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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

## restaurants

## featured restaurant

## warung café



by Elyse Glickman

## Urbaniz-Asian

If you've been downtown lately, you will notice parts of it are a little less "L.A.-like," having been rescued, polished and transformed into arty pockets of sophistication that will remind you of New York's East Village, Chicago's RiverNorth or another city where "urban renewal" has revitalized an area once thought past its prime. One such pocket are the blocks around Spring and Main, where lofts are emerging like wildflowers on the once barren landscape and shops, restaurants and the promise of the better city draws the best and brightest.

One such place is **Warung**, a perfect little spot that represents urban life and fare at its finest. Brought to life by a team lead by visionary owners **Fred Eli** and **Thomas Gilmore**, the clean, arty space enlivened by gallery pieces and smart interiors offers food and beverage menus that are just as brilliantly thought-out. The best place to start is the beverage menu, whose highlight is a Sake page that will turn you into an expert by the end of the evening. The limited, but carefully thought-out selection is broken down into specific categories (**Sparkling, Light & Smooth, Fragrant, Rich, Desert**), each with the brands and their tasting notes clearly spelled out for effortless pairing and sipping. (we loved the Light & Smooth's Sasaichi Junmai and the Fragrant section's Ken Daiginjo). The cocktail section, however, is also stellar, thanks to soju and saki-based concoctions dreamed up by Lisa Vu and her group behind the bar (a soon to be added Espresso martini is perfection, while the signature Soju Lime Cooler—their take on the mojito—is everything you'd want that libation to be, except harsh and too sweet).

When you arrive at the food menu, you'll discover that assembling your meal will be just as much fun as figuring out what you will sip with it beforehand. The chefs do offer up a nifty weekday happy hour (two appetizers and a beverage for \$12) and combination specials. However, given the kitchen's focus on flavor and texture, you are better advised to unleash your inner foodie and work through some of the generous tapas-sized portions, each with their own surprises and spins on the much-done Pan-

hot picks



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HEF

Asian menu.

The meat dishes are excellent (the Filet Mignon even more so, with a velvety taro root mash that will make you forget about potatoes). However, the lighter fare and salads are memorable. On the green side, the Spicy Indian Chicken Salad, Ahi Tuna Tataki Salad and the Papaya and Tofu Salad are all crisp and refreshing. The peanut part of the Peanut Ramen noodles is restrained, so you can taste all the other subtle flavors, as is the Green Curry and Seafood Asian Ceviche. The Black Cod is also a revelation, thanks to a light curry replacing the heavy teriyaki-like preparations of similar dishes. Sauces frame the dishes rather than overpower them. Deserts, likewise, offer a sweet and cleansing finish rather than a blast of sweet.

Although the food is first rate, the service is also something special—attitude-free, attentive and passionate when it comes to recommendations of food and beverage—the kind of fusion more restaurants like this should pay more attention to...

**118 W. 4th Street. Los Angeles, CA 90013. (213) 626-0662**  
[www.warungcafe.com/](http://www.warungcafe.com/)

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### **Ago**

**8478 Melrose Ave. Hollywood. 323.655.6333.** Italian. Although it is mainly known for being owned by Robert DeNiro, the cuisine is noteworthy and reminiscent of traditional Italy. The primarily Tuscan menu includes favorites like flaky monkfish and brick oven pizza. Start with the burrata, which is not on the menu.

### **A.O.C**

**8022 W. 3rd St., Los Angeles. 323.653.6359.** Mediterranean. A wine-and-tapas chic bistro by Suzanne Goin and Caroline Styne (Lucques). Cheeses (daily selection), charcuterie, patés, boudins, lamb skewers, along with other rare French and Mediterranean delicacies. More than 50 wines are offered by the bottle, carafe, and glass.

### **Angelini Osteria**

**7313 Beverly Blvd. Los Angeles 323.297.007.** Italian. You know in the movies when someone walks into an Italian eatery and they are greeted by a maitre D who treats them like long lost family? If you go to Angelini often enough, this eatery (across from El Coyote) is that movie. With rustic and traditional Italian cuisine, chef Gino Angelini creates a neighborhood home. ... One of the best steaks outside of Florence, and don't miss the salt crusted sea bass.

### **Aphrodisiac**

**10351 Santa Monica Blvd. Century City, 310-282-8870.** Burton (Porterhouse Bistro) has created a concept fully dedicated to love and the making of it. While it is a "regular" restaurant with tables, chairs and booths, the most experiential part of the place is the private bedroom- complete with a deep red comforter strewn atop a king size bed and a personal butler who serves an eight-course meal- each course focused around one central theme- aphrodisiacs. You can opt to have the video cameras turned on, documenting your rendezvous for future at-home pleasure. [www.aphrodisiacrestaurant.com](http://www.aphrodisiacrestaurant.com)

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### **The Backyard**

**W Hotel, 930 Hilgard Ave., Westwood, 310.443.8211.** French. The W Hotel's upscale poolside restaurant and bar serving summertime fare for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sip The Backyard's signature cucumber martini, then let the perfectly chilled oysters on the half-shell slither down your throat.

### **Bastide**

**8475 Melrose Place. West Hollywood. 323.651.5950.** French. Undeniably one of the best french restaurants in Los Angeles. True to the extravagance of french cuisine, this prestigious restaurant does not skimp on indulgent extras. If you are in the mood for truffles

