http://chef.dormbox.com/?location=los-angeles

Los Angeles, CA

Wanting to cook it up in Los Angeles, California? Culinary schools and programs are in the dozens in the City of Angels. Nevertheless, only Culinary Connection gets you in on the action, gaining a real world culinary education while also making those oh so valuable connections by apprenticing in a real, professional restaurant, under the guided instruction of a master chef.

With no shortage of celebrity chef restaurants, seven by Wolfgang Puck alone, LA is West Coast’s sprawling center for basically anything ranging from gourmet food truck fare to authentic fine-dining to walks on the wilder side. Home of a very sizable Chinatown, Korea Town, Little Armenia, Little Ethiopia and with tacos basically being the go-to food for the masses, there are restaurants to fit any budget and culinary persuasion aplenty. What is perhaps surprising about LA, is that fact that in a city that’s full of aspiring actors, Hollywood heavies, artistes and industry-folk, there’s a downright craving for soul, whether that means resurrecting long-forgotten dishes, Old World fare, or crafting cuisine that sates the appetite in a whole new way.

Young, hip, meat-centric chefs, Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo of Animal, take a counter-culture approach to feeding people in a city that has no shortage of vegans or vegetarians. As the name suggests, Animal really is a testament to meat, celebrating it with gusto. Shook and Dotolo cook up dishes like Crispy Pig Head, Beef Heart and Veal Brains as well as the very rich, traditionally Quebecois *poutine*, made of french fries, gravy and cheese curd. Though they offer slightly more traditional dishes as well, this duo exemplifies just how open-minded the laid-back, food-forward culture in LA can be.

Santa Monica native Chef Andrew Kirschner of Tar and Roses specializes in small plates with a focus on cooking in a big wood-burning stove that switches from almond to walnut to apple, olive and oak wood, depending on the day (or hour). “Snacks” include dishes like sweet and smoky Balsamic Glazed Ribs with fried basil, popped corn with crisp bacon, brown sugar and chili as well as Wood Fired Manila Clams. Small and large offerings include Korean Style Steak Tartar with quail egg and grilled bread, Wooded Roasted Half Chicken with squash, farro and rapini bread salad and something called the Shellfish Pot of Scallops, Clams, Mussels, Shrimp with Maitake and Curry.

Just steps away from Venice Beach, Chef Bobo of Piccolo, serves up authentic Venetian, as in Venetian Italian cuisine in what has been referred to as a “hole in the wall” in one of the hippest areas in LA. Offerings include a Venison Carpaccio with marinated shimeshi and grappa-blueberry emulsion and Crispy Veal Sweetbread Burger with quail egg, polenta, shaved truffle and marsala as well as Pan-Seared Pheasant Breast, rolled with roast chestnuts and speck. The Chef’s special “In Bobo we Trust” menu offers a choice of four, six or ten-course guided tours of Cucina di Venezia.

Chef Michael Voltaggio, Top Chef Winner and previous Chef de Cuisine of the celebrated Bazaar by José Andrés, has set up shop in trendy West Hollywood. The menu is decidedly artful, slick and experimental though not too haute for LA. In a town that’s almost played out the whole “tattooed chef thing” his small plates, geared towards mixing and matching, are thoughtful and fun. Foams made of mushrooms, dehydrated potatoes and other modernist leanings combine with risottos, lardo and other Italian, Spanish or otherwise European classics, making for a cuisine that is very much geared towards the yearnings of an eclectic set of patrons, while offering depth and that ever-elusive thing called memorability.

Los Angeles is susceptible when it comes to buying into the hype. Because of this, celebrity chefs and wild and crazy innovators may see some degree of success the moment they open their doors. But give them one or two years and those that were little more than pure hype will have disappeared only to be replaced by a dozen more, touting the next version of the next cool thing. Staying power requires passion and a feel for the unique and various cultures that are LA while also knowing how to give people what they want even when they don’t know exactly what that is. Sounds like the perfect challenge to you? Then you need to be part of a culinary program that will get you connected. The competition is rife but the motley array of culture, people and great resources when it comes to food and inspiration can help anyone who wants to become a chef and who has the talent and passion it takes, see their way to the top. Furthermore, even though LA is massive and very spread-out, the food culture really is one where everyone knows virtually everyone else. New chefs and food industry professionals would be smart to get in and tap in to the restaurant food scene, absorbing what is distinctively LA beyond the momentary buzz.