

Issue No. 1

# *edible* LA

MAY/JUNE 2017

Sharing the Story of Local Food & Culture

## Crazy for ARTICHOKES

(get 'em while you still can!)

MUST-TRY RECIPES FROM  
THE BELLWETHER  
HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU  
GRACIAS MADRE  
PEDALERS FORK  
...AND MORE!



LA River High School's Urban Farm  
Food Waste Gets the Respect it Deserves  
The Changing Face of Edible Marijuana  
Springtime Mocktails



# We asked our contributors to dish on their FAVORITE OUTDOOR DINING SPOTS IN LA + share tips for when to go and what to get!

Where are your favorites? We want to know! Share on social media with #FeastOnLA



"Tacos Villa Corona, a small family-run taco shop in Atwater Village," suggests photographer **ALAN GASTELUM** (*Local Heroes: The Soul of a School*, page 14). "They now operate only a walk-up window (Papa's burrito is my go-to), which forces you to be adventurous in finding somewhere to eat, whether it's a curb on Glendale Blvd, heading to the park with my dog, or stopping at **Proof Bakery** for a cortado and freshly-squeezed OJ to enjoy at one of their tables."



"**Manuela** (manuela-la.com) in the courtyard of the Hauser & Wirth arts complex Downtown," recommends contributing writer **LISA ALEXANDER** (*Local Heroes: The Soul of a School*, page 14). "A gorgeous mural (I call her *Our Lady of the Tomatoes*) presides over the organic garden. Drink a Rattlesnake Round Up cocktail as ivy drips overhead. Order grilled carrot salad with labne or yummy polenta with ragu and a fried egg."



"I'm loving **Sawyer** in Silverlake (sawyerlosangeles.com)," says sommelier and cocktail recipe contributor **KRISTINE BOCCCHINO** (*Marvelous Mocktails*, page 18). "Their back patio is awesome for both brunch and dinner. At brunch, the root vegetable and duck confit hash is unbeatable and for a light, twilight dinner I would go for the smoked trout salad with horseradish crème fraîche to start, followed by the Spanish octopus dusted with za'atar."



"Go to **Bamboo Restaurant** (bamboorestaurant.net) in Culver City's 'Little Brazil' during the summer," suggests food historian, teacher, author, and contributing columnist **LINDA CIVITELLO** (*The Food Historian*, page 35). "Tall stands of the namesake plant block Venice Boulevard and pleasant servers keep the fresh sugarcane mojitos flowing. The two spiced and sautéed—not battered and fried—soft shell crabs with plantains, rice, and beans will leave you with take-home."



"I love to have an early Sunday brunch on the patio at **Eveleigh** (theeveleigh.com) in West Hollywood," says chef and contributing writer **RYAN CAVEYWOOLPERT** (*Marvelous Mocktails*, page 18; *Behind the Line*, page 34). "I always start with the 'Wake Me Up' shot (lemon, ginger, and cayenne), which definitely lives up to its name," he says, "and wholeheartedly recommend their avocado toast and soft scramble."



"The patio at **Plant Food + Wine** (plantlab.com) in Venice is one of my favorites for lunch and I always make sure to start with the cashew raclette and grilled bread," says editor in chief and contributing writer **SHAUNA BURKE** (*Accomplishing the Impossible*, page 12; *Crazy for Artichokes*, page 20). "For unparalleled views without the ritz or the price tag, I also love to stare at the ocean from **Malibu Farm** (malibu-farm.com) on the pier. You can't go wrong with anything on the breakfast menu."



# *The Soul of a School*

BY LISA ALEXANDER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
ALAN GASTELUM







## AN ENVIRONMENTAL HIGH SCHOOL TAKES ON AN URBAN FARM ALONGSIDE THE LOS ANGELES RIVER

**L**os Angeles River High School ([lariverschool.com](http://lariverschool.com)) has been around for six productive years now. Its principal, Kristine Puich, dressed in black with high boots, gold hoops in her ears, and a chattering walkie-talkie swinging at her belt, strides on ahead during my tour.

"You'll like this," she says.

The bracing wind tears down a central corridor, its curve mimicking the banks of the river just over the way. We go through a chain-link gate, past the football field, and end up in an area landscaped with rocks and concrete steps; students are hunched over pads as they focus on their work.

"This is our science and art teacher, Reies," she says, introducing me to a lively guy in a hoodie with a big smile. Reies Flores turns out to know or thing or two about plants. And it's here, at the most far-flung edge of the campus, that he's relied on the help of the students - and his considerable talents - to create a rare urban farm.

The first thing I see: Cabbages. Broccoli. A stalk of oversized kale that resembles a Dr. Seuss-like tree. The flash of mallard plumage. The bustle of a gaggle of geese. Neat paths covered in mulch, which were donated by the city. A large greenhouse and worm and compost bins.

The garden occupies about an acre in the crux of the I-5 and Route 2 in Glassell Park. Scruffy and peaceful, it's adjacent to the former Taylor Yard, a Southern Pacific Railroad facility, and trains still roar on by.

The students are enthusiastic about the experience, seeming to love being outside caring for the garden and the animals. One student says she sees everything in a different way now. Before this class, she knew vegetables, but now she's experienced making contact with the seeds and plants and actually seeing and paying attention to how they grow. Another student tells me how she'll incorporate a garden into her own life once she graduates and goes out into the world.

Flores grew up not far from here in Northeast LA. His favorite time as a child was spending time with grandma in her kitchen. She'd cook and tell stories about her childhood in the







20s in Zacatecas, Mexico, on what we would now call an organic sustainable farm. He met his wife, also a teacher, at Irving Middle School, then ended up starting his own farm when his daughter was born, since he wanted to feed her food that he knew was safe from pathogens.

Luckily for Flores, he landed at the LA River High School where principal Kristine Puich (herself relocated from Oakwood School) is all about encouraging creativity in her educators. She loved Flores' urban farm experience, suggested he develop the unused plot, and then went to work getting an environmental California Partnership Academy ([cde.ca.gov](http://cde.ca.gov)) grant and the necessary certifications to make it all real.

Here, the kids are an integral part of the mix. Each small group is responsible for its own garden bed.

"I've never seen anything like this," Flores says. "Honors students and ESL students and special interest students - they can all feel equally happy here. There's no buy-in for the garden. It's automatic and right away."

The students take the produce home and sometimes even the animals, too (ducks are popular; the geese, not so much). Like many Americans, these kids, too, have gotten fuzzy about how food actually makes its way onto dinner plates. Some of the students couldn't believe that broccoli actually bloomed (it does - brassica oleracea goes to seed and attracts a lot of beneficial insects.)

"It's really grounded the kids," Puich says. "They're calmer now. More focused on their academics. And the

only shift we've made is the farm."

In the 90's there were a lot of agriculture programs in LA Eastside public schools, but it became politically troublesome. Some felt that the kids were being pushed, unfairly, into these more vocational schools and so many of the programs were halted and the students were encouraged to go to college instead. Now the programs are starting to return, but reframed as a more technical pathway of producing well-rounded, environmentally-aware graduates who may end up in agriculture and urban development. Next up in the school's agricultural pathway is an urban farm-to-table cooking class.

"We'll be using the produce in stir-fries and soups, as well as dairy and eggs. Pretty much everything," Flores says.

In addition to the edible plants, there are the vociferous geese — endangered breeds like Pilgrim, great watchdogs who love to sound an alarm, as well as blue-eyed Embdens and a gorgeous Sebastopol with a frizzle of curly feathers resembling Farrah Fawcett's long-ago bangs.

The geese, the very intense geese, crowd forward hissing and honking as I beat a retreat. "They're protecting a nest," Flores says.

There's also a long, low coop for the brace of Mallard, Muscovy, Russian Black and Whites, and Swedish blue ducks, as well as a separate enclosure for the equally talkative roosters. The fluffy yellow chicks were warmed inside the greenhouse for months, but now they're





feathered adolescents, milling about in the yard. Along the back of the property, a drift of orange and grey pigs (yes, a *drift* — one learns a lot of animal collective nouns on an LA Unified farm!) crowd against the gate. The biggest and most curious, Cheeto, props his hooves on the wood to get a good look. His snout is much bigger than expected, round and pulsing. I feel unnervingly scanned and then, just as quickly, discarded as an inedible lifeform. These kunekune pigs are from New Zealand.

“They used to clean up the scraps in the Maori villages,” Flores says. Here they perform a crucial function for the community, enthusiastically eating all the meat-based waste (except, luckily for them, the pork) from the five school cafeterias, while the vegetable-based waste is shunted to the chickens, the worms, and the compost bins.

A new herd of sheep has just come to live in a pen by a lot full of school buses. The next purchase will be a miniature Dexter cow. Flores plans to teach the kids how to milk cows and make butter, cheese, and yogurt. The sheds and gates are also recycled, constructed almost entirely out of wooden pallets from the football field. An elevated orchard wraps along the backside of the lot. Preparations are in the works for more edible beds here as well, closest to the river and alongside a native swale area, a riparian tract that holds moisture and thrives with indigenous breeds such as willow and cattail. Juncus grass with its spiky green leaves has grown here as far back as when the Tongva, a local Native American tribe, used it to

roof their huts.

Whole systems agriculture like this uses natural spaces to attract wildlife and they in turn are good for the garden. Herons, egrets, and hawks, both Cooper’s and Redtails, regularly land for a pit stop. The Mallard ducks, the wildest of the bunch, sometimes take off for a spin around the land.

The end goal here at LA River High School is to set up a program that will be seen as a necessity to deal with waste and avoid the landfill. The school has so far accomplished this with five public schools on their campus. The next frontier would be the district and on from there. The big idea is to recycle things to help grow other things and eventually get to producing absolutely zero food waste.

Standing here on the banks, the tended plants and animals on one side and the wild scruff of a river making a comeback on the other, it all makes a whole lot of sense.

Just then those geese get to honking and Flores grins.

“Train’s coming,” he says. ♦