



end with earthy tomatoes and poached pear. Service is exemplary at every level—the sommelier might even pour each beer instead of wine with your cheese course. 225 N. Geary St., Beverly Hills, 310.860.7600; montagueriville.com.

TOP 28 Nancy Silverton and Mark Buxat reinvented pizza, and now their pies—served bubbling hot from

the wood-burning oven at **Pizzeria Mozza**—have become the standard by which all others are rightfully judged. Anyone who disagrees obviously hasn't tasted the pizza that gets topped with house-made leavened sausage and cream (paired with a fine Aglianico from Campania). The pizzas are now only one minute each day, and on Tuesday it's the finest duck confit for miles. 641 N. Highland Ave., L.A., 323.297.0100; mozza-la.com.

TOP 29 There was a massive chef shakeup a couple months ago at **Craft**, but maybe it's a sign of Tom Colicchio's singular vision and ultra-tight rein that there was hardly a dip in the quality of the farmhouse-style small-plate menu (cream and feta burrata or the steel overboiled with egg). And with 58 sabbles of things like citrus tuna with Casa Cava orange and mint, or pig's head terrine with salsa verde,

the adjoining **Craftbar** has become a destination in its own right. 10300 Camarillo Blvd., Century City, 310.278.1100; craftbarangeles.com.

TOP 26 It takes a chef-crit to pair cuisine with weapons or lamb bacon with pink snapper, but David Letts makes delicious combinations like these seem very conventional at **The Hungry Cat**, the mini-club-

I'm in a Cult, Get Me Outta Here!

Have we all been brainwashed, or are these places really that good?

| | Umami Burger 850 S. La Brea Ave., 323.931.3000; umamiburger.com | Kogi Taco Truck Two units (Daly and Venice) moving.citypeople.togoblog.com | Jiltada 5233 Sunset Blvd., 323.663.3004 jiltadacaliforniafood.com |
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| THE CULT | | | |
| THE BAIT | <i>Nothing but burgers, five and a-half steps—and something ingenious called the "5th step"</i> | <i>Tacos and burritos stuffed with Kansas BBQ and house-made, served in the elite Tostitos!</i> | <i>Sauces that exist in a dimension that others call the "heat" that restaurant in America</i> |
| THE REALITY | <i>The burgers are, arguably, surprisingly delicious and worth every second of their hype.</i> | <i>Truck-queuing can be fun, but this weird fusion food scene great only where you're drunk.</i> | <i>Have you ever reached your tongue to feel heat? If so, and you want to do it again, you'll love it.</i> |

BEST NEW CHEF

← | **Steven Fretz**

XIV

Although the sign above the ivy-covered, Philippe Stark-designed façade says "a Michael Mina restaurant," the famous San Francisco-based chef/partner is quick to admit that the guy really responsible for writing and executing the menus at this chandelier- and candelabra-stuffed chateau is longtime protégé turned rising star chef Steven Fretz. OK, sure, the original concept (which forced everyone to agree upon a dozen miniature dishes and create a multicourse degustation) fell flat. But the problem never stemmed from Fretz's inspired American cooking, which has been stellar from the start. And, thankfully, what tasted great in miniature now tastes even better as full-blown appetizers and entrées: tuna tartare with ancho chile and pears, porcini risotto with preserved lemon, tapioca-crusting snapper with white soy vinaigrette, and pan-roasted pork loin paired with crispy braised pork belly and pea tendrils.

8117 Sunset Blvd., L.A., 323.656.1414; michelminasac.com. **TOP 26**



RUNNER-UP, BEST NEW CHEF

Travis Lett

GJELINA

To get a sense of what this local, reclaimed-wood-paneled restaurant with mismatched chairs is all about, finagle a table on the patio, then take a whiff. That's the intoxicating aroma of Travis Lett's wood-burning oven. Now peer through the kitchen window. He's the handsome one with messy blond hair, and the soul-searcher he's fixating over probably came from the farmer's market. Momentarily, you'll be devouring those mushrooms atop rustic toast slathered with crème fraîche. An awesome lamb sausage pizza pairs as well with a can of Tecate as it does with a bottle of Paul Dolan Zinfandel. At luncheon, there's an incredible BLT with a fried egg in the middle. 1429 Abbot Kinney Blvd., Venice, 310.450.1429; gjelina.com. **TOP 60**