



Must Read: Cathy Chaplin's Food Lovers' Guide to L.A.

Plus, Chaplin's Top 10 Must Tastes

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I'm almost embarrassed to admit that I've only been reading Cathy Chaplin's [Gastronomy Blog](#) for a year. It's where Chaplin, a native Californian, has documented her dining excursions throughout L.A. and beyond since 2006. Her

enthusiasm for food and culture coupled with a knack for getting to the crux of every dish's *raison d'être* has led me to comb through the site's archives in an effort to catch up. It's no wonder a publisher picked her to lead us on a tour of this city, which, if we're being honest, thinks first with its stomach.

Buckle up, the [Food Lovers' Guide to Los Angeles](#) includes over 300 pages of recommendations, reviews, and recipes. Set to be released on Tuesday, December 17, it's my guide to dining out in L.A. in 2014.

As a teaser, we asked Chaplin to share her **10 must-eats in L.A. right now**. Here's her list:

① [Noodle Boy](#), Rosemead

From the bounce of the noodles to the spring of the wontons, it's clear that there is an expert behind the stoves. Order the wonton noodle soup, which comes with four wontons chock-full of shrimp and a choice of egg noodles, wide rice noodles, or thin vermicelli.

② [Mumbai Ki Galliyan Se](#), Artesia

This is the only restaurant in Los Angeles specializing in the street foods of Mumbai. The completely vegetarian menu lists close to 100 dishes including specialties from South India and Punjab, and even Indochinese fusion. Order the *dabeli*, a slider of sorts stuffed with potato patties laced with *masala* (a spicy mix of chilies, cumin, and cinnamon), onions, green grapes, peanuts, and pomegranate seeds in between buttered and toasted buns.

③ [The Serving Spoon](#), Inglewood

A full-service diner serving Southern classics in a brightly lit and energetic room. Cookie's Wings & Waffle features well-seasoned chicken, expertly fried and outstandingly juicy, served with a cinnamon-dusted waffle that hits an intriguing savory note. The flavors here are rounded and harmonious—a thrilling combination of sweet, salty, and umami.

④ [Bestia](#), Downtown

Everything about Bestia—the food, the energy, the room, the service—is simply the best. Every dinner here should start with an order of the Ventrigli di Pollo Rosolati, also known as the tenderest chicken gizzards known to man. Pan-roasted and paired with roasted beets, Belgian endive, and aged capra sarda cheese, the *ventrigli* are like no other gizzards in town.

⑤ **Pho Filet, South El Monte**

While the filet mignon that comes standard with every bowl is a cut above the rest, it's Linh Phuong Nguyen's unparalleled broth that distinguishes her product from the dozens of *pho* hawkers in town. Beef bones are carefully simmered to yield a rich broth that is as clear as it is flavorful. An underlying sweetness, as well as a rush of cinnamon and anise, adds further complexity to the soup.

⑥ **Ma Dang Gook Soo, Koreatown**

Comfort cuisine reigns supreme at this charming den of Korean home cooking. The most alluring dish on the menu is the namesake *kal gook soo*, steaming bowls of knife-cut noodles served in a chicken, clam, anchovy, or *kimchi* (fermented cabbage) broth. The soup's subdued flavors allow for the irregularly edged and toothsome noodles to soak up the spotlight.

⑦ **Patisserie Chantilly, Lomita**

Chef Keiko Nojima's French pastries with a Japanese flair are nothing short of spectacular. While every dessert lining the pastry counter is impeccable, it's the black sesame cream puff that really hits it out of the ballpark. Each one is filled to order with black sesame-flavored whipped cream, drizzled with honey, and sprinkled with soy powder. The intense and pure flavor that Chef Nojima is able to extract from the black sesame seeds is incredible.

⑧ **Old Sasoon Bakery, Pasadena**

The first thing you'll notice when walking into the store is just how good the place smells. Freshly baked breads and pastries perfume the air both inside and outside the shop. The ambiance is homey, yet efficient. On your first visit to Old Sasoon, come and order the *khachapuri*, a Georgian breakfast staple composed of a boat-shaped flatbread topped with a blend of cheeses, one or two runny eggs, and a few pats of melted butter (an original Sasoon touch).

⑨ **Lucky Noodle King, San Gabriel**

No one executes the regional specialties of Sichuan quite like this spot, home to the best *dan dan mian* in town. Each bowl is mounded with fresh noodles and ground seasoned pork. A biting yet creamy sauce ties everything together, making the *dan dan* noodles here an event.

⑩ **Cemitas Poblanas Don Adrian, Van Nuys**

It takes a massive jaw and a serious appetite to conquer a *cemita poblana*, a beast of a sandwich constructed from a plush sesame roll jam-packed with ripe avocados, *panela* cheese, Oaxacan string cheese, salsa, onions, and meat. While the beef *milanesa*, a thinly pounded and deep-fried hunk of *carne*, is the most traditional filling, there's also house-made *queso de puerco* (pork head cheese), *pata de res* (pickled beef tendons), and even salmon to properly stuff your *cemita*.

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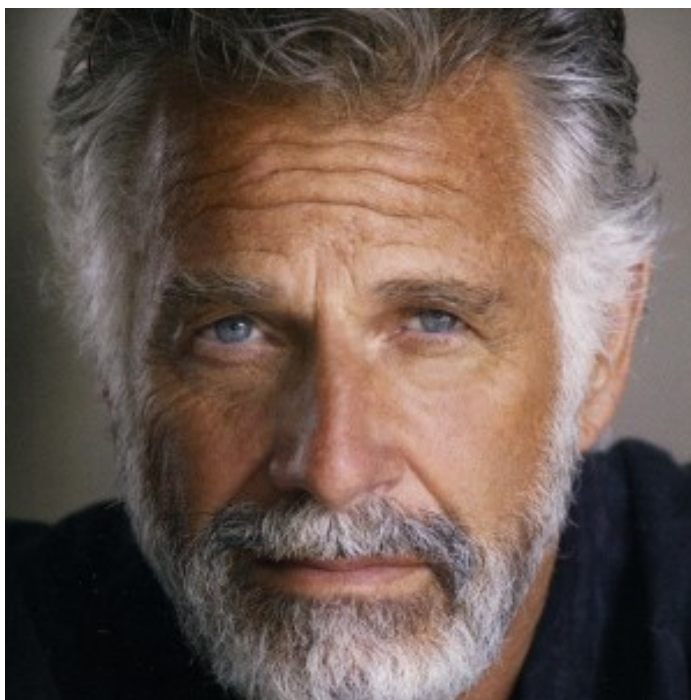
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