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**FOOD & DRINK** 

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L.A. Story: A Foodie's Guide The Los Angeles restaurant scene has all the buzz of a Weinstein premiere. Bäco Mercat chef Josef Centeno gives us a tour.



Updated Jan. 30, 2014 7:24 p.m. ET AS I BITE INTO a slice of warm zucchini bread smothered with

cherry, limequat and plum preserve at Valerie in Los Angeles's Grand Central Market, a sharp-suited man in shiny Berluti brogues picks up

STREET JOURNAL

By JEMIMA SISSONS

his morning flat white and quinoa muffin. At a nearby taco stand, some builders are devouring pork tacos smothered with fiery hot sauce. Two L.A.s converging under one roof. Long a foodie mecca, the city has in recent years become a force to be reckoned with. The charge is being led by a group of young chefs who have opened up affordable, experimental restaurants in once-

"Los Angeles is experiencing a revolution in terms of its dining scene," says Cathy Chaplin, author of "Food Lovers' Guide to Los Angeles." "Not just with regards to the diversity and range of restaurants and cuisines available, but also in terms of residents' willingness to step outside their comfort zones."

**Grand Central Market** PHOTOS: A FOODIE'S PARADISE (317 S. Broadway; grandcentralmarket.com), near Downtown's notorious Skid Row, is the perfect place to kick off a tour of this new food



signature sandwich, filled with soft-shell crab, beef-tongue schnitzel or lamb meatball (from \$9/€7)—was followed in 2012 by the low-key Mexican restaurant Bar Amá (118 W. 4th St.) and, last October, Orsa & Winston (122 W. 4th St.), a Japanese-focused place. "There are two sides of L.A.," Mr. Centeno says as we devour a piece of signature Blum's coffee crunch cake (whole cake from \$45), at

PRODUCE

guisados.co), where the tortillas are made fresh daily and the toppings are slow-braised.

and the other. Those who eat and those who don't eat. The people

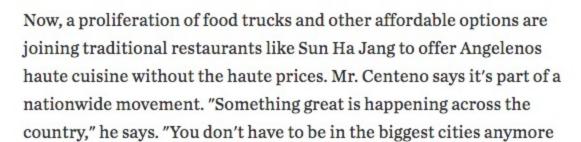
The next 48 hours prove him right as we set off on a food-fueled tour

that will take us from the Pacific to the Hollywood Hills. Our second

stop is **Guisados** in Central L.A.'s Echo Park (1261 W. Sunset Blvd.;



Koreatown. Sun Ha Jang (4032 W. Olympic Blvd.) has been an institution in the city for 25 years—one of the few places where you can get authentic Korean roast duck (\$54 for four). When the order arrives, our table groans with the sizzling slices of duck and the little pots of chive, pickled onion, sprouts, pickled radish and steamed cabbage that accompany it. Advertisement tor.com<sup>®</sup> real estate in real time



between," says Mr. Centeno, a native Texan who trained in New York

at Daniel and Les Celebrites before moving to California. "There was

a demographic in L.A. that just wasn't being tapped into—a lot of the

younger crowd could only afford ethnic food."

to get the best food."

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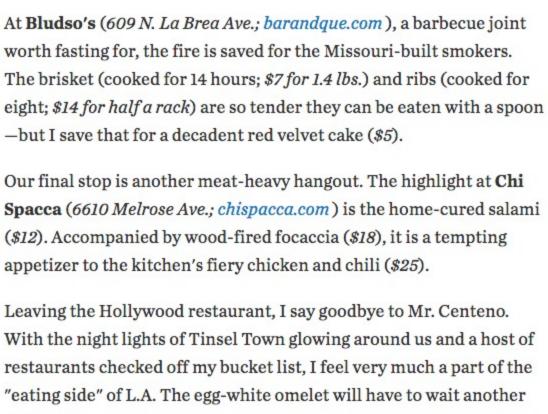
Guisados **LOS ANGELES** Sun Ha Jang Grand entral Market Lukshon

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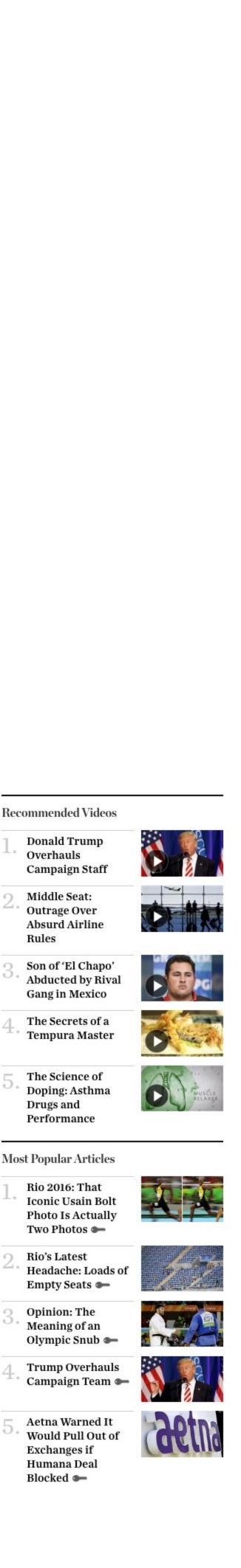
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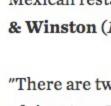
Curtis Stone's

Recipe for Grilled

Lamb Chops With

Herbed Labneh







forgotten neighborhoods like Echo Park and Silverlake.

scene. Built in 1917 and once a trinket and tacos affair, the market is slowly transforming into a place that offers gourmet cheeses and organic cold-My guide through the food-packed lanes is chef Josef Centeno, who opened his first stand-alone restaurant here three years ago. Bäco

Valerie (valerieconfections.com). "The zero-carb, egg-white side,

who eat are definitely now taking over."

bearing names like Battle Point, Malagash and Hurricane Islandmore Robert Louis Stevenson than Central L.A. (1637 Silverlake Blvd.; leoysterbar.com)

On the way to Koreatown, we make a pit stop at **Scoops** (712 N.

Hollywood, at 11:30 a.m.-the perfect time, it turns out, for a salty

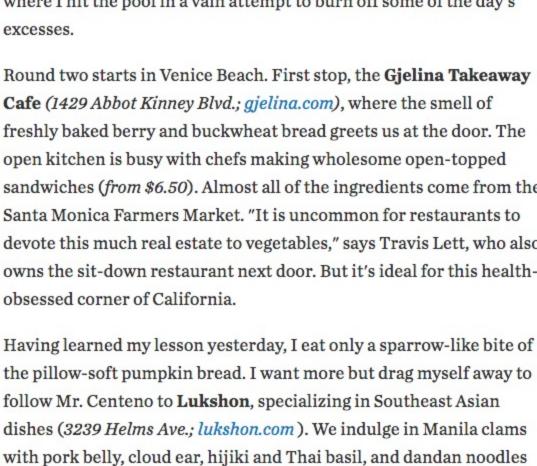
After a short drive, Mr. Centeno pulls into a nondescript strip mall in

avocado and rum and peanut butter curry taster (\$3 a scoop).

Heliotrope Dr.), a forward-thinking ice cream joint in East

Rosemead, CA Beds Bath "L.A. restaurants used to be high-end or ethnic. There was nothing in

L&E Oyster bar: Seafood and small plates in Silverlake NOAH WEBB FOR THE WALL STREET



dancing with fiery Sichuan peppers.

With the clock ticking, we move on-but not very far, at least in culinary terms. Kris Yenbamroong's Night + Market (9041 Sunset Blvd.; thenightmarket.blogspot.com) offers Asian cuisine with a country market twist and a ramped-up chili kick. My request for extra spice is granted with an off-the-scale crispy rice salad with spicy sour pork (\$35 for three courses).

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