

## Holiday Dining Guide 2008

*Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa and some plain ol' specials to sip and eat*

**W**e know you just got over the Thanksgiving frenzy, but Christmas carols are already on the radio, stores are urging you to buy your Secret Santa gifts on layaway, and we've come up with this festive list of delicious dining destinations for you to eat away your latent family feelings.

### Akasha Hanukkah

9543 Culver Blvd., Culver City, CA; (310) 845-1700

Culver City's gourmet wunderchef, Akasha Richmond, is unleashing yet another holiday promotion to celebrate the Festival of Lights. Over the eight nights of Hanukkah (that's December 21-29 this year, for you Gentiles), she will be serving slow-roasted brisket and chicken breast schnitzel with capers and lemon ... you know, just like your mom used to make. Sides include traditional *latkes* (potato pancakes), of course, with Braeburn apple sauce and sour cream, sweet potato and leek latkes for those of a more Sephardic persuasion, and Hanukkah donuts known as *sufganiyot*. So bring your *mishpuchah* and give the *dreidel* a spin while you enjoy these yummy Jewish treats.



### BLT Steak

8720 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, CA; (310) 360-1950

One of the swingiest spots in town is hosting a Christmas Eve dinner that even Santa would skip milk and cookies for. Chef Laurent Tourondel has created a special menu that will include dishes like wild mushroom risotto with mushroom cappuccino (we have no idea what this is really, but it sounds... foamy) and black truffles, and a traditional chateaubriand with foie gras in Madeira sauce with Alba white truffles—one of the most coveted foodstuffs in the world. So even if you've been naughty this year, you can still treat yourself to a nice meal. BLT Steak will also be hosting a New Year's Eve special dinner with roasted venison in huckleberry juniper sauce on the menu.

### Holidays at blue on blue

The Avalon Hotel, 9400 W. Olympic Blvd., Beverly Hills, CA; (310) 407-7791

Celebrate Christmas and New Year's at blue on blue, then come for brunch on New Year's day to recover from all your overstuffing and end-of-the-year boozing. This delightful poolside restaurant at Beverly Hill's stylish Avalon Hotel is offering an intimate Christmas Eve and Day four-course menu with items like roasted beet salad with stilton, lobster and corn custard with vanilla cream and winter truffles, and Scottish salmon with rutabaga mash and orange-fennel marmalade for \$75 a person. You'll also be able to order items à la carte. Then for New Year's Eve, you can come back and celebrate with a \$110 five-course menu including a grilled radicchio salad with asparagus and quail egg, crispy pork belly with baked apples and gingerbread pudding, grass-fed New York strip steak with lobster and potato beignets, and a persimmon and huckleberry frangipane tart. You'll need to come back the next day for a hangover-busting brunch that will feature a breakfast quesadilla with eggs, sausage, arugula, fingerling potatoes and roasted jalapeno salsa, or Italian nachos with crispy pasta, sausage, green onions, olives, tomatoes and asiago and parmesan cheeses. After all that eating, one of your resolutions better be to hit the ovm.

### BLVD 16



Hotel Palomar, 10740 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA; (310) 474-7765

Travelers and natives alike can enjoy the locavore fare at the Palomar Hotel's BLVD 16 restaurant on New Year's Eve. Chef Simon Dolinsky is preparing a prix fixe meal for New Year's Eve that will include dishes like Totten Inlet oysters on the half shell, smoked foie gras with blackberry jam, lobster ravioli in a lemongrass emulsion with maitake

mushrooms, grilled ribeye for two with truffle mac n' cheese and mushroom ragout, and seared scallops with salsify purée, roasted chestnuts and bacon froth. There will also be a choice of desserts like an Asian pear crostata with ginger ice cream, and a chocolate terrine of ganache, mousse, hazelnuts rosemary tangerines and goat cheese ice cream. The 5-6:30 pm seating will be \$100 per person, and the 7-10 pm seating will be \$125 per person, then starting at 10 pm, appetizers and party favors will be free and there will be a cash bar. If you can't make New Year's, stop by the restaurant throughout the holiday season to try one of their specialty cocktails like the Great Pumpkin (pumpkin pie mix, rum, Frangelico, Licor 43 and Canton Ginger Liqueur in a martini glass with a graham cracker-crust rim) or the Apple Jack (steamed apple cider, Jack Daniels, cinnamon and simple syrup in a spice-rimmed glass).

### Casa

350 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles, CA

Not all your holiday options have to be fancy. Kris Morningstar's new Mexican restaurant (set to open mid-December) will be hosting mariachis at midnight and a tequila toast to ring in 2009. There will also be special appetizers and homemade margaritas available at the indoor/outdoor bar at this new joint in the heart of Bunker Hill.

### Katsuya Glendale

The Americana at Brand; (818) 244-5900

The latest franchise of this popular Japanese restaurant has opened at Americana at Brand—basically, the Grove: Glendale Edition. Like its two namesake sister restaurants (in Brentwood and Hollywood) this Katsuya will be hosting a special New Year's Eve party where \$75 will get you all-you-can-eat appetizers and an open bar of specialty cocktails created by mixologist Ryan Magarian. Cheers to that!

### La Cchette

10506 Santa Monica Blvd., Century City, CA; (310) 470-2510

One of the best reasons to eat in Century City is this darling little French bistro where you can enjoy a sumptuous three-course Christmas Eve dinner for \$110, or a New Year's Eve prix fixe dinner for \$145 this year. The Christmas menu will include dishes like sautéed frog's legs with star anise sauce, coffee-rubbed braised bison short ribs with red yams and cranberry puree, and a traditional French white and dark chocolate Christmas log with candied chestnuts and vanilla rum. The celebratory New Year's Eve menu bids adieu to 2008 in high style with starters like scallops and pike quenelles in crayfish nantua sauce or a napoleon of foie gras with huckleberry verjus coulis and fig relish. Main courses will include sautéed Dover sole with puff pastry and red wine sauce, a roasted venison chop, and duck à l'orange (of course). The dessert menu celebrates classics like Baked Alaska, and crepes with chocolate sauce.

### Montage Beverly Hills

160 N. Canon Dr.; Beverly Hills, CA; (310) 860-7800

The newest addition to Beverly Hills's luxury hotel scene, the Montage Beverly Hills just opened in November, steps away from Rodeo Drive. As a way of introducing itself to LA with a splash, the elegant eight-story Montage is hosting a slew of holiday events in its two restaurants, Parq and Muse. On both Christmas Eve and Day, Parq will host a \$75 four-course tasting menu, and Muse will feature a five-course menu with à la carte options available. On New Year's Eve, guests can pay \$125 for Parq's five-course prix fixe menu and live entertainment, or \$300 for an all-inclusive (that means cocktails too!) evening at Muse that will start with a reception at the bar, continue with a seated dinner, followed by another dessert reception at the bar and live entertainment before a champagne toast at midnight. We don't have the details on the menus yet, but all the options sound like a great way to celebrate the holidays and ring in the New Year.

### New Year's at Murano

9010 Melrose Ave.; West Hollywood, CA; (310) 246-9118

It's a new year and a new chef at Murano in West Hollywood. Join Naples native Luciano Sautto for a spectacular 5-course New Year's Eve prix fixe menu. There are seatings at 7 pm (\$85 or \$115 with wine pairings) and 10 pm (\$100 or \$130 with wine pairings), but go for the later one so you can enjoy a champagne toast at midnight. The special menu will include an appetizer of smoked salmon on a potato blini with caviar and chive crème fraîche, a salad with butter lettuce and endive with gorgonzola cheese in a truffle oil dressing, handmade butternut squash agnolotti pasta with pancetta sage sauce, a choice of pan-seared sea bass over broccolini in a light tomato concasse or filet mignon with wild mushrooms and truffled potato, and finally, the house specialty dessert, a delicious tiramisu. May all your meals in the new year be this good.

### Nutcracker "Sweet" Desserts and Drinks at Noé

Omni Los Angeles Hotel; 251 S. Olive St.; Los Angeles, CA; (213) 356-4100

One of the world's premier ballet companies, St. Petersburg's *Kirov Ballet*, is coming to LA to perform Tchaikovsky's classic "Nutcracker Suite" at the Los Angeles Music Center from December 17-20, and to celebrate, Chef Glen Ishii is offering a selection of Nutcracker "Sweets" at Noé's cozy fireplace lounge. Featured drinks will include the classic White Russian, or the ballet-inspired Sugar Plum Martini. For dessert, try the Walnut Waltz: a Mont Blanc pastry with sweetened walnut mousse sculpted into a fluffy little mountain and dusted with powdered sugar. That should get even staunch football fans to the ballet. Noé is also hosting a special 6-course prix fixe New Year's Eve dinner with several seatings—as the night goes on, the prices go up from \$80/\$100 (with wine pairing) to \$125/\$155 (with wine). The menu will include blue fin tuna carpaccio, Japanese snapper with barley risotto, kabocha pumpkin risotto, sweet potato gnocchi with sage brown butter, and maple leaf duck breast with seared foie gras in a poached pear and brandy sauce.

### Sona

401 N. La Cienega Blvd.; Los Angeles, CA; (310) 659-7708

A year-round foody favorite, Sona is David Myers's temple to California cuisine and one of LA's best restaurants. For New Year's Eve, Myers is concocting one of his famous seasonally inspired menus featuring "organic and free-range artisanal products." We can't tell if that means hand-crafted cabinetry, or locally produced meats and veggies, but we'll go with the latter. Though we don't have the precise details, the menu is sure to be fantastic, and will include four courses for \$89 (early seating) or \$125 (late seating). Champagne will be complimentary.

### XIV

8117 Sunset Blvd.; West Hollywood, CA; (323) 656-1414

Part of Sam Nazarian's growing empire of restaurants, clubs and hotels, XIV is quickly establishing itself as the new spot to see and be seen on the Sunset Strip, and what better time to come out and party than New Year's Eve? Chef Michael Mina is creating a special prix fixe menu for the evening, which you can enjoy at three separate seatings. The one at 6:30 costs \$135 and will be in the main dining room. The 7:30 seating will be on the patio for \$165, and the 9:30 seating in the main dining room will go for a grand total of \$225. We don't have the menu yet, but knowing chef Mina's style, it's bound to be whimsical and delicious.