

SEX!  
TEXTS!  
MONEY!  
DATING  
2016

March 2016

LIVING

Food's newest  
female breakout  
stars

Dumplings so  
good you'll weep

The cities with  
the best—and  
worst!—tippers

The scene at Leona  
in California's  
Venice Beach

● THE ELLE GUIDE TO  
THE 15 MOST AWESOME, FEMALE-LED, FUN, SEXY,  
GAME-CHANGING, MOUTH-WATERING,  
STAY-OUT-ALL-NIGHT, THINK-ABOUT-IT-FOR-YEARS-  
TO-COME PLACES TO EAT RIGHT NOW

Last year, ELLE published our first-ever restaurant guide: 30 exceptional, newly opened establishments helmed by extraordinary female executive chefs. Our motivation? While women had always been doing incredible things in restaurant kitchens, they hadn't always been getting credit for it, and we wanted to help change that. And with such rapid innovation going on in food (it's almost hard to remember when ramen was what you prepared on dorm-room hot plates), we just wanted to know where, if we're spending our hard-earned money, the great places to go out to eat are. In this, our second installment of the ELLE restaurant guide, we narrowed our list to 15 but kept to our original criteria: new restaurants with a kick-ass woman running the joint.

**ELLE MUST-HAVES:**

**FORWARD-THINKING CUISINE.** One restaurant in this year's collection has a menu inspired by a letter written by Mark Twain; another crowd-sources ideas for its specials on Facebook. **GREAT SCENE.** Hot guys, cool girls, authenticity. The kind of place where you could people-watch for hours. **INSTA-GRAM-INSPIRING PRESENTATION.** Whether it's 22-foot reclaimed-wood ceilings in the dining room (see: Seattle's Chop Shop) or a dollop of whipped cream on a stack of pancakes swirled just so (Chicago's Johnny's Grill), there's an element in each of our picks too visually stunning to keep to yourself. And above all else, **THE FOOD HAS TO BE REALLY, REALLY GOOD.** Yeah, there's that. And, now, without further ado, the listings, by Charlotte Druckman.



## LIVING

main focus. The charcuterie and cheese sampler (\$13) is a stand-out, as are pork chops brined in beer (\$21) and schnitzel served with potatoes cooked in duck fat (\$17). Equal attention is paid to the drinks, with German beers and wines at center stage. But there are thematically appropriate cocktails, too—an herbaceous, citrusy Nürnberg punch (\$9) and a Schadenfreude with mescal and elderflower (\$10).

## A SO-CAL NATIVE GETS HER TURN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

**LEONA Venice, CA**

For a while, Nyesha Arrington was the overqualified underdog Angelinos were rooting for: a regular food-television competitor (she's a *Top Chef* alum) who built a stellar résumé working with Michelin-starred chefs like Santa Monica's

Joshua Citrin and French master Joël Robuchon, but who had yet to strike out on her own. Finally, the hometown favorite is calling the shots at Leona.

The Venice Beach spot is no hole-in-the-wall—it features a bar, banqueted tables, an open kitchen, a communal table, and an outdoor patio. Arrington's food is similarly ambitious. Global cues spark surprising remixes of traditional flavor combinations and ingredients, starting with the Coctel Mixto, which takes welcome liberties with a generic shrimp cocktail—a



medley of seafood in a tomato-watermelon jus, garnished with crunchy, spicy rice paper (\$14). Next comes the bulgogi-braised short rib (\$27) and lamb belly wontons (\$24), both nods to her Korean grandmother, as is the brunchtime Korean latka (\$9). Don't miss the Adult "Frosted Flakes" dessert (\$7).

## MEXICO CITY PRODIGY DROPS ANCHOR IN SAN FRANCISCO

**CALA San Francisco**

In Mexico City, Gabriela Cámara is known for her way with seafood at her smash-hit restaurant Contramar. A few months ago, she brought her skills to San Francisco when she opened her first U.S.

venture, where the tortillas are pressed by hand and the seasonal protein is responsibly and locally caught. A tamale may include mussels (\$16) or sea urchin (\$20), a tartare may be composed of raw bonito (\$17), a ceviche may lavish lime juice and avocado on white sea bass (\$24), and a mixiote may pair collard greens with a red chile adobo-sauced black cod (\$36). Then again, next month, it may all change with the weather. And that's just dinner: More recently, the chef set up a taqueria out back, where people have been lining up for lunch.

## WORTH EVERY BIT OF THE HYPE

**LILIA Brooklyn**

As of press time, Missy Robbins's Brooklyn restaurant hasn't technically opened its doors. But we're part of the chef's dedicated fan base (which also includes the Obamas) who've waited a year and a half for her solo venture, and we're so sure of its success we've included it here anyway. Given Robbins's mastery of Italian cuisine in her previous

## EVERYTHING'S BIGGER IN TEXAS, INCLUDING FLAVOR

**PINK MAGNOLIA Dallas**

After a successful long-term pop-up run, reality TV personality Blythe "The Naughty Chef" Beck put down permanent roots in Dallas with Pink Magnolia. Beck stayed true to her nickname (so earned for her indulgent approach to ingredients...and her tendency to drop the f-bomb in the kitchen) with a menu of haute down-home staples: lemony crab dip (\$16); hollandaise-topped crispy-fried oysters, Rockefeller-style (\$12); bacon-wrapped meat loaf (\$26); and pimento mac and cheese (\$9). On Sunday nights, she lets diners dictate the menu, accepting submissions for recipes on the eatery's website. If that isn't enough Southern charm for you: The place comes complete with outdoor seating on porch swings, y'all!



Pink Magnolia's sinfully indulgent PMB Pink Magnolia Burger, a beef and bacon patty topped with cheddar, crispy fried onions, and applewood BBQ sauce

ventures (Manhattan's A Voce restaurants; Chicago's Spiaggia), you might think Lilia, housed in a converted auto-body shop in Williamsburg, was named for a favorite Italian relative, but it's actually from the Latin word for garlic. Robbins comes to the cuisine by training, not blood, and we're excited for the result. So far, the chef has been mum on details, but expect a woodburning grill that churns out chicken and fish and al dente handmade pastas.

## A MAJOR LEAGUE CHEF MIXES SPORTS FANDOM WITH ELEGANT DINING

**TIGER MAMA Boston**

America might recognize Tiffani Faison as the runner-up on the first season of *Top Chef*, but Boston identifies her with barbecue and, now, Southeast Asian-style food. Four-plus years after cutting the ribbon at Sweet Cheeks Q, she's put the finishing touches on Tiger Mama. The new spot, located in Boston's



CITY WHERE IT'S MOST POPULAR TO GO DUTCH:  
**Boston\***

CITY WHERE IT'S LEAST POPULAR TO GO DUTCH:  
**San Francisco**

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO MAKE THE DINNER RESERVATION FOR AN ANNIVERSARY: **33%**

\*Data throughout provided by restaurant reservation app Reserve, based on information from Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC.