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CHEF & SOMM SYMBIOSIS

**CHERRY PIE
PINOT NOIR IS
THE UNITING
FORCE**



**Kristoffer Miller, General Manager,
Restaurants, Neiman Marcus, and Chef Ruby
Oliveros of Rotunda, San Francisco.**

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BARTENDER BRUNCH: GOOD MORNING (MASH)

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SUMMER 2017

VOL.2 NO.3

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Burrata e ham
graces the plate
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Linger at Loquita

A SLICE OF SPAIN IN SANTA BARBARA

by Hana-Lee Sedgwick / photos by Rob Stark



In Santa Barbara, CA, Loquita celebrates authentic Spanish cuisine.

GIVEN SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA'S historic roots in Spanish culture, cuisine and architecture—and a similar Mediterranean climate to boot—it was only a matter of time before a restaurant there would be designed to pay tribute to the flavors of Spain. That's the idea behind Loquita, a new restaurant concept that celebrates the culture and cuisine of Spain, while still feeling authentically Santa Barbara in style.

Named after the Spanish colloquial term for a wild, fun-loving young girl, Loquita is located at the gateway to the Funk Zone, the city's formerly abandoned warehouse district that has been transformed into a mecca for wine, food and art. As the sixth venture for Acme Hospitality, the team behind such popular Funk Zone establishments as The Lark and Lucky Penny, Loquita is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. Shares Sherry Villanueva, Managing Partner for Acme Hospitality, "It was the right time to dedicate our next restaurant to the incredible culture and food that Spain is known for, but interpreted by a contemporary California sensibility."

Loquita's kitchen is led by Executive Chef Peter Lee, formerly of the Michelin three-star restaurant Joël Robuchon in Las Vegas. Tasked with creating a menu that showcases simple Spanish food with a modern Californian twist, Lee looked to some of the nation's best Spanish restaurants for inspiration and ideas, soon discovering the incredible diversity of Spanish cuisine.

The resulting menu, which consists of modern, inventive spins on traditional dishes, is designed to evoke a festive, communal dining experience—a playful nod to the tapas bars of Spain. Offerings include traditional pintxos, or one-bite morsels on a skewer, an extensive tapas menu featuring traditional favorites and surprising newcomers, as well as Loquita's signature paella. Offered in vegetarian, chicken and chorizo, and seafood versions, the paella is prepared to order and meant to be shared by the whole table. Made with a base of tomatoes, chilies and garlic cooked for six hours, then mixed with Spanish bomba rice and a variety of ingredients straight from the farmers' market, it's a dish that leaves a lasting impression.

Lee's personal favorite menu item is the Wagyu beef carpaccio, which he describes as inherently Italian but made with the flavors of Spain and California. "I use pickled mustard seeds, Manzanilla olives, 12-year-aged Sherry vinegar, shallots, Arbequina olive oil and fried parsley for crunchy texture," he shares. "It's a surprising dish."

Adding to the fun is Loquita's Sunday brunch, where guests can enjoy patatas bravas, smoked salmon Benedict and the popular Spanish French toast with oranges. Wash it all down with a fresh and salty Green Gazpacho Bloody Mary over a live performance of Flamenco dancing, and you've got yourself a perfect Sunday afternoon.

The contemporary interior, decorated with gilded Baroque-style mirrors, antique brass lights and an expansive walnut bar, successfully mixes elements of Spain with Santa Barbara's unique cultural heritage. Adding to the classic yet festive ambiance is a large outdoor patio, complete with fireplaces adorned with sardine cans.

While Loquita may pay homage to Spain, it's unmistakably Santa Barbara in style, making it a worthwhile place to dine, drink, mingle and celebrate the good life in California. ■cr

Executive Chef Peter Lee.

