

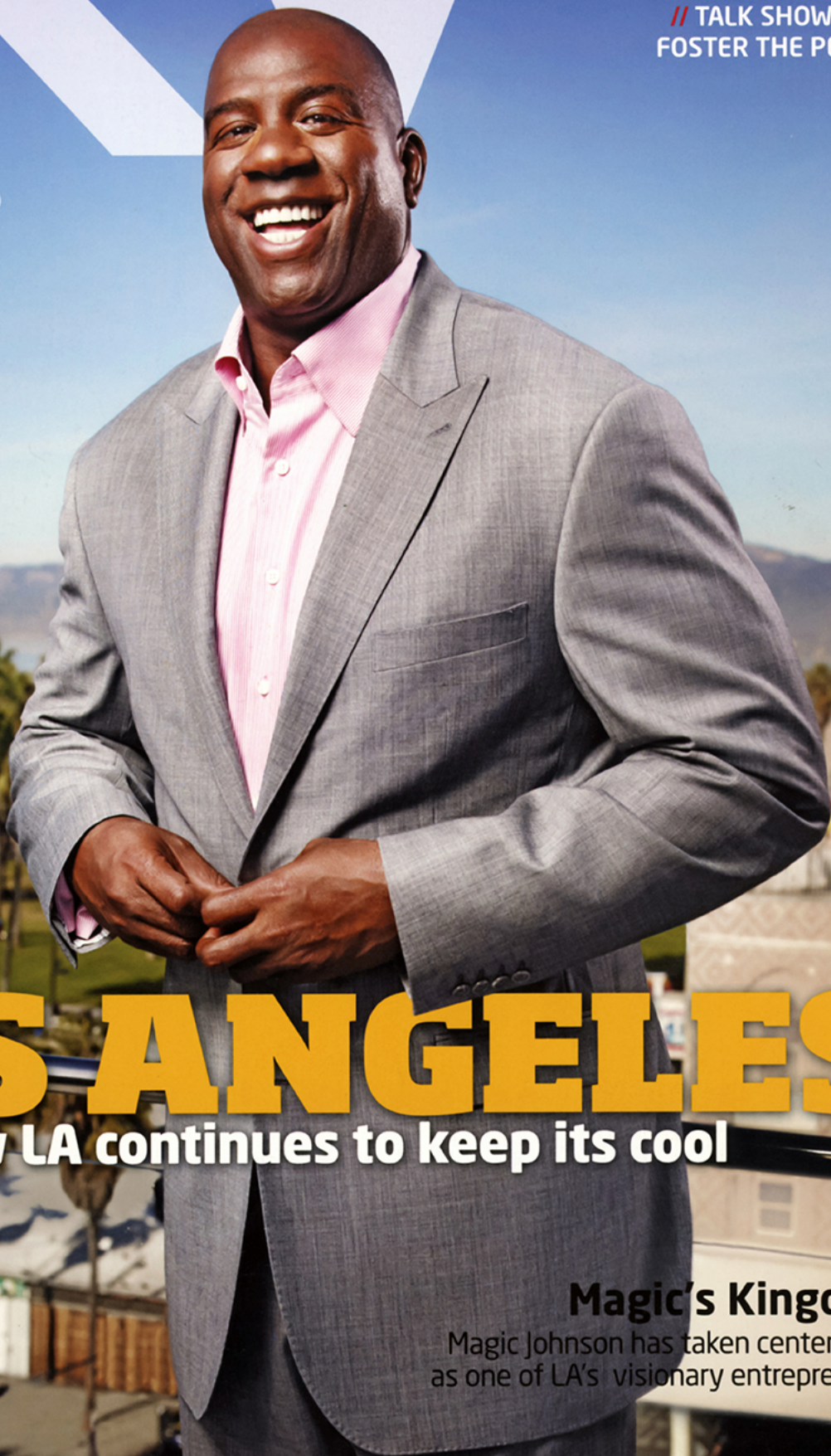
# SKY

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FOSTER THE PEOPLE



# LOS ANGELES

How LA continues to keep its cool

## Magic's Kingdom

Magic Johnson has taken center court as one of LA's visionary entrepreneurs

# What's HOT *in* LA NOW

*Chefs in residence. Artisanal cocktails made with homemade bitters and small-batch spirits. La Cienega. Paddling trips down the Los Angeles River (yes, it can be done). Fashion by Kelly Wearstler and the last days of "Pacific Standard Time." Los Angeles has long been a sparkling patchwork of cool, and today is no exception.*

BY ERIC HISS AND JAMES BARTLETT



# A **Spirited** Cocktail Scene

*Downtown LA has found the perfect recipe for a cocktail renaissance.*

PHOTOS:  
JESSICA  
SAMPLE

Start with one part urban renewal, add two parts dedicated mixologist and a dash of LA sizzle and what do you get? The perfect recipe for the cocktail renaissance currently underway in Downtown Los Angeles. Perhaps nowhere else in the vast 400-square-mile expanse of the City of Angels does the cocktail scene have so much panache than near its historic core, just a shaker's throw from high-profile developments such as L.A. Live and the Staples Center.

While you might find bars pouring tempting drinks all over the city, from Hollywood to Venice, the concentration of

establishments here serving craft cocktails rendered from freshly squeezed juices and artisanal bitters and favoring small-batch distillers gives Downtown a cocktail cred that no other area of the city can really match. "There's a certain group of people here who take this very seriously, and it shows," says Steve Livigni, former manager of The Doheny and now a spirits consultant and director of operations for two other well-known area nightlife impresarios, Jonnie and Mark Houston. "Downtown, it's about the religion of cocktail."

► An early vanguard in the LA artisanal cocktail scene,

**The Doheny** opened in the historic Petroleum Building in 2008 and was a favorite of Downtown denizens due to the care and creativity poured into every drink. It's now closed, but the equally celebrated **Caña Rum Bar** has since opened in the same space, and it shares its predecessor's dedication to craft, as well as its owner, Cedd Moses, the man many insiders credit for raising the bar (so to speak) for the Downtown cocktail scene. "His places are all cocktail-driven," Livigni says. "That means he does things like train people properly, support small, hand-crafted brands and take his people

on trips so they learn how things are done in other cocktail hot spots."

► Another venerated cocktail location, especially among whiskey aficionados, is **Seven Grand**. Heading up the dimly lit stairway of its century-old building, you enter a bygone era with the vibe of an exclusive men's club: stuffed deer heads, dark wood paneling and antique pool tables. The mussed-haired hipster seated next to the suited banker will bring you back to the present, but what will really catch your eye are the chalkboards with their prodigious lists of whiskies and cocktails. Drinks are an art form here—all



The faces and drinks behind Downtown LA's burgeoning cocktail culture: ❶ Seven Grand's Pedro Shanahan shows off his killer mohawk—and tasty Old Fashioned ❷ Más Malo, a mecca for spicy cocktail lovers ❸ Meal or mixed drink? Rivera's Barbacoa, with Del Maguy mescal, lime, ginger, chipotle and beef jerky ❹ Caña Rum Bar's 28 Days Later, in all its tiki-mint glory ❺ Mixologist Robert Luna of Más Malo invented the Piñata Smash, a blend of tequila, serrano chili, cilantro, pineapple, lime juice and agave nectar ❻ Caña Rum Bar's Rum and Coco Water, courtesy of bartender Allan ❼ A Manhattan, Seven Grand-style ❽ WP24's Ginger Crisp, as refreshing as it is potent ❾ Drinking up at Más Malo.

the syrups and bitters are handmade, the juices freshly squeezed and the whiskey plentiful. This is the place to order an Old Fashioned, Manhattan or Whiskey Sour. Just don't ask for anything made with an energy drink. And if you love whiskeys such as rye and bourbon, be sure to check out monthly tastings led by "Spirit Guide" Pedro Shanahan.

▶ A walk downstairs from Seven Grand takes you not just to another establishment, but to what feels like a different continent—one that imbibes spicy tequilas and earthy mescals. Welcome to **Más Malo**, the year-old sibling of

the popular Malo restaurant in the trendy Silver Lake neighborhood. Instead of Old World traditions and classic cocktails, Más Malo mixes it up with flavors such as serrano chili, horchata and agave syrup combined with premium tequila and mescal. The cocktail musings of executive chef and mixologist Robert Luna reflect his Mexican roots and his youth growing up on LA's Eastside. A case in point is the potent Piñata Smash, a spicy send-up of the traditional margarita with reposado tequila, serrano chili, pineapple, cilantro and fresh lime juice. "Imagine a birthday party in East LA with 30 kids whacking

a piñata and it suddenly opens," Luna says. "The drink is supposed to remind you of that playfulness—and the surprise—when you go from the sweetness of the pineapple to the bite of the chili."

▶ Heading south, celebrated chef John Sedlar's **Rivera** has been taking Latin cuisine to superlative heights since it opened three years ago. An extra bonus for diners is a cocktail menu that is just as *magnifico*. Kitchen-fresh cocktails are made with small-batch premium spirits—such as the Barbacoa (with premium Del Maguy mescal, fresh lime, ginger, chipotle and a garnish

of beef jerky). The results have not gone unnoticed—Rivera was recently tapped by *Food & Wine* magazine as one of the 50 best bars in the country.

▶ Another high point of any cocktail foray Downtown is the Asian-finessed drinks at **WP24**, located on the 24th floor of the Ritz-Carlton hotel. Wolfgang Puck's kitchen here serves up high-concept adventures in Asian cuisine, while his brother, Klaus, does the same with the cocktail menu. This is the place to pair your chili dumplings with the Ginger Crisp, a cocktail made with sake, Chambord vodka, lime and ginger sugar —E. H.



HOT:

## La Cienega

▶ The stretch of North La Cienega between Melrose Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard is a treasure trove for design lovers.

There's long-running Dragonette, Hollyhock, Mecox Gardens and The Collection. But newcomers have hit the strip, too. New Yorker **Todd Alexander Romano** has made a splash with his color-rich home furnishings, and interiors whiz **Barclay Butera** has relocated from La Brea. The latest big news is the opening of **Harbinger** from heavy hitters Joe Lucas and Parrish Chilcoat (above). [harbingerla.com](http://harbingerla.com)





## Pacific Standard Time

This \$10 million celebration of the eclectic, postwar arts scene in Southern California—underwritten by the Getty Center—has been running in city galleries and museums since October. Check out its range of LA pop art, modernist architecture and beyond while you still have a chance. [pacificstandardtime.org](http://pacificstandardtime.org)



## Kelly Wearstler

She has wowed the interior design world with her colorful and graphic-packed retro chic. Next up for this style setter? An eponymous fashion-cum-lifestyle emporium on Melrose Avenue featuring color-splattered dresses, fabulous jewelry and more, in a glamorous setting. [kellywearstler.com](http://kellywearstler.com)



# Collaborative Chefs

Shared kitchens are now one of the hottest ingredients on Los Angeles menus.

As fickle as celebrity hairstyles, the Los Angeles food scene has a reputation for being notoriously trendy. But get the right people with a passion for an idea involved and what starts out as an anomaly can become a full-blown movement (just look at the city's food truck scene). So it is with the latest trend, which is standing conventional kitchen wisdom on its head by tossing the old axiom "Too many cooks..." into the food processor and coming up with an entirely new take: the collaborative kitchen.

Conventional wisdom

improvised restaurant milieu has multiple influences, including the ad hoc creativity of the food truck phenomenon and the here-today-gone-next-week pop-up restaurant trend that burst on the scene five years ago with **Ludo Lefebvre's** celebrated stint at Breadbar. Local chefs also cite another crucial point when this new wave really reached a high-water mark: the four-month foodie nirvana that was Test Kitchen, where high-profile chefs such as **Michael Voltaggio, Neal Fraser** and **Alain Giraud** were not only working side by side in the temporary venue, but actively collaborating on dishes and ideas.

One of the most memorable recent manifestations of this unconventional camaraderie came last November, when three area restaurants chosen for *Esquire's* "Best New Restaurants 2011" didn't respond by flicking raspberry coulis at one another, but decided to join forces. During an amazing three-week run on consecutive Monday nights, the four chefs associated with the restaurants designed menus together and cooked in each other's kitchens. **Kris Morningstar** from Ray's & Stark Bar, **John Rivera Sedlar** of Playa and Sotto's **Steve Samson** and **Zach Pollack** pulled



off a culinary hat trick that each night was a playful fusion of their kitchens' propensities and each chef's personal cachet. For instance, at Sedlar's Playa, known for its traditional Latin flavors upended by modern surprises, Morningstar's braised rabbit leg drizzled in chestnut-chili sauce and paired with aged Nantes carrots served on a plate embellished with a Dia de los Muertos skull design was a big favorite.

"The whole pop-up, Test Kitchen collaboration trend has been a very healthy thing for Los Angeles," Morningstar says. "It's like an all-star game—it still matters, but everyone is there to have fun. I can focus on my dish, but if another chef like John or Zach needs a hand, I can pop over and help them out."

Across town in Santa Monica, **Andrew Kirschner** is eyeing the shared kitchen trend at his newly opened eatery, Tar & Roses. The restaurant's quirky name is inspired by the typical notes of nebbiolo wine, which hints at the locale's focus on modern interpretations of rustic cuisine from Italy, Spain and France. And although the veteran chef proudly says the wood-fired oven is the "heart and soul"



**Chilaquiles alla Sarda**—lamb tongue, salsa verde and egg—prepared by **Steve Samson** and **Zach Pollack** at Playa for a collaborative dinner inspired by *Esquire*.

says this isn't possible: No domain is considered as sacred as a professional chef's kitchen. But this wouldn't be the first time LA's appetite for the unconventional spawned something new.

The city's shared and





**Chefs collaborating in the Los Angeles food world:** 1 Kris Morningstar of Ray's and Stark Bar, who has worked with other LA kitchen wizards 2 Test Kitchen veteran Michael Voltaggio 3 Grilled pork meatballs from Sotto 4 Andrew Kirschner from Tar & Roses, who has plans to team up with other area chefs 5 Vietnamese sausage from Blue Cow 6 The "Esquire team": Steve Samson, Kris Morningstar, Zach Pollack and John Rivera Sedlar 7 Jet Tila, who ran the popular pop-up kitchen Bistrionomics at Breadbar with partner Alex Ageneau.

of his kitchen, it could also benefit from visiting hands. Kirschner, who previously stinted at Venice's much-loved Joe's Restaurant and will be a guest chef himself there next month, is considering inviting an eclectic roster of top local chefs to cook at Tar & Roses in the upcoming months.

Downtown LA's Blue Cow puts yet another spin on the concept, fusing the food-lab creativity of Test Kitchen with collaborations between both outside chefs and local suppliers. Case in point: Before opening last month, the

restaurant put out a call to some chef friends who had been showing interest in contributing ideas. Chef **Jason Travi** (of Culver City's Fraiche) answered the call by spending a month on a Blue Cow sausage sabbatical, perfecting dozens of ideas into several high-concept creations. One of the most popular results is Wild Turkey, a house-made sausage with a pillowy consistency and an earthy, boozy flavor made from organic turkey, caramelized onions and Wild Turkey bourbon.

Cultural mashups are

also on the menu in the collaborative kitchen, and perhaps no one represents that better than LA native **Jet Tila**, who grew up in the city's Thai Town neighborhood. Now helming the kitchen at Las Vegas' Wazuzu restaurant, Tila also partners in pop-up with French chef **Alex Ageneau**. Together, they're running LA-based Bistrionomics, which is serving up "Frasian" cuisine that had local foodies buzzing this past spring with a popular stint at Third Street's Breadbar, the site of Chef Levebvre's seminal

sessions. Lucky locals who got into the cozy space dined on entrées such as grilled lamb chops served with kumquat yogurt and a carrot confit.

"For us, the statement is seasonal, affordable and casual yet fine dining," Tila says. "We think you can do three-star Michelin technique without crushing wallets."

Tila and Ageneau are now planning a brick and mortar operation where an open kitchen will also be encouraged. It's another sign that this is one LA trend that's here to stay. —E.H.

## UNCOMMON EXPLORATIONS

You can snowboard, ski, scuba, surf and sunbathe on the same day in the LA area—if you have lots of time, money and energy. But here are a few Los Angeles experiences that are truly unique.



### Saddle Up!

Everyone in LA has heard of this. Every night of the week, "The Sunset Dinner Ride" saddles up 20-plus riders for a scenic jaunt through Griffith Park to a Mexican restaurant for dinner before your ride back in the dark. [sunsetranchhollywood.com](http://sunsetranchhollywood.com)

### Accomplice: Hollywood

Produced by Neil Patrick Harris, this game/tour/show takes you on a scavenging journey in groups through Hollywood as, with only scraps of information, you follow the clues offered by mysterious cast members in a quest to find the missing movie star. [accomplicetheshow.com](http://accomplicetheshow.com)

### Get On Your Bike!

The paint's barely dry on the bright green 1½-mile bike lane on Spring Street in hip Downtown, but if you prefer to cycle when the city's all lit up at night, Midnight Ridazz leads regular trips all over town. [downtownbicycles.com](http://downtownbicycles.com), [midnightridazz.com](http://midnightridazz.com)



### Fly High

Forget a helicopter: How about a ride in a 275-horsepower WWII-style biplane? You'll be in the front seat wearing classic pilot's goggles and can fly out over the bay or head Downtown. [blackandwhitebiplane.com](http://blackandwhitebiplane.com)