

FOOD

One of L.A.'s 101 Best Restaurants expands to Atwater with line-worthy Thai food



Thai restaurant Holy Basil, in both downtown and Atwater Village, serves dishes dishes such as pad see ew with pork loin and Chinese broccoli. (Stephanie Breijo / Los Angeles Times)

BY STEPHANIE BREIJO | STAFF WRITER

FEB. 23, 2024 3 AM PT

Holy Basil Atwater Village

The fragrance of Thai chiles, fish sauce, from-scratch curry paste and wok-fried meat

and seafood wafts from a small alcove in an Atwater Village shopping center, drawing throngs of customers. The second location of Thai restaurant Holy Basil recently opened in the Atwater Canyon complex, and with it, chef Wedchayan “Deau” Arpapornnopparat has a new space to explore the culture-blending Thai cuisine that’s landed his restaurant wide acclaim — including its spot on [The Los Angeles Times 101 List](#) of best restaurants in the city.

Holy Basil came to fruition during the pandemic, a to-go-focused operation run out of a downtown walk-up window serving street-style Thai food in partnership with co-owner Tongkamal “Joy” Yuon, who heads operations and the beverage program — including teas made via their own company, the Base Co. While Holy Basil’s items are familiar, with classics such as pad see ew, tom yum and gra pow, Arpapornnopparat’s style is his own, blending Thai, Indian and Chinese flavors and techniques into curries, stir fries and more.

“It’s kind of a mix of everything, of my experience,” he said. “It’s definitely what I like to eat ... we’re implementing a lot of what we grew up eating into the dishes.”





The new location features an everyday focus on seafood dishes such as lemongrass mussels. (Stephanie Breijo / Los Angeles Times)

Arpapornnopparat was raised in a Thai and Chinese household, learning to cook primarily from his mom and his aunt, though he says his entire family loves to cook and to eat. He tends to lean into Central Thai cooking with plenty of Chinese influence, though his six years in school in India have also affected his menu: Dishes such as the shrimp with yellow curry draw on all three cultures, tinged with Chinese five spice and coconut for an almost Indian korma-like sweetness. Their tangential, seafood-focused pop-up menu, Yum, ran on weekends in the downtown location but

also features more on the dine-in menu at the Atwater spot, with options such as lemongrass mussels, the shredded “Grandma’s fish and rice,” and wild shrimp aguachile all making an appearance on Atwater Village’s early menus.

The new outpost was roughly 2½ years in the making, involving a from-scratch restaurant build with months of construction, flooding, frustration and delays. Now the 750-square-foot outpost is open with eight low bar seats along the open kitchen, and a handful of tables inside and outside for roughly 20 diners. Given the number of families in the neighborhood, Arpapornnopparat and Yuon plan to introduce more Southeast Asian brunch and breakfast items in the coming months, such as Chinese sausage with eggs and milk bread.

Downtown’s location, which the chef says is more amenable to large parties, will remain open — and there are plans to open more Holy Basil outposts in L.A., ideally one in Santa Monica as early as next year. The pair also plan to open a currently unnamed Thai izakaya in Melrose Hill, which might also offer a tasting menu, currently targeted for a 2025 debut. It’s all part of what Arpapornnopparat sees as a new movement in cooking that both embraces and riffs on the recipes of those who came before.

“I feel like a lot of younger chefs are, whether it’s Thai or Southeast Asian, trying to preserve and elevate the old technique more than before,” he said. “It’s exciting that everyone is trying to bring the cuisine to the surface with other menus, new techniques, new renditions of the cuisine, and I think Holy Basil wants to be a part of that, too.”

Holy Basil is open in Atwater Village Wednesday from 5 to 9 p.m.; Thursday and Friday from noon to 3 p.m. and 5 to 9 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. Follow along on [Instagram](#) for updates to days and hours of operations.

3170 Glendale Blvd., Unit C, Los Angeles, holybasildtla.com



Chef-owner Wedchayan “Deau” Arpapornopparat, right, prepares lunch behind the counter of his Atwater Village location of Holy Basil. (Stephanie Breijo / Los Angeles Times)

Cipriani

An iconic Italian restaurant and hospitality chain founded in Venice recently expanded to the West Coast, touching down in Beverly Hills with its signature bellinis, pastas, grilled meats, specials and a jazz cafe. The nearly century-old Cipriani brand started humbly with the intimate Harry’s Bar in 1931, when Giuseppe Cipriani Sr.’s bar attracted aristocrats and global elite such as Katherine Hepburn, Orson Welles and Frank Lloyd Wright. The founder — credited with creating the bellini as well as beef carpaccio — went on to expand his empire with a hotel before his family opened multiple concepts in New York City and, eventually, London, Miami, Las

Vegas, Dubai and elsewhere.

The new Beverly Hills restaurant serves the brand's classics such as carpaccio "alla Cipriani" made with grass-fed beef tenderloin, thin sheets of veal in tonnato, and house-made fresh tagliolini. The jazz cafe was designed to hark back to Old Hollywood and features a grand piano; it's open Thursday from 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 5:30 to 11:30 p.m. Cipriani is open Sunday to Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

362 N. Camden Drive, Beverly Hills, (310) 866-5060, cipriani.com



Niku Nashi, which returned as delivery-only, serves all-vegan sushi such as the Barbie Roll, which wraps fried oyster mushroom, pickled cabbage, spicy "tuna" and burdock root in pink soy paper and tops it with plant-based "caviar." (Stephanie Breijo / Los Angeles Times)

Kakkoi and Niku Nashi

A new delivery sushi business is blending Japanese classics with European inspiration. Kakkoi recently launched across L.A. on most major delivery platforms, a collaboration between executive chef Ole Tsoy, who for years operated a sushi restaurant in Barcelona, chef Niko Zaragoza (Kensho Vegan Sushi) and Brad Saltzman (Nancy's Fancy gelato).

While Kakkoi's specialty is artful sushi rolls, serving scallop-and-ikura-topped maki, classic hand rolls, seared nigiri and rose-shaped sashimi, it also offers stir-fried udon and a signature lobster "roll" wrapped in lavash flatbread.

Kakkoi is currently running as delivery-only out of a Fairfax kitchen, but Saltzman says the team plans to open a bricks-and-mortar location in the future.

Meanwhile vegan sushi concept Niku Nashi — also from Zaragoza and Saltzman, as well as Monty's Good Burger and Nic's on Beverly restaurateur Nic Adler — has made a return via Kakkoi. The popular Niku Nashi, which means "no meat" in Japanese, previously operated out of Melrose restaurant and bar APB ("All Plant Based") until APB closed at the end of 2023.



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"Our goal for Niku Nashi has always been to bring affordable, innovative vegan sushi to areas lacking vegan food," Saltzman said. "More than 65% of our customers are not vegan."

While the owners also scout multiple bricks-and-mortar locations for Niku Nashi, its

plant-based rolls and small plates — with options such as tempura mushroom hand rolls or the use of konjac to replicate tuna — can be found on UberEats, Postmates, DoorDash and Grubhub. Kakkoi lists Niku Nashi's offerings under a separate tab via all its delivery platforms. Kakkoi — with Niku Nashi items — is available Tuesday to Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

7302 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, (323) 844-0096, kakkoi.la; nikunashi.net

B&T's Deli

A new plant-based sandwich shop just opened in Santa Monica serving vegan options with an intended dose of deli nostalgia. B&T's Deli, from husband-and-wife team Terrence and Britt Caldwell, was inspired by their love of all walks of delis, as well as their trials and tribulations finding quality plant-based subs. "Deli culture is in our blood," Terrence Caldwell told the L.A. Times via email, citing Bay Cities, Russ and Daughters, and Erewhon all as influences on the new shop. They're sourcing much of their produce from the nearby Santa Monica Farmer's Market for house sandwich concoctions, build-your-own varieties, sides and salads available by the half pint, and a range of house-made spreads that can also be purchased in to-go jars. Look for items such as a take on whitefish sandwich that's made with celery root salad, lemon, capers and dill on a bagel; the ode to an Italian sub with artichoke hearts, roasted onion, balsamic and pepperoncini; and a chickpea-salad take on the chicken salad sandwich. B&T's Deli is open Tuesday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

912 Montana Ave., Santa Monica, bandtsdeli.com



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The deli capital? It's L.A.

Oct. 21, 2009



Koreatown's Red Room flips Coffee MCO into a weekend wine bar serving modern Korean small plates from chef Yoon Sung under moody neon lighting. (Stephanie Breijo / Los Angeles Times)

Red Room

L.A.'s moody, neon-lit, weekend-only wine bar run out of a Koreatown coffee shop has returned with a new chef and food program. From Thursday to Saturday find Coffee MCO flipping to Red Room, a natural-wine bar that debuted last year and hosted multiple food pop-ups and events until it closed in December. Now it's back with a permanent chef, who's complementing the wine list of German, Italian, French, Slovakian and other primarily European bottles with modern Korean small plates such as bulgogi smashburger sliders, perilla-oil pesto noodles, sardine jorim and pillowy potato jeons loaded with marinated ikura, perilla and lemon crème fraîche.

Chef Yoon Sung — a medical doctor as well as a veteran of Hanchic, Chimmelier and Woodberry Kitchen — previously popped up in L.A. as Oksusu, and is building upon his modern-Korean cooking with more intricate dishes at Red Room that will rotate frequently and showcase seasonal produce through dishes such as mushroom Bourguignon. Red Room is open Thursday to Saturday from 6:30 p.m. to midnight, with the kitchen closing at 10 p.m.

2580 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, redroom.la

Afuri Culver City

After [a year of waiting](#), popular quick-and-casual ramen-ya Afuri Ramen expanded to Culver City this month. The Japan-founded chain, which debuted in the Arts District in 2021, is famed for its use of mountain water in its soup broths. Other signature items include house-made dumplings served boiled, fried, or “buta”-style with a crispy edible skirt fanned out around them, also available in vegan options. Ramen styles include tonkotsu, shio or shoyu with add-ons such as spicy miso or yuzu, while small plates such as stuffed bao and karaage are also on offer. Afuri Ramen + Dumpling is now open daily in the Culver Steps development project from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

9300 Culver Blvd., Unit 117, Culver City, (424) 298-8292, afuriramen.com





Afuri, famed for its ramen and dumplings, recently opened its second L.A. location. (Stephanie Breijo / Los Angeles Times)

Nico's Wines and Baby Battista

A new bottle shop in Atwater Village also boasts a basement wine bar featuring wine specials, spritzes, beers and nonalcoholic options, plus a venue for events and live programming. Nico's Wines and sibling wine bar Baby Battista are the latest endeavor from Nicole Peltier, who previously ran mobile wine operation Nico's Small Market. She's expanding upon her cart's natural-wine tastings with charcuterie and other small bites in Atwater Village, where dozens of bottles are available for purchase at around \$20 upstairs; downstairs, by-the-glass pours rotate and can be paired with snacks such as fresh bread with seaweed butter; tinned fish; chips with crème fraîche and caviar; and build-your-own cheese and charcuterie plates. Nico's Wines is open daily from noon to 9 p.m., while Baby Battista is open Sunday to Tuesday from 5 to 11 p.m. and Wednesday to Saturday from 5 p.m. to midnight.

3111 Glendale Blvd., Unit 2, Los Angeles, 323-662-5556, nicosla.com



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Stephanie Breijo

Stephanie Breijo is a reporter for the Food section and the author of its weekly news column. Previously, she served as the restaurants and bars editor for Time Out Los Angeles, and prior to that, the award-winning food editor of Richmond magazine in Richmond, Va. Born and primarily raised in Los Angeles, she believes L.A. to be the finest food city in the country and might be biased on that count but doesn't believe she's wrong.