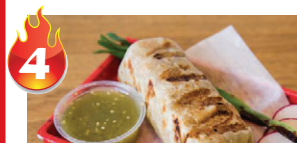




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**DOWNTOWN
 RESTAURANTS
 ARE SIZZLING.
 HERE ARE 7
 STANDOUTS,
 SOME OLD,
 SOME NEW**



SONORATOWN: Chargrilled carne asada and fresh hand-made flour tortillas are the name of the game at this tiny lunchtime eatery that serves tacos, burritos, quesadillas and chimichangas with a Northern Mexico twist. Meats are cooked on a mesquite grill, while a tortilla lady expertly presses the pillowy soft wraps in the back of the restaurant. At 208 E. Eighth St., sonoratownla.com.



LASA: Brothers Chase and Chad Valencia are changing the way L.A. sees Filipino food. Clams are popular here, as is the kinilaw, a plate of toothsome raw rockfish redolent with kalamansi citrus. The Bicol Express, traditionally a homey pork stew, at Lasa is interpreted as a jumble of fried pig tails, with lacy skin and runny fat, set on a pool of rose-gold coconut cream. At 727 N. Broadway or lasa-la.com.



MAJORDOMO: Celebrity chef David Chang opened his first Los Angeles restaurant in January, and it quickly became one of the city's toughest reservations. Expect dishes to share with plenty of Korean influences, seen in plates such as spicy skate fried rice and oysters with kimchi consommé. There's also the show-stopping, \$190 smoked whole short rib. At 1725 Naud St., majordomo.la.

BROKEN SPANISH: Modern Mexican cuisine melds with Southern California ingredients at this upscale eatery from chef Ray Garcia. Located near Staples Center, Garcia prepares dishes like sous-vide octopus with chorizo, chicharon with elephant garlic mojo, a lambneck tamale with oyster mushrooms, and an oxtail and plantain quesadilla. At 1050 S. Flower St., brokenspanish.com.



THE EXCHANGE: A lively spot on the first floor of the Freehand Hotel, the Exchange uses Israeli cuisine as a jumping-off point. Lunch options include a Tunisian sandwich and a chicken schnitzel. At dinner, try the lamb kebab or the grilled sweet potato. Of course, they have hummus, and there is an inspired cocktail list. At 416 W. Eighth St. or freehandhotel.com/los-angeles/the-exchange.

SUSHI GO 55: Little Tokyo is overflowing with places to eat sushi, but there's a reason why Sushi Go 55 has been serving up nigiri and sashimi since 1929. Nestled in the Little Tokyo Galleria, this is a literal hidden gem for any wannabe sushi nerd, whether you're indulging in an omakase meal or just stopping by for happy hour. At 333 S. Alameda St., sushigo55-hub.com.



BAVEL: Ori Menshe and Genevieve Gergis, known for the Italian restaurant Bestia, turned to Middle Eastern fare with Bavel. The Arts District establishment holds variations on the dishes the two ate as children. Appetizers include grilled octopus and oyster mushrooms. Among the entrees are wagyu beef cheek tagine, grilled dorade and slow roasted lamb neck shawarma. At 500 Mateo St. or baveldla.com.