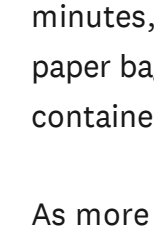
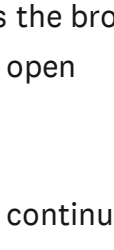


The Best Meals I've Eaten In My Car This Year

A love letter to my 2017 Toyota Corolla.



KAT HONG
APRIL 9, 2021



Over the past year, I've eaten a lot of meals in my car. Pasta goes bad after fifteen minutes, max. French fries can't survive the suffocating sauna known as the brown paper bag. And oysters... well, let's just say speeding down PCH with an open container of raw seafood over ice is not ideal.

As more and more COVID-19 restrictions get stripped away, restaurants continue to fully vaccinate their staff and reopen for indoor dining, and things begin to resemble some semblance of normalcy. I can't help but wonder what will happen to this ritual that, for better or for worse, have come to cherish over the last 13 months.

There's just something about the cramped (often messy) quarters, juxtaposed with some of the best dishes in the city, that sets a bit furtive and raucous, like using your ex's Netflix login behind their back. I have a hunch that my eating-in-the-car routine isn't going anywhere, but as a last hurrah, one final ode to my leased-turned-almost-owned 2017 Toyota Corolla, here's a guide to the best meals I've eaten in the driver's seat.

Side note: For the record, I do not endorse eating and driving. Be safe, buckle up, and pull over like a civilized human while eating your food. Your fellow drivers (and car seats) will thank you.

The Spots



Broad Street Oyster Co.

SEAFOOD MALIBU
PERFECT FOR: CELEBRITY SIGHTINGS OUTDOOR/PATIO SITUATION
SERIOUS TAKE-OUT OPERATION
\$\$\$ 23359 PACIFIC COAST HWY, MALIBU

The Dish: A Dozen Oysters

Please don't judge me for this one. I was having a bad week. I hadn't been outside in months, accidentally bought a gigantic bag of decaf coffee, and just the night before, had resorted to hand-washing all of my loose change, just to pass the time. Shit was dark. So I bought a dozen oysters from Broad Street Oyster Company. What was I supposed to do? Not eat the platter of raw oysters right away? Drive all the way back to the Eastside from Malibu, a trip that could easily take two hours? Twist and turn down PCH, while my beautiful, little oysters sloshed around in a puddle of melting ice in the passenger seat? No thank you. So, like the civilized, law-abiding person I am, I pulled into a deserted parking lot along the beach, gently spooned the sweet, meaty mollusks into my mouth, and thought about how much longer I could get away with not paying for my car registration.



Where To Eat Seafood Outside In LA

PORRIDGE AND PUFFS IS PERMANENTLY CLOSED



Porridge and Puffs

VIETNAMESE HISTORIC FILIPINOTOWN
PERFECT FOR: CASUAL WEEKNIGHT DINNER DINING SOLO GLUTEN-FREE OPTIONS LUNCH
\$\$\$ 2801 BEVERLY BLVD, LOS ANGELES

The Dish: Vietnamese Iced Coffee

Although I only used to live a few blocks away from this Historic Filipinotown restaurant, I once managed to chug half a bottle of their Vietnamese iced coffee on the drive home. It's vibrant and strong, like any good iced coffee, mixed with a sweet condensed milk blend that's smoother than any pick-up line by my current crush, Daniel Kaluuya. Then I realized that it was a concentrate and was intended to be diluted with water. That was a rough afternoon.

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HK Market

KOREAN KOREATOWN
PERFECT FOR: SERIOUS TAKE-OUT OPERATION
\$\$\$ 124 N WESTERN AVE, LOS ANGELES

The Dish: Cheese Kimbap

The glistening, cylindrical kimbap from Ktown's HK Market almost seems tailor-made for on-the-go snacking. The plastic container is packed to the brim with the colorful, seaweed-wrapped rolls stuffed with bright yellow daikon, fish cakes, carrots, and, yes, American cheese. The pieces are easy to grab, they never leave your hands too sticky, and make for the perfect complement to a cruise down Western Ave., admiring the weird, Google NFC, and quickly breaking whenever someone makes an illegal left turn.



Mama's Drive-By Kitchen

\$\$\$

The Dish: Nem Nuong Cuon

Equal parts charity initiative, restaurant pop-up, and revolutionary delivery platform, Mama's Drive-By Kitchen distributes dish pairings from separate mom-and-pop restaurants to convenient pick-up locations all over the city. Sometimes that manifests in bringing together Little Tokyo legends Kouraku, Fugeten-Do, and Aday, other times it's a special one-day meal from Jun Won. A few months back, I was lucky enough to get the nem nuong cuon from Broard Chateau in Fountain Valley. Sweet pork sausage rolls in one hand, steering wheel in the other, plus Kim Petras blasting through the speakers - this blessed combination was a one-way-ticket to transcending my physical form.



Mama Makes It Easy: How A New Pop-Up Brings Iconic LA Restaurants To You



Jame Enoteca

ITALIAN EL SEGUNDO
PERFECT FOR: CASUAL WEEKNIGHT DINNER LUNCH
\$\$\$ 241 MAIN ST, EL SEGUNDO

The Dish: Mandilli

Pre-pandemic, asking for a ride to LAX was basically akin to asking a friend to donate an organ. But over the past year, whenever someone needed a ride to the airport (which happened exactly twice), I'd jump at the chance - mostly to swing by Jame Enoteca. It takes exactly eight minutes to get to their El Segundo outpost from Terminal 7 (United), and you'll receive a beautiful, silky smooth handkerchief pasta in a nutty pesto sauce that's both a breeze to cut through, and surprisingly easy to twirl while driving.



Son of A Gun

SEAFOOD BEVERLY GROVE
PERFECT FOR: LUNCH SMALL PLATES
\$\$\$ 8370 W 3RD STREET, LOS ANGELES

The Dish: Yellowfin Tuna

During this strange, brain-looking dish taste better served in some shallow, artisan-made bowl at a restaurant? Of course. Should I have waited until I got back to my house before dunking the condensed ball of avocado and tortilla chips wrapped in a thin yellowfin tuna membrane into its spiky yellow juices? Absolutely. But the drive home was over 45 minutes, with bumper-to-bumper traffic, so much like your money and JG Wentworth, I needed it now.

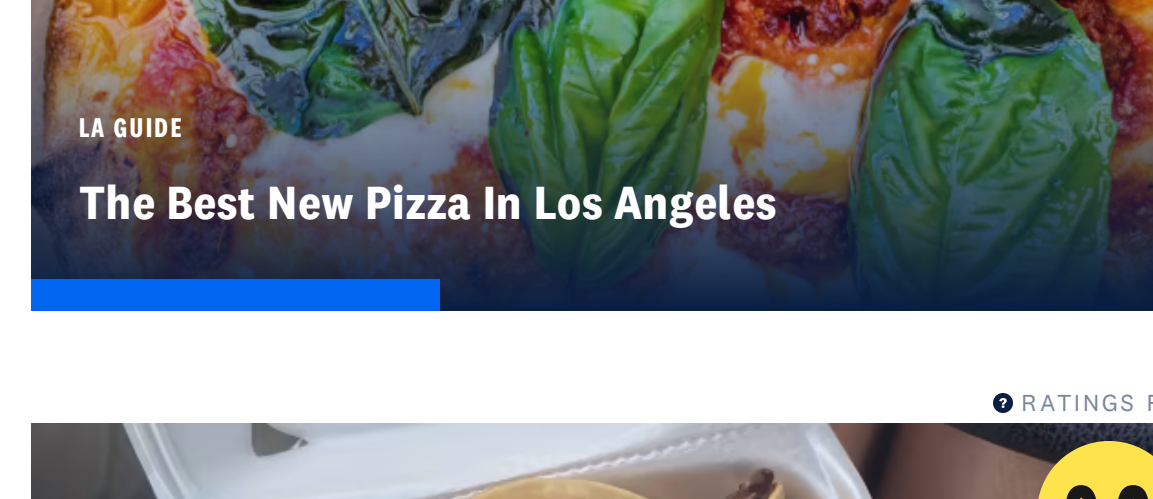


Cafe Birdie

AMERICAN HIGHLAND PARK
PERFECT FOR: BRUNCH DATE NIGHT DINNER WITH THE PARENTS OUTDOOR/PATIO SITUATION
\$\$\$ 5631 N FIGUEROA ST, LOS ANGELES

The Dish: Squash Blossom Square Pie

Perfect, soft little pillows, the pizzas at this Highland Park restaurant are made Sicilian-style, which means they're served as extra-thick, square pieces and contain more dough than Jeff Bezos' bank account. That's all I really have to say. It's an excellent slice of pizza, in or out of the driver's seat.



The Best New Pizza In Los Angeles



Mariscos Jalisco

TACOS BOYLE HEIGHTS
PERFECT FOR: CLASSIC ESTABLISHMENT DINING SOLO IMPRESSING OUT OF TOWNERS LUNCH
\$\$\$ 3040 E OLYMPIC BLVD, LOS ANGELES

The Dish: Tacos de Camaron

From seafood packaged camarones to their excellent merch, I've written about my obsession with this Boyle Heights mariscos truck at length. But when it comes to eating their signature tacos de camaron in the car, things get complicated. There's randomly a lot of prep work - you'll need to squeeze the limes, carefully slice the avocados, then drench it in their creamy, house-made salsa without it overflowing into your cup holder. It's not an easy feat, especially combined with a quick merge onto the 101, teasing your friends that you're running late, and skipping past the ads of the beginning of a special You're Wrong About episode about Princess Diana. It's hard work, but someone's gotta do it. Or you could just pull over. Actually, do that.

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SUGGESTED READING

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Infatuation LA's Favorite Meals Of The Week
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Where To Eat & Drink If You Forgot How To Socialize

COMPANY: Atlanta, Austin, Barcelona, Berlin, Boston, Cape Town, Charleston, Chicago, Copenhagen, Dallas, Detroit, Hampton, Hong Kong, Houston, Hudson Valley, Joshua Tree, Kansas City, Las Vegas, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Maui, Melbourne, Mexico City, Miami, Minneapolis, Montreal, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, North Carolina, Orlando, Palm Springs, Paris, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver, Washington DC, Wilmington. NEW! Save this guide for later.

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