

BEYOND BEAUTIFUL

JESSICA ALBA GETS DOWN TO BUSINESS

James Franco on directing and denim

PLUS Donna Karan, Willie Nelson, Kelly Wearstler

serving up spring

FOR A TASTE OF THE FRESHEST INGREDIENTS SPRING HAS TO OFFER, TRY THESE SEASONALLY INSPIRED MENUS AROUND TOWN.



"Artichokes are best in spring," says chef Cody Diegel of the reason he's serving a babyartichoke salad with shaved fennel and Parmesan. Other specialties at the Thompson Beverly Hills' new restaurant include ricotta-stuffed squash blossoms and cherry crumble with white-peach ice cream. Thompson Beverly Hills, 9360 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, 310-388-6860; caulfieldsbeverlyhills.com

Eva Restaurant

Chef Mark Gold insists spring is

Livello

"When springtime rolls around," says executive chef Joseph Elevado, "I really look forward to using soft-shell crab and English peas." Diners at L'Ermitage Beverly Hills' new Asian- and Italian-inspired restaurant will savor those ingredients in the crispy soft-shell crab with arugula and carrot salad dressed with chili, mint, and lime vinaigrette; and spaghetti carbonara with English peas, Benton's bacon, and black pepper. L'Ermitage Beverly Hills, 9291 Burton Way, Beverly Hills,

310-860-8660; lermitagebh.com

Mezze

Chef Micah Wexler puts a springtime twist on traditional tabouli by adding fava beans, green garlic, and fresh almonds to the traditional mélange of bulgar, parsley, cucumbers, tomato, and lemon vinaigrette. To "take the dish over the hump," Wexler adds morsels of savory pancetta. 401 N. La Cienega Blvd., West Hollywood, 310-657-4103; mezzela.com

Savory

When buds start blooming, owner and executive chef Paul Shoemaker roasts up local halibut

Livello executive chef Joseph Elevado discusses meldina







his favorite season of the year thanks to all the great produce at local markets, including ramps, green and white asparagus, porcini mushrooms, and edible flowers. You'll find the aforementioned at his cozily romantic Beverly Boulevard bistro in such dishes as live king-crab ravioli with tangerine; and organic eggs with porcini mushrooms, English peas, and essence of lemon. 7458 Beverly Blvd., LA, 323-634-0700; evarestaurantla.com

Hatfield's

Owner and chef Quinn Hatfield would feature spring asparagus in every dish on Hatfield's menu if he had his way. Instead, his guests will have to sample it roasted with brown butter and served with soft-cooked egg ravioli, morel mushrooms, and charred pea tendrils.

6703 Melrose Ave., LA, 323-935-2977; hatfieldsrestaurant.com

Lucques

Hearing LA culinary luminary and co-owner/chef Suzanne Goin wax poetic about her ricotta dumplings with fava puree, spring vegetables, and pecorino pistou makes us wish it were springtime all year round. Goin, it turns out, is a pea "nut" (pun intended) and loves pea shoots, English peas, and sugar snaps, so you can count on seeing them on her menus all season long. 8474 Melrose Ave., LA, 323-655-6277; lucques.com

M.B. Post

Chef/co-owner David LeFevre's favorite ingredient this time of year is the ultrafresh English pea, which he plans on using in his al dente risotto with orange and pea tendrils at his casually upscale Manhattan Beach outpost. 1142 Manhattan Ave., Manhattan Beach, 310-545-5405; eatmbpost.com

with pea tendrils and English peas, flavorful applewoodsmoked bacon from Niman Ranch, and sous-vide cipollini onions dressed with olive oil and seasoned with salt, pepper, and Espelette chili peppers. It's worth the drive to Malibu. 29169 Heathercliff Road, Malibu, 310-589-8997; savorymalibu.com

Wilshire

New executive chef Nyesha Arrington is pulling out all the stops for spring, using one of her favorite ingredients, morels, in a dish of corn ravioli with the mushrooms, sherry butter, and tarragon-a plate made even more delicious by the candlelit atmosphere of the patio on which it's served.

2454 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, 310-586-1707; wilshirerestaurant.com LAC

What's the concept behind Livello? I'm using classic Italian techniques, Japanese aesthetics, and blending the flavors in the dishes.

Yet you say Livello isn't a fusion restaurant? We take key, authentic elements from both Italian and Asian cuisines and balance the two. It's like the next generation of dining.

What is your favorite season for fresh produce? Hove spring because everything is starting to come back after the winter chill.

