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JONATHAN

Wald's

101

Best

RESTAURANTS
2016

\$4.99



Photographs by KIRK MCKOY Los Angeles Times

The upside-down fig cake with bee pollen, top, and Rustic Merguez lamb sausage with polenta and preserved peppers, middle, are two reasons chef Jeremy Fox, above, is a hot topic.

Rustic Canyon

1119 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, (310) 393-7050, rusticcanyonwinebar.com. 5:30-10:30 p.m. Sundays to Thursdays, 5:30-11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Full bar. Valet parking. Credit cards accepted. \$\$\$

11 Rustic Canyon is a relaxed wine bar in an unglamorous corner of Santa Monica. You could wander in on a Tuesday night, join the crowd drinking Chinon and Santa Maria Viognier, maybe get a handful of lavender-dusted almonds and some chicken wings, and never quite discover that it was a restaurant talked about all over the country. But if you should order the beets and berries, an insanely pleasurable mess with pistachios and purple quinoa that may have been the impetus for the current Things in a Bowl craze, or even the focaccia with beet molasses, you'll be utterly convinced. Jeremy Fox might be the perfect Westside chef at the moment. His menu is a happy place for the paleos and the gluten-free, the hedonists and the vegetarians, those into both nose-to-tail and seed-to-stalk. He came into his prime as chef for a famous vegetarian restaurant attached to a Napa yoga studio, but he is beloved in Santa Monica for things like his pig's ear salad with green goddess dressing and his green shellfish pozole, which zaps the deep earthiness of boiled hominy with an electric jolt of citrus and puréed green chiles. Zoe Nathan is no longer the pastry chef of record, but Jun Tan's brown butter cakes and Valrhona chocolate tarts have rarely been cause for complaint.