seafood but in larger portions and for less money. Full bar. (\$\$) Northern Italian

Café des Artistes 1534 McCadden Pl. (323-469-7300). L Mon.–Fri.; D nightly; brunch Sun. A lush garden complete with fountains and a tree-draped terrace surround this cozy bistro, where the fireplace inside is always lit. The must-have item on the menu is the confit de canard, a duck leg roasted in its own fat and served with pommes sarladaises—that is, if you're able to eat anything more after devouring the multiple-variety shrimp cocktail. Full bar. (\$\$\$) French

Campanile 624 S. La Brea Ave. (323-938-1447). L Mon.–Fri.; D Mon.–Sat.; brunch Sat.–Sun. This home to Nancy Silverton's La Brea Bakery and local shrine to Mark Peel's urban-rustic cuisine continues to be solid yet innovative. The cedar-smoked trout with fennel salad; rosemary-charred lamb with artichokes, fava beans and olives; and sour-cherry brioche are classic

selections from a menu that changes daily. Full bar. (\$\$\$) Italian/Mediterranean

Canter's 419 N. Fairfax Ave. (323-651-2030). B-L-D 24 hours daily. Perhaps the rudest deli this side of Houston Street, with waitresses who have seen it all, not once but many times. In recent years, it's become a mecca for the too-hip-for-words crowd, who show up late for blintzes and abuse. Nate 'n Al has more class, but Canter's has soul. Full bar. (\$) Deli

Carlito's Gardel 7963 Melrose Ave. (323-655-0891). L Mon.–Fri.; D nightly. One of the city's few Argentine-Italian restaurants—a pity, for this is a wondrous amalgam: cooking built around a great love of beef and an equal affection for garlic. There are skirt steaks, empanadas and Argentine wines, and big appetites should attempt the mixed grill. Beer and wine. (\$\$) Argentine-Italian

Chianti 7383 Melrose Ave. (323-653-8333). D nightly. It's so dark inside that waiters use flashlights to show you to your table, but the menu shines with offerings like fresh black mussels steamed in a lightly spiced tomato broth and superb brick-pressed baby chicken marinated in lemon and thyme, served with watercress salad and rosemary-roasted potatoes. The tiramisu must be Melrose's creamiest. Full bar. (\$\$\$) **Chianti Cucina** L-D daily. The bright, noisy white-tiled kitchen and bakery next door is the place to grab a bite of antipasto misto (for two or more), a bowl of minestrone or something from the daily selection of antipasti. Full bar. (\$\$) Italian

Citrus 6703 Melrose Ave. (323-857-0034). L Mon.–Fri.; D nightly. The food's still fab at this Hollywood cornerstone, and the space, with its covered patio and glass-walled kitchen, is still novel. The shiitake tart with garlic cream is a rich but soul-sating way to start, and the porcupine crab cakes, apparently inspired by a Don King hair day, are top-drawer. Entrées are a tough choice: lobster with napa cabbage and apple Thai sauce; sea bass with black chanterelle crust in an onion sauce; veal daube prepared osso buco style. Have the crunchy napoleon for dessert—that's crème brûlée in them thar layers. Full bar. (\$\$\$\$) Franco-California

Dar Maghreb 7651 Sunset Blvd. (323-876-7651). D

nightly. Our best-known Moroccan restaurant, a place Aladdin might open. Here, you sit on cushions eating chicken with olives with your fingers while a belly dancer undulates inches from your nose. Full bar. (\$\$\$) Moroccan

exIncendo 6282 Hollywood Blvd. (323-465-3257). L daily; D Tue.–Sun. One of the owners sells his colorful pottery downstairs in the gift shop. Upstairs is a sweet-looking dining room with an energetic lunch menu—grilled lamb chop salad, a good Cobb and a roast beef sandwich with caramelized onions and blue cheese are options—and an expanding dinner selection that includes baked salmon with pesto crust and grilled flank steak with red onion and thyme. Beer and wine. (\$\$) American

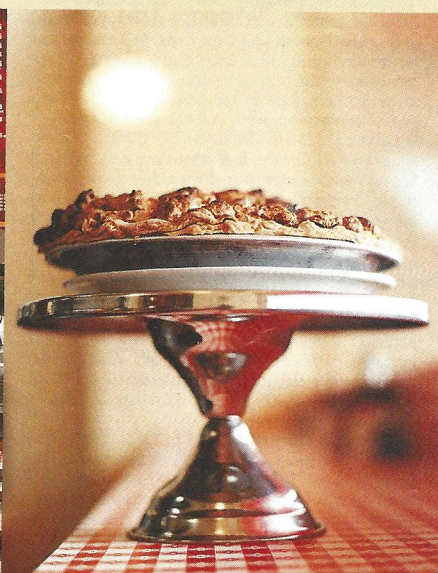
Jozu 8360 Melrose Ave. (323-655-5600). D nightly. Everyone here seems to know ever-present owner Andy Nakano, who likes to keep the menu in flux. Meals start with a complimentary vial of sake and might include the likes of tangerine-glazed Sonoma quail served with a spicy cucumber salad, the wild striped bass wrapped in savoy cabbage with a ginger vinaigrette or the Szechuan peppercorn-studded teriyaki-grilled rib eye. Have room for one more bite? Lemon cheesecake or wasabi sorbet. (\$\$\$) California-Pacific

Kass Bah 9010 Melrose Ave. (310-274-7664). D Mon.–Sat. It's easy to get distracted at this Industry-heavy hot spot. A chic young crowd floats around the mahogany-paneled salon sipping drinks while live music plays. But attention snaps back to the table when dishes such as tuna tartare, shellfish-stuffed quesadillas and Atlantic salmon with red-pepper sauce arrive. The fresh fruit with sorbet is also noteworthy. Full bar. (\$\$\$) California

La Luna 113 N. Larchmont Blvd. (323-962-2130). L Mon.–Fri.; D nightly. This grille-fronted trattoria with sidewalk tables—a bit of the Via Veneto in the middle of Hancock Park—specializes in such Italian cuisine as carpaccio di bue, ravioli stuffed with radicchio and agnello alla griglia. The food is so authentic, you may start drinking wine with lunch again—but then, a meeting at nearby Paramount can have that effect, too. Beer and wine. (\$\$) Italian

L'Angolo 6602 Melrose Ave. (323-935-4922). D Tue.–Sun. An inventive take on the classic Italian menu: pumpkin ravioli in white-truffle butter, duckling crespella, chops and signature almond-crusted branzino, as well as a revolving selection of cheeses. And, given the level of sophistication here, it's all very reasonably priced. Full bar. (\$\$) Italian

NEW The Pig



612 N. LA BREA AVE. (323-935-1116). L-D Mon.–Sat. The late-night crowd at this friendly joint is as inevitable as the lines at Pink's down the street. Chefs on their breaks chat with customers about the brisket, an applewood-smoked chunk of beef in a sweet-mustard glaze served with creamy mashed potatoes. Other reasons to use all the napkins on the counter: hickory-smoked baby back ribs, Cajun-crusted Mississippi catfish and Smoky Mountain gumbo served with jalapeño corn bread. Need something sweet? Karo pecan pie. BYOB. (\$\$) Memphis-style Barbecue