

SOUTHEAST ASIA *meets* WEST HOLLYWOOD

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE YOUNG CHEF
DRIVING LA CIENEGA'S HOT NEW ROOFTOP RESTO

WRITTEN BY MICHELLE LYN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF E.P. & L.P. AND ALLEN LIM

Australia's latest export is L.A.'s gain: talented young Sydney chef, Louis Tikaram, who was tapped to run the kitchen at Botanical Hospitality Group's newest venture, E.P. & L.P. Split into three unique spaces, E.P. is a modern multi-level "Asian eating house" that offers a contemporary riff on traditional Asian recipes—ranging from small plates to larger family-style offerings. L.P. is an expansive rooftop deck supplying breathtaking views of the Hollywood Hills, which sets the scene for al fresco dining late into the night. Adjacent to L.P. is Frankie's, a private bar for intimate gatherings.

Tikaram's Fijian-Chinese heritage, Australian roots and global culinary tutelage all contribute to a unique and flavorful menu that thoughtfully incorporates California produce for fare served in a stunning space destined to be a summer haute spot.

Here, Westside DIGS talks with the toque of the town.

What kind of vibe can we expect at E.P. & L.P.?

E.P. & L.P. is an amazing place to eat, drink and have fun with friends. What I'm most excited about is showcasing the beautiful California produce with the flavors and techniques I have learned throughout my career and upbringing to create something truly unique to L.A.

E.P. is the dining room level and offers a family-style menu. L.P. is an open rooftop, with small bites inspired by some of my favorite Southeast Asian street food and an amazing selection of cocktails by our beverage director, Alex Straus.

Who has been your biggest culinary inspiration?

My mentor chef, Martin Boetz, at Longrain. This is where I started to cook (seriously). I had previously worked in a mom and pop-style Thai restaurant after school in Byron Bay—though this is where my mind was blown by the complex flavors of Southeast Asian cuisine. When I moved to Sydney, I visited Longrain every day until Boetz, who trained under David Thompson, was willing to offer me a job. He taught me everything about the cuisine and how to respect produce and ingredients to maximize freshness and flavor.

Although I was young during my years at Longrain, it didn't stop me from working every station in the kitchen and traveling to Melbourne alongside Martin to open a second restaurant in 2006. After leaving Longrain to learn other cuisines and travel the world, I returned in 2011 to take the reins as executive chef for the next four years.

How have you woven your eclectic background into the menu in a way that will appeal to Southern Californians?

At L.P. we offer a dish that is a take on the Fijian Miti, a type of coconut relish. Since

guests might not be too familiar with it, I made it more approachable by serving it with Cassava and Rice Crackers and naming it L.P. Nachos.

What dishes do we absolutely have to try?

Some of my personal favorites at E.P.—that also seem to be very popular with our diners—are Kokoda, a Fijian style ceviche with coconut milk, lime and chili; Abalone on the half shell that is wood grilled with curry paste and Thai aromatics; Sweet & Sour Crispy Pork that is twice cooked with chili, lime and endive; Chiang Mai Larb with spiced salmon, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaf and Vietnamese mint; Check Yo Neck, wood grilled lamb neck with lettuce, herbs and chili jam that you wrap yourself; Lou Dogg's Crispy Skin Chicken, half a Mary's farm chicken with black vinegar, chili and lemon. At L.P.: the Soft Shell Crab Bun and the L.P. Nachos, chicken simmered in coconut cream with cassava and rice crackers.

When you're not working, where in L.A. do you like to eat?

I love to go explore! I've ventured to Compton for tacos, Venice to visit Gjusta, and Bestia is one of the best meals I have eaten in L.A. so far! Chef Ori uses his Israeli heritage to elevate Italian food to a new level and, combined with his nose-to-tail philosophy, every dish is perfectly balanced in flavor and texture.

Son of a Gun serves small share plates on a seafood-driven menu; though the cuisine has a personal twist, some dishes may be inspired by California produce, Asian or American flavors. It doesn't really matter where inspiration originates; it is all super tasty. One of my go-to spots in the area is Terroni, I recently celebrated my 30th birthday there with my wife, Jorja, and other close friends.

E.P. & L.P.

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