

Angeleno

MODERN LUXURY™
Aug 2008

THE RESTAURANT ISSUE 2008

TO LIVE AND DINE IN L.A.!

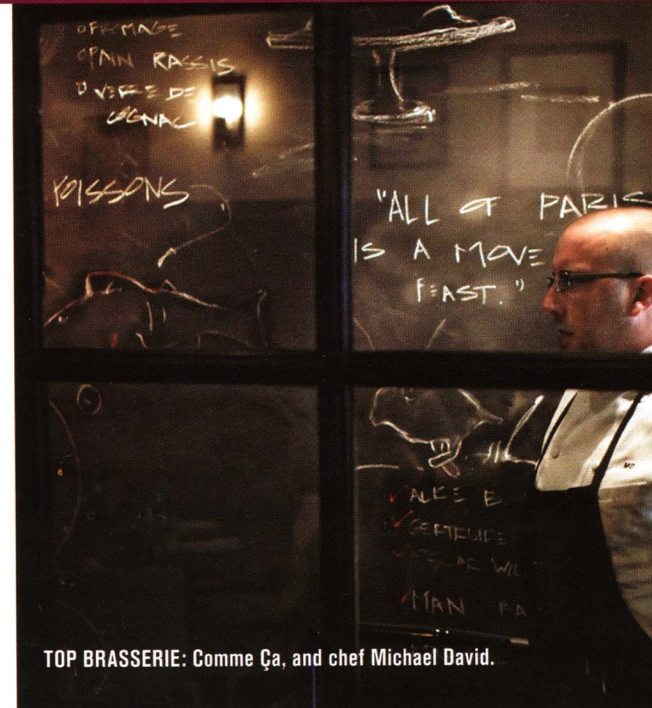
BY BRAD A. JOHNSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ETHAN PINES AND PEDEN + MUNK

WHO'S THE BEST CHEF OF 2008—AND WHY DOES HE HAVE SO FEW DINERS?
WHICH OUT-OF-TOWN TOUQUE SWOOPED IN TO GRAB TOP HONORS?
AND COULD THE BEST WINE SERVICE IN TOWN REALLY BE IN... GLENDALE?

PLUS: THE 50 BEST RESTAURANTS IN LOS ANGELES!

THE SUNSET STRIP'S BLT STEAK grabbed a spot among the city's Top 10 restaurants this year. So did Providence. And pulling off an astounding comeback, Craft has risen to the Top 25. But where are Valentino, Akasha and Paperfish? They all failed to make the list. Surprised? Yeah, well, picking the Top 100 would have been exponentially easier, but whittling it down to the 50 best restaurants for 2008 required tough choices. I dined at more than 250 restaurants in the last 12 months to arrive at these picks. Sadly, some of my favorite go-to spots, like Chateau Marmont, Angeli Caffè and Joan's on Third, similarly fell shy of the cut-off. I wanted to include more options in the Valley, too, but I struck out with almost everything I sampled on that side of the hill. And, yes, I ate at every major sushi restaurant on Ventura, hoping that at least one *omakase* would amaze me, but none did. In explaining this article, it probably helps to clarify what this is not: This is not a ranking of the city's most talented cooks, although it comes close to that. This is not an exploration of smoky noodle cafés in Little Tokyo or greasy barbecue joints in Carson. Nor is this a story about road trips to Monterey Park or to Artesia. For the record, I eat tacos at Cactus Taqueria weekly, and I constantly crave Jitlada's squid salad. But, when all things are considered, those places simply don't rank among the city's 50 best. And that's the point. It takes more than a good cook to make a great restaurant. So, here we have 'em: the absolute best restaurants in Los Angeles for 2008, sliced by Top 10, Top 25 and Top 50.

RUNNER-UP BEST NEW RESTAURANT



TOP BRASSERIE: Comme Ça, and chef Michael David.

If this has been the year of anything in L.A., it has been the year of casual French cuisine. At **Comme Ça**, chef/owner David Myers (Sona, Boule) and chef de cuisine Michael David (also from Sona, and New York's Café Boulud before that) have captured the true flavor of France better than anyone else who's tried. The steak frites are casual perfection, and the sautéed skate wing with brown butter redefines brasserie simplicity. Let the record also show that this was the year a restaurateur actually learned a lesson about noise. When the minimalist, hard-surfaced brasserie opened, the place should have come with a surgeon general's warning about eardrum damage. But recently installed sound absorbers have made dining here much, much more enjoyable. 8479 Melrose Ave., L.A., 323.782.1104, www.commecarestaurant.com. [TOP 50]