

L.A. Examiner

No Tools Here: Laurel Hardware



Don't let the name fool you. You won't find ladders, saws, drills or plumbing fixtures at [Laurel Hardware](#). But you will discover a fascinating drink menu and probably the best tapas in Los Angeles.

An eclectic mix of modern and rustic, Laurel Hardware opened its doors in July of 2012. A quick glance around and you'll notice dozens of interesting details in their decor, but a conversation with the manager will give you the truly fascinating 411. The etching along the bar countertop is the adornment from the bank that Dillinger robbed. The floor is reclaimed wood from the Coney Island Boardwalk. And other elements like the steel wall and industrial-looking wooden stools are a nice throwback to the materials that were once sold in this very spot.

While the front area is perfect for a quiet meal, the gigantic lounge is ideal for a night out with friends (or a hot date). With floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook a gorgeous back patio, the lounge is home to a mix of cozy booths, lush couches, and long picnic-style tables. The music is loud, but not so much that you can't hold a conversation. Grab a drink at the large U-shaped bar and stroll out to the twinkling wonderland of the back patio. Tabletop candles and white lights strung throughout the trees create a warm and comfortable ambience.

The drink list is every bit as unique as the landscape. With spirits like red beet infused plum vodka and chai infused Macallan 10, you're doing yourself a disservice by ordering anything from the rum & Coke caliber. The El Rey (maestro dobel, cointreau, sous-vide w/apples, thyme, orange zest, habanero & yuzu bitters) is a perfect blend of fruity and spicy. The Gangster (rain organic

cucumber vodka, fresh juiced watermelon & lime) goes down so smoothly, you'll need to double check you're not sipping on heavenly nectar. Hint: if your drink doesn't come with a "buzz button," ask the server for one. These edible Peruvian flower buds are used to cleanse your palate and provide a refreshingly cool tingling sensation in your mouth.

Chef Mario Alberto has cooked up a menu with exquisite small plates. Start out with the butternut squash - the burrata mixed with bourbon maple will make you lick the plate clean. The baby zucchini with bloomsdale spinach, aged blue cheese and medjool dates will make you fight over who gets the last bite. For a fun change of pace, try the passion fruit and miso glazed chicken wings. And you absolutely have to taste the butterscotch dessert before you leave - it's a savory trip to Delicious Lane.

So next time you drive through West Hollywood, remember that Laurel Hardware can't help with your home furnishing project, but it will definitely fix your urge for succulent cuisine and zesty cocktails.

Summon Sinful Food And Great Spirits At Saint Felix



Forget Saint Mary. And Saint Paul. The only name you should know is [Saint Felix](#).

Located at the desirable corner of Santa Monica & Robertson in West Hollywood, Saint Felix is a prime spot to meet your friends and people-watch. Grab a patio table and smile as the festive hordes of people prance by, en route to a rainbow-ridden dance club. Or head inside and check out at all the amazing pieces of decor dotted throughout the bar. The bedazzled skulls. The topless cardboard vixen. The Kiss masks. The naked photo of Burt Reynolds. (Don't worry if your vision lingers a little longer on this one- that's totally normal.) And the infamous leg lamp as seen in the classic film "A Christmas Story."

Once you've taken in your eclectic surroundings, settle in to their cushy booths or belly up to the bar. If you want something light and sweet, try the Belle du Jour (champagne with raspberry puree and raspberry garnish). If you prefer a cocktail with more kick, sip on their Pear Manhattan or Firecracker. (Warning: this one is deliciously spicy!) The Moscow Mule will kick your taste buds into flavor nirvana, but beware: they're served in copper mugs which are so cool that some customers have run off with them. (Consider this a public service announcement to please refrain from becoming a drunken thief, aka "That Guy.")

In today's overindulgent-Cheesecake-Factory-style-of-ridiculously-large-food-proportions, Felix offers perfectly sized tapas dishes that leave you happily satiated. The chicken skewers are served with a mouth-watering chipotle aoli, and the fish tacos are crisply orgasmic. For smaller bites that are ideal for sharing, order the cheese plate or delectable garlic parmesan fries.

If you're on a first date and encounter an awkward lull in conversation, not to worry – the TV is rather hypnotizing, with a fascinating loop of old movie clips, hilarious still photos (think: a smiling ape sitting in the grass), and random imagery. Even if you're with the most entertaining of your friends, you can't help but sneak a few glances at the screen.

So this Sunday, be a bit naughty, skip the morning church services, and go to Saint Felix. Grab some brunch and a Bloody Mary, and say your Hail Mary in style!

Need An Old-World New-Age Cocktail? Roger That.



Ever get annoyed with the white-walled, sleek-marbled, VIP-list BS of Los Angeles bars? Then take off that bedazzled-dragon collared shirt and come visit Roger Room at 370 La Cienega.

Unless you're on the lookout, you'll drive by [Roger Room](#) without realizing it. Next to renowned comedy club/ live music venue Largo, Roger Room is one of those bars you wouldn't think to go to unless you had tickets to Patton Oswalt...but now you know better.

Zip inside and you'll wonder if you've stumbled back in time into a speakeasy. The bartender's outfits are reminiscent of classic 1920s attire and chances are you'll see at least a few handlebar moustaches and lots of suspenders. The mirrored ceiling and dark interior mimic the vibe of a gentleman's club and the drinks don't disappoint. But the intimate seating area can make it difficult to converse with friends if you came with a group, so make sure to arrive early.

The cocktail list is a smidge on the pricey side, but is well worth the investment. (Hey, they've earned that right by offering up 3 different Absinthe concoctions!) If whiskey is your poison of choice, you have to try the Thug. (Buffalo Trace Bourbon, Barenjager Honey Liqueur, Lemon Juice and Spicy Habanero Bitters - DELICIOUS!) Or go with vodka and sip on their Four Aces. (Svedka, Basil, Green Grapes, Lime Juice and Canton Ginger Liqueur.) If you prefer something straight up, they've also stocked a healthy assortment of high quality spirits.

So next time you're planning a trip to Largo or you're in the neighborhood, channel your inner Prohibitionist and drink in the exuberance of Roger Room.

Formosa Café: All In Good Spirits



Tired of watered down cocktails?

Hate waiting in line for the trendiest club among screechy girls in short dresses and dudes with popped collars?

Sick of \$40 cover charges and \$20 valets?

Then check out [Formosa Cafe](#) at 7156 Santa Monica Blvd, just west of La Brea. Once frequented by the likes of Frank Sinatra, Humphrey Bogart, and Elizabeth Taylor, the local landmark recently celebrated its 74th birthday.

Unless you have poor eyesight, you can't miss the bright red exterior and neon green sign. Venture inside and you'll feel like you've stepped into another world—a fun mixture of old classic Hollywood and spunky Japanese accessories. Rows of black and white photos adorn the walls, a veritable "who's who" of actors, musicians, and other recognizable faces.

The low lighting and cushy booths make for a cozy and comfortable experience. Glance around and you'll be amused by the glass-encased Elvis and Marilyn Monroe figurines. And the big-bellied Buddha statue is sure to make you smile.

But you may want to bring your EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomena) recorder—Formosa is rumored to be haunted.

If you stroll past the vivacious red booths and dark wood shelves behind the bar, you'll enter the back section, which is a converted train car. This is the area that's allegedly seen the most paranormal activity. If you dare to sit back here, you'll

notice the air is noticeably more still and eerie. Or you may not notice if you've had a few of their spectacular cocktails.

Speaking of which, the bar is managed by a team of talented mixologists, including local legends Alex Goode (a brand ambassador for Cointreau) and Joseph Brooke (a regular on Spike TV's Bar Rescue). They whip up hauntingly tasty spirits, so make sure you try the whiskey honey concoction. If chatting with the adorable bartenders (or ghosts) has worked up your appetite, be sure to try the salmon entrée or the beef and broccoli, or any of the delicious bites from the appetizer list.

So do yourself a favor, bid farewell to the bland clubland of Hollywood and immerse yourself in the classic pizzazz of Formosa. You'll be glad you did.