

EATER'S DIGEST

Where to Meet for a Cocktail (or 12) Now

A decade after L.A.'s cocktail revolution took hold (farmers' market sourcing, custom ice cubes), spreading from faux speakeasies to LAX terminal bars, comes a new round of fresh innovation. **Matthew Biancaniello**, who made his name at the Roosevelt Hotel's Library Bar, has begun operating Mon-Li at Malibu's Calamigos Guest Ranch and Beach Club



Biancaniello

(26025 Pacific Coast Highway). It presents a seasonal tasting menu — "I'm using things I forage nearby,

like water mint and cactus root," he says — over 12 liquid courses (\$150 per person). Mon-Li inverts the standard dining hierarchy: Food, like a red abalone hand roll, is paired with the cocktails, not vice versa. Meanwhile, at downtown's Le Neant (519 S. Spring Street), opening Dec. 1, the bartenders determine what they serve — though it won't be made with store-bought Campari or Cynar. "We're making all of our own amaras, bitters and vermouths," says bar director **Kevin Lee**. "We'll be reliant on the terroir, and as inconsistent as nature is."



Wild bay leaf, passion fruit and mezcal (left) and a poblano-infused tequila with gazpacho and hard-boiled quail egg, both at Mon-Li.



TABLE READ

# The Draycott

THR reviews the British-inflected instant clubhouse at the Westside's redeveloped Palisades Village *By Gary Baum*

Every debuting restaurant desperately hopes to secure a sizable contingent of well-heeled regulars. Rare, however, is the newcomer fortunate to find itself overrun from night one with patrons eager to join those ranks. That's the reality of the Draycott, an all-day British-inflected brasserie that bowed in late September as the high-gloss signature dining establishment of **Rick Caruso's** new redevelopment, Palisades Village. (Caruso is the maestro of refined schmaltz also behind the comparatively down-market The Grove.)

**15255 Palisades Village Lane** (310) 573-8938  
**Recommended:** Draycott chop (\$18), pan-roasted trout (\$28), pork chop (\$29)  
**Best table:** Two booths with views of the bar and terrace

↑ The Draycott, photographed Oct. 22, is hardly without faults but already has emerged as an all-day hotspot in the drastically underserved Pacific Palisades.

The chatter among the predominantly local crowd is evidence of a clubhouse being born in real time: "I've been in four times this week." "You've got to get the manager's card." Most importantly: "I'm making this my table."

The married couple behind the Draycott is **Matt and Marissa Hermer**, recent arrivals from England (though she was raised in Orange County). She was on Bravo's *Ladies of London*; he made his name creating the royals-luring club Boujis; they collaborated on a pair of fancified country-fare spots there called Bumpkin. Their aesthetic here is mostly a brazen swipe from Ceconi's in West Hollywood — bright furniture, marble bar, showpiece terrace, a generalized air of Europe-on-holiday. It's all leavened with kids books and board games in a converted martini trolley.

Hand it to the Hermers: They've anticipated the conservative taste of their demo, constructing a streamlined menu strategic in its lack of edge. Visitors won't be challenged by, say, offal, or any other British gastronomic

adventurism. Even the curry spice in a roasted cauliflower starter — a nod to England's proud heritage of Indian cuisine — is restrained to a near-comic blandness.

The Draycott's sweet spot is the tried-and-true, whether squarely Anglo or traditionally Hollywood. There's a stellar fish and chips, a juicy pork chop paired with an excellent slaw, and a casually flawless Pimm's Cup. Meanwhile, at lunch, the chop salad — which includes chicory, fagioli beans and flecks of Parmigiano-Reggiano — could convert disciples of the iconic iteration at La Scala.

Yet the triumphs (like a buttery, pan-roasted trout) are undermined by some real misses: a bowl of moules-frites in a wincingly acidic broth; chicken liver mousse that repeatedly arrived out-of-the-fridge stiff and astonishingly flavorless. Luckily, the amiable servers are rapid-response specialists who, like the Hermers, appear hypercognizant of the reality that their patrons are the types not only to return a disappointing dish but also to relish spending the next week telling everyone they know about it. And at the Draycott, that could mean half the Palisades.

**The Bottom Line** The Palisades gets the conservative cuisine it craves.

*This review is based on multiple visits. Reservations are made under another name. Meals are covered by THR.*



## Hollywood and Dine ...

Otium chef **Timothy Hollingsworth** will appear on Netflix's cooking competition show *The Final Table*. ... **Ori Menashe** and wife **Genevieve Gergis**, the couple behind Italian hit Bestia and Middle Eastern successor Bavel, have published their Bestia cookbook. ... **Steve Aoki**, the EDM star and scion of Benihana founder **Rocky Aoki**, is aggressively expanding his pizza delivery service Pizaakii (launched in July) to San Francisco, Miami and New York City. ... **Ugly Delicious** host **David Chang**, who opened Majordomo earlier this year, plans to open an outpost of his Momofuku Noodle Bar in West Hollywood in 2019.

Photographed by **Damon Casarez**