

Musso & Frank Grill

6667 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, (323) 467-7788, mussoandfrank.com. 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Tuesdays to Saturdays. Full bar. Validated parking in rear. Credit cards accepted. \$\$

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If you are a certain kind of food guy, it is almost a sacred duty to dismiss the

Musso & Frank Grill, where a large part of the menu remains largely unchanged from 1919 and where the avocado cocktail and kidneys Turbigo could not be further from the kinds of things they are serving at Red Medicine or Trois Mec. The steaks, chops and sand dabs are fine, although you'd probably do better at Mastro's or even Taylor's. Yet it is hard to imagine Hollywood without Musso's wooden booths, Manny's martinis or the chicken pot pie on Thursdays. The Welsh rarebit and shrimp Louie are unchanged from when you and your grandfather were children, and the flannel cakes are still the best consolation for late risers in town.

Bulgarini Gelato

749 E. Altadena Drive, Altadena, (626) 791-6174, bulgarinigelato.com. 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays; 10 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays. Lot parking. Also at 8686 Washington Blvd., Culver City, (310) 815-1723. Credit cards accepted. \$

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The foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains are home to some of the best ice cream in California, including the all-American Main Street creaminess of Mother Moo in Sierra Madre and the farmers market freshness of the original Carmela. But even the glories of Mother Moo's three-milk ice cream fade in comparison with the gelati of Leo Bulgarini, who is nearly as fanatical about his gelato as he is about his hometown AS Roma soccer team; he is especially adept at

capturing the flavors of ripe, local fruit. It is hard to say what is better: his goat's milk gelato with toasted cocoa nibs, the yogurt gelato with sea salt and olive oil, the blood orange sorbetto or the gelato he makes with the ultra-pricey Bronte pistachios he hand-carries from Sicily. House policy at Bulgarini mandates a three-scoop minimum, at \$2.50 per.

Border Grill

1445 4th St., Santa Monica, (310) 451-1655, bordergrill.com. 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Fridays, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays. Full bar open to midnight. Takeout. Street and valet parking. Credit cards accepted. Also at 445 S. Figueroa St., downtown L.A., (213) 486-5171. Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays to Fridays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; dinner, 4-9 p.m. Sundays to Thursdays, 4-10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Full bar. Takeout. Pay lot. Credit cards accepted. \$\$

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Mexican cooking in Los Angeles has changed a lot since Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken opened their first Border Grill in the 1980s, and it is no longer unusual to find ingredients sourced from the Yucatan, margaritas made with top-shelf tequila or standard dishes transformed with expensive, organic ingredients. The restaurant, its chefs and its cookbooks have been around so long that it is easy to take them for granted, as breathtaking as its stuffed steak and pescado Veracruzano were when we all first tasted them. But still, nobody has managed to marry the freshness of the California kitchen with the deep, complex flavors of Mexican cooking in quite the way that Feniger and Milliken do, and if you ran across their ceviche, pork-steak carnitas or squash tacos in an Eastside dive, you would be as happy as a lime-marinated clam.