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SPECIAL RESTAURANT ISSUE



ILLUSTRATION BY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES
SHINING EXAMPLE: At *Gracias*, chef Neal Fraser has created a menu that's as stylish and contemporary as the *bières* that lure the young Hollywood crowd — and keeps them coming back.

A new sparkle

L.A.'s restaurant scene hasn't been this alive, this effervescent, since the mid-'80s. *Page 3* • There's a delirious new L.A. look (think fire, water, leather and stone). *Page 5* • A bolder breed of diner. *Page 4* • Great wine in the unlikelyst of places. *Page 8* • A generation of chefs eager to share recipes. *Page 6* • And even a few surprises. (Did you know the cafeteria was invented here?) *Page 7*

A NEW SPARKLE: THE SCENE

This delicious moment

Exciting new restaurants are transforming L.A. dining at every level. There's never been a better time to pull up a chair.

By **S. IRENE VIRBILA**
Times Staff Writer

...Farther west, you'd have to be blind not to notice all the new places cropping up on Beverly Boulevard, West 3rd Street, Melrose Avenue, and Sunset and Hollywood boulevards like mushrooms after a deep rain — Table 8, **Grace**, Opaline, Citrine, Dolce, Cinch and a long string of others.... That generalizing is difficult may be the most encouraging sign. At Sona, David and Michelle Myers, both Patina alums, are proposing intricate tasting menus in a chic, minimalist setting. Chloe in Playa del Rey is a little neighborhood place where two young chefs decided to go it on their own, with a short, seasonal menu and plenty of heart. **With Grace**, Neal Fraser has created a stylish contemporary bistro where a young Hollywood crowd is discovering his brand of contemporary cooking.

Addresses of the moment

Suddenly L.A. is filled with compelling new restaurants and classics that have reinvented themselves in surprising ways. Here are some of the most exciting places right now:

Amuse Café, 796 Main St., Venice; (310) 450-1956. Entrees, \$13 to \$18.

Angelini Osteria, 7313 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles; (323) 297-0070. Entrees, \$20 to \$34.

A.O.C., 8022 W. 3rd St., Los Angeles; (323) 653-6359. Small plates, \$6 to \$13.

Balboa, the Grafton Hotel, 8462 W. Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; (323) 650-8383. Entrees, \$16 to \$39.

Bastide, 8475 Melrose Place, West Hollywood; (323) 651-5950. *Prix fixe* five-course traditional menu, \$80 per person; seven-course seasonal menu,



ANNE CUSACK Los Angeles Times

FINE PAIRING: Wine and cheese go sleek and sophisticated at A.O.C.

\$90; nine-course Bastide menu, \$100.

Chloe, 333 Culver Blvd., Playa del Rey; (310) 305-4505. Entrees, \$18 to \$27.

Cinch Restaurant, 1519 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica; (310) 395-4139. Entrees, \$8 to \$24.

Clementine, 1751 Ensley

Ave., Los Angeles; (310) 552-1080. Sandwiches, \$7.25 to \$9.25.

Dolce Enoteca e Ristorante, 8284 Melrose Ave., Hollywood; (323) 852-7174. Entrees, \$24 to \$36.

EM Bistro, 8256 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles; (323) 658-6004. Entrees, \$14 to \$29.

Falcon, 7213 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; (323) 850-5350. Entrees, \$13 to \$28.

Firefly, 11720 Ventura Blvd., Studio City; (818) 762-1833. Entrees, \$13 to \$24.

Grace, 7360 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles; (323) 934-4400. Entrees, \$16 to \$30.

Jar, 8225 Beverly Blvd., Beverly Center; (323) 655-6566. Entrees, \$18 to \$30.

Joan's on Third, 8350 W. 3rd St., Los Angeles; (323) 655-2285. Sandwiches, \$7.95 to \$9.95.

Le Dome, 8720 W. Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; (310) 659-6919. Entrees, \$22 to \$60.

Maple Drive, 345 N. Maple Drive, Beverly Hills; (310) 274-9800. Entrees, \$15 to \$31.

Noé, Omni Los Angeles Hotel, 251 S. Olive St., Los Angeles; (213) 356-4100. Entrees, \$18 to \$32; six-course tasting menu, \$65; nine-course

tasting menu, \$95.

Opaline, 7450 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles; (323) 857-6725. Entrees, \$16 to \$28.

Paladar, 1651 Wilcox Ave., Hollywood; (323) 465-7500. Entrees, \$16 to \$23.

Patina, Walt Disney Concert Hall, 141 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles; (213) 972-3331. Entrees, \$30 to \$40. Chef's table, \$100 per person; four-course early seating, \$85; ocean menu, \$85.

Rocca, 1432-A 4th St., Santa Monica; (310) 395-6765. Entrees, \$11 to \$19.

Sona, 401 N. La Cienega Blvd., West Hollywood; (310) 659-7708. Entrees, \$20 to \$36; six-course tasting menu, \$69; nine-course menu spontané, \$99.

Table 8, 7661 Melrose Ave., Hollywood; (323) 782-8258.



ALEXANDER GALLARDO Los Angeles Times

ANYTHING GOES: The mood and the food are eclectic and experimental at Sona.

Entrees, \$18 to \$27.

Urasawa, 218 Via Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills; (310) 247-8939. Minimum \$250 per person. Reservations required.

Valentino, 3115 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica; (310) 829-4313. Entrees, \$18 to \$34; chef's tasting menu, \$85.



CARLOS CHAVEZ Los Angeles Times

REINVENTED: Heat from the competition fueled Maple Drive's recent transformation.