

29

The Grill on the Alley

BEVERLY HILLS

A QUIET CHEER PERVADES this Beverly Hills institution. Studio heads loiter in the booths; grandes dames in hair bands down lunchtime cosmopolitans. The greeting is friendly, the service refreshingly unexcited. The food is just as genuine. Dungeness crab cocktail comes nestled on a bed of ice, the way they used to serve it at Chasen's. The Dover sole *meunière* and the liver and onions are sensational. Try ordering the baby back ribs or the Kobe beef burger off the menu. A cinnamon-dusted rice pudding or a bracing key lime pie makes a fine end of a memorable meal.

» 9560 Dayton Way, Beverly Hills, 310-276-0615 or thegrill.com. ★★

30

Gardens

BEVERLY HILLS

ASHLEY JAMES COOKED IN Bordeaux, Singapore, and Buenos Aires before arriving at the Four Seasons with his intriguing palette of ingredients. More important, he knows the wisdom of restraint. An inspired licorice-roasted John Dory is calibrated just so, and the mushroom couscous with cabernet-candied shallots rounds out the dish. James's menu is rife with nifty salads and soups (banana-coconut-lemongrass is a specialty) and includes a "From the Grill" section of steaks and chops. If the dining room feels too proper, head for the lounge.

» 300 S. Doheny Dr., Beverly Hills, 310-273-2222 or fourseasons.com. ★★

31

Xiomara Melrose

LOS ANGELES

THE BARMAN AT XIOMARA feeds the sugarcane into the juicer. The resulting *mojito* is the best in Los Angeles. Xiomara Ardolina's restaurant conveys the feeling of old Havana: Rugs are scattered with aristocratic nonchalance; the walls sport pictures of the *malecón*, the seawall that surrounds the city. The food exemplifies one of the world's essential multicultural cuisines. *Bacalaitos*, little salt cod fritters, are a nod to the country's Basque and Gallego cultures; *ropa vieja*, shredded duck served over *manchego*-spiked polenta, pairs Italy and Spain; the fried rice with dried shrimp, ham, and ripe plantains illuminates the greatness of Chinese-Cuban cooking. » 6101 Melrose Ave., L.A., 323-461-0601 or xiomararestaurant.com. ★★

32

Jar

WEST HOLLYWOOD

ON THE ONE HAND, THIS IS a chophouse, and Suzanne Tracht's pot roast and Brobdingnagian bone-in pork loin are duly heralded. What elevates Jar, however, are the small dishes: deviled eggs crowned with chunks of crab-meat or the tender calamari salad with a citrusy dressing set off by a chiffonade of mint. The room may be the most handsome—and comfortable—in the city. Brunch is outstanding, from the sticky buns to the pot roast hash. » 8225 Beverly Blvd., West Hollywood, 323-655-6566 or thejar.com. ★★

33

Nishimura

WEST HOLLYWOOD

HIRO NISHIMURA IS A SUSHI chef with groupies. Several years ago they followed him to a garden cottage without a sign across from the Pacific Design Center. The spare all-white interior does not distract. From the periwinkles served in a tiny hand-cast cup to the live scallop sashimi that Nishimura slaps into submission to the Alaskan crab sushi that is broiled to order, the cooking has a pointillistic preci-

sion and an undeniable power.

» 8684 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood, 310-659-4770. ★★

34

Mimosa

LOS ANGELES

AT JEAN-PIERRE BOSCH'S RESTAURANT, you know from the moment the mason jars of olives and cornichons are placed on the table that bistro rituals are understood here. Sautéed foie gras is served with Armagnac-soaked prunes, the fish soup with croutons and rouille

COMME ÇA

WEST HOLLYWOOD

35

DAVID MYERS, who is also the chef-owner of Sona (see #6), explores traditional brasserie food here with his characteristic eye for detail. The goat cheese is rolled in pistachios, giving a pert beetroot salad a sprightly touch; marrowbones are accompanied by a lusty oxtail jam. With white banquettes and a heat-seeking crowd nibbling on *moules frites*, the mood can be giddy, but the food carries weight. » 8479 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood, 323-782-1104 or commecarestaurant.com. ★★



EDMUND BARR