

Los Angeles Times

FOOD

The 25 best classic diners in Los Angeles



“Comfort” is an overused word when discussing the role of restaurants in our lives. But what better descriptor exists to convey the feeling of sinking into a booth or hopping onto a swiveling counter stool at one of L.A.’s evergreen diners?

The sturdy white mugs, ever full. The fast-moving staff, at once cheerful and no-nonsense. The haze of griddle smoke in the air. The canonical menu: eggs every which way, pancakes and waffles, ingredient-packed salads, club sandwiches, burgers and melts. And likely meatloaf for dinner. We frequent diners — or coffee shops, if you prefer, and not the kind that serve single-origin pour-overs — for their beautiful predictability.




In Southern California, diners come in all shapes, though the design of L.A.'s most fabled diners was codified in the mid 20th century with Googie architecture. Angled bursts of neon signage pointed the way inside to dining rooms outfitted in chrome, Naugahyde and Formica. These vintage buildings have been disappearing for decades. It's a reminder to treasure the space-age shrines that do remain — including Foxy's in Glendale, Bob's Big Boy Broiler in Downey, Norms in West Hollywood and Pann's in Westchester.

Because this is Los Angeles, some of our beloved institutions serve chilaquiles alongside eggs benedict, and the option of char siu or machaca in addition to sausage and bacon. We drove the lengths of the L.A. Metro area, savoring chile relleno omelets, country-fried steak and billowing banana cream pie — and so much more — in timeless, crowded rooms. These made the cut as our 25 favorite diners.





Norms

 Beverly Grove | American

The waitstaff at the West Hollywood Norms have tentacles for arms. During the breakfast, lunch and dinner rush (these are daily occurrences), platters of pancakes are hurriedly topped with scoops of butter, carafes of coffee are emptied and filled, counters are wiped and checks are dropped, seemingly all at once. The SoCal restaurant chain, now with more than 20 locations, has grown into a diner empire since Norm Roybark opened the first Norms in Hollywood in 1949. But during peak breakfast hours, the restaurant on La Cienega Boulevard often feels like the center of the city. There's a Bigger Better Breakfast (eggs, all the breakfast proteins, hash browns and hotcakes or toast) on most tables. Norms also serves my ideal meatloaf dinner, with thick meaty slabs buried under glossy gravy.

