



8.5

Best New Restaurants 2022

Pijja Palace

INDIAN BAR FOOD SILVER LAKE

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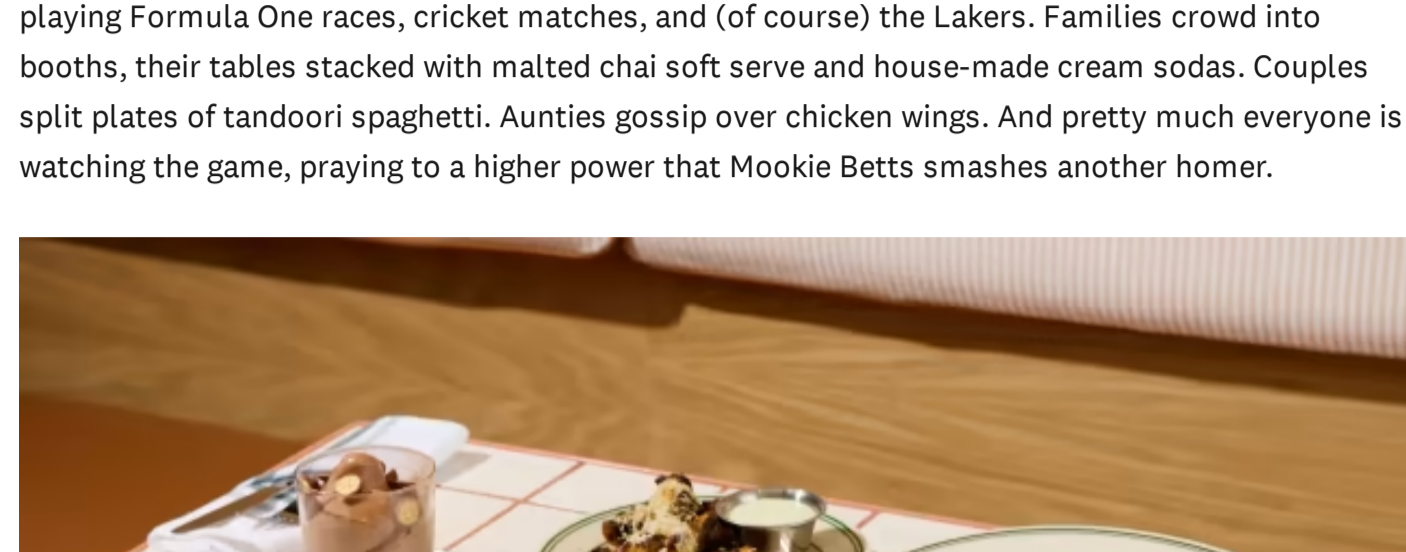
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KAT HONG
JULY 7, 2022

Pijja Palace is an Indian sports bar in Silver Lake that looks nothing like the image that just popped into your head. A genre-bending fusion of saag-seared pizzas, mid-century modern furniture, R&B music, and framed photos of Serena smacking a forehand, it's one of the most memorable Silver Lake restaurants to open in a very long time.

But first, some context: The strip mall that houses Pijja Palace was previously home to Sunset Foot Clinic, a beloved local landmark known for its iconic rotating [Happy Foot/Sad Foot sign](#). The clinic relocated in 2020, the sign came down, and Pijja Palace moved in soon after. This restaurant, in other words, had some "ahem" big shoes to fill.

And damn, did they fill them.



The dining room at Pijja Palace feels both hectic and harmonious, like a CBD drink laced with amphetamines. Tables are painted in soft pastels, and a dozen flatscreen TVs plaster the walls playing Formula One races, cricket matches, and (of course) the Lakers. Families crowd into booths, their tables stacked with malted chai soft serve and house-made cream sodas. Couples split plates of tandoori spaghetti. Aunties gossip over chicken wings. And pretty much everyone is watching the game, praying to a higher power that Mookie Betts smashes another homer.

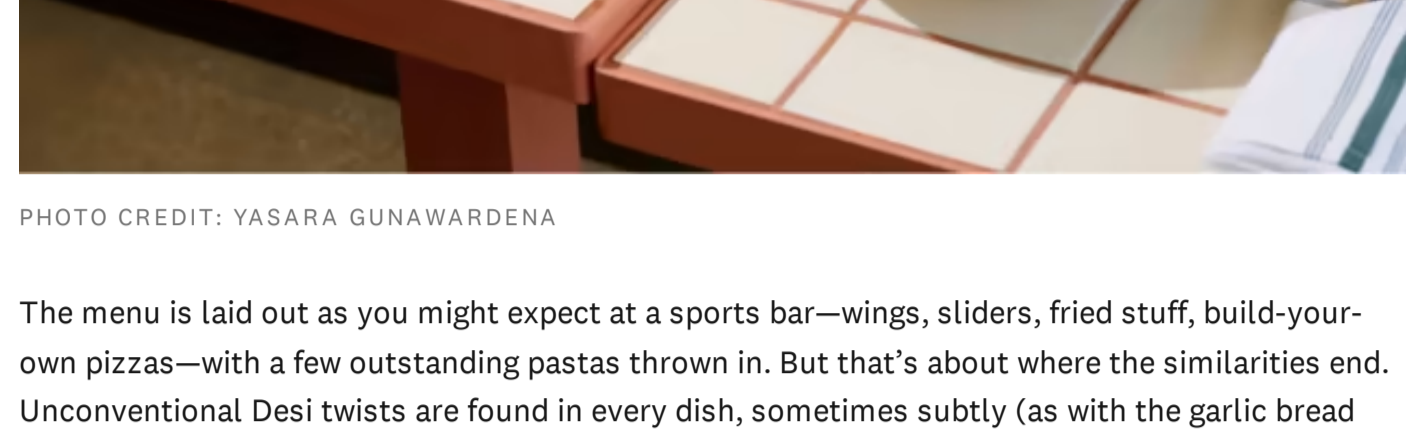


PHOTO CREDIT: YASARA GUNAWARDENA

The menu is laid out as you might expect at a sports bar—wings, sliders, fried stuff, build-your-own pizzas—with a few outstanding pastas thrown in. But that's about where the similarities end. Unconventional Desi twists are found in every dish, sometimes subtly (as with the garlic bread daubed with garlic-chile paste) and other times emphatically bold, like juicy lamb sliders slapped with Amul cheese, a salty-tangy spread that's the Indian equivalent of Kraft singles. Unless you arrive with a dozen friends, you won't be able to try everything that grabs your attention. So start with the pastas and build from there. A good rule of thumb is a pasta per person, plus one for the table. Then a pizza as well. And probably some okra fries and wings, too.



PHOTO CREDIT: YASARA GUNAWARDENA

If we haven't said it plainly enough, Pijja Palace is no ordinary sports bar, and that extends to its drink menu, too. Besides draft beers and funky natural wines, you will also find inventive cocktails—try the chai whiskey sour flavored with Darjeeling tea—and a vintage soda machine in the back, a relic from the 1940s, which spouts out colorful fountain-style treats. Dr. Patel's Prescription Sarsaparilla comes with a scoop of sweet caramel ice cream, while a tamarind soda balances the tropical fruit's tart bite with floral Rooh Afza syrup and a shot of setzer. Shirley Temple could never.

Game days warrant a visit to Pijja Palace, of course. But it's also suited for casual date nights, catch-ups with friends, and evenings when the group chat needs something to do. This is a place where boredom isn't allowed. You will eat Indian-ish fusion comfort food, feel visually overstimulated, and stare deeply into LeBron James' eyes on an HD screen. Trying to explain Pijja Palace's jovial mish-mash to someone—a friend, an alien from Mars, your cousin from Iowa—will leave you exasperated. There's just too much fun stuff. Our advice? Don't overthink why or how it all fits together. Just enjoy it.

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Food Rundown

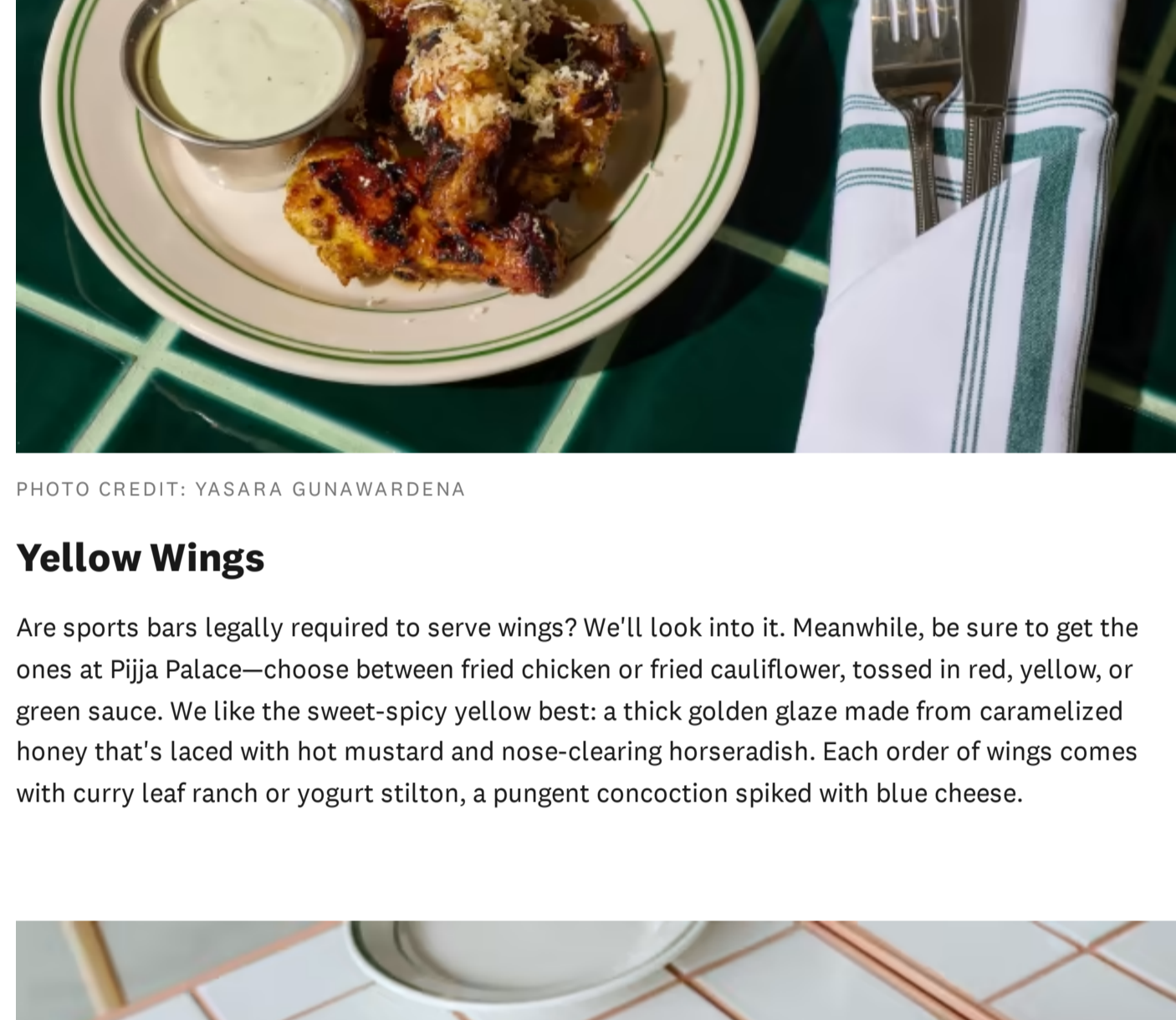


PHOTO CREDIT: YASARA GUNAWARDENA

Yellow Wings

Are sports bars legally required to serve wings? We'll look into it. Meanwhile, be sure to get the ones at Pijja Palace—choose between fried chicken or fried cauliflower, tossed in red, yellow, or green sauce. We like the sweet-spicy yellow best: a thick golden glaze made from caramelized honey that's laced with hot mustard and nose-clearing horseradish. Each order of wings comes with curry leaf ranch or yogurt stilton, a pungent concoction spiked with blue cheese.



Green Chutney Pijja

The namesake pijjas/pizzas taste like a vastly superior version of the ones at Chuck E. Cheese, complete with a medium-to-thick crust and blistered cheese. We especially love the green chutney pijja, a simple cheese pie slathered in a zesty pesto-colored sauce and dusted with coarsely ground garam masala.



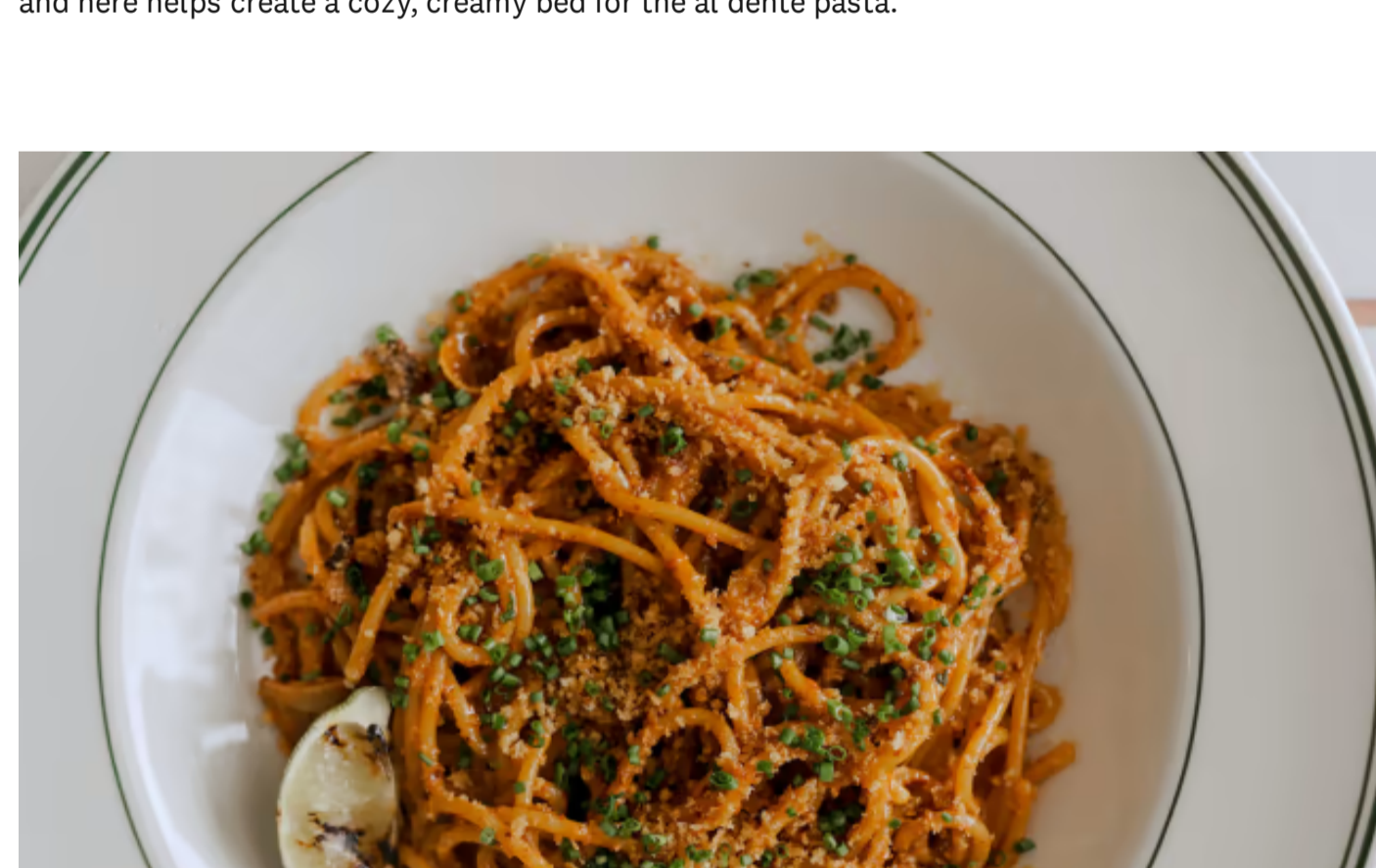
Kesar Shells & Cheese

Imagine if Hamburger Helper and cacio e pepe had a baby. And that baby was a genius. In MENSA. Who also modeled part-time. That would be this dish.



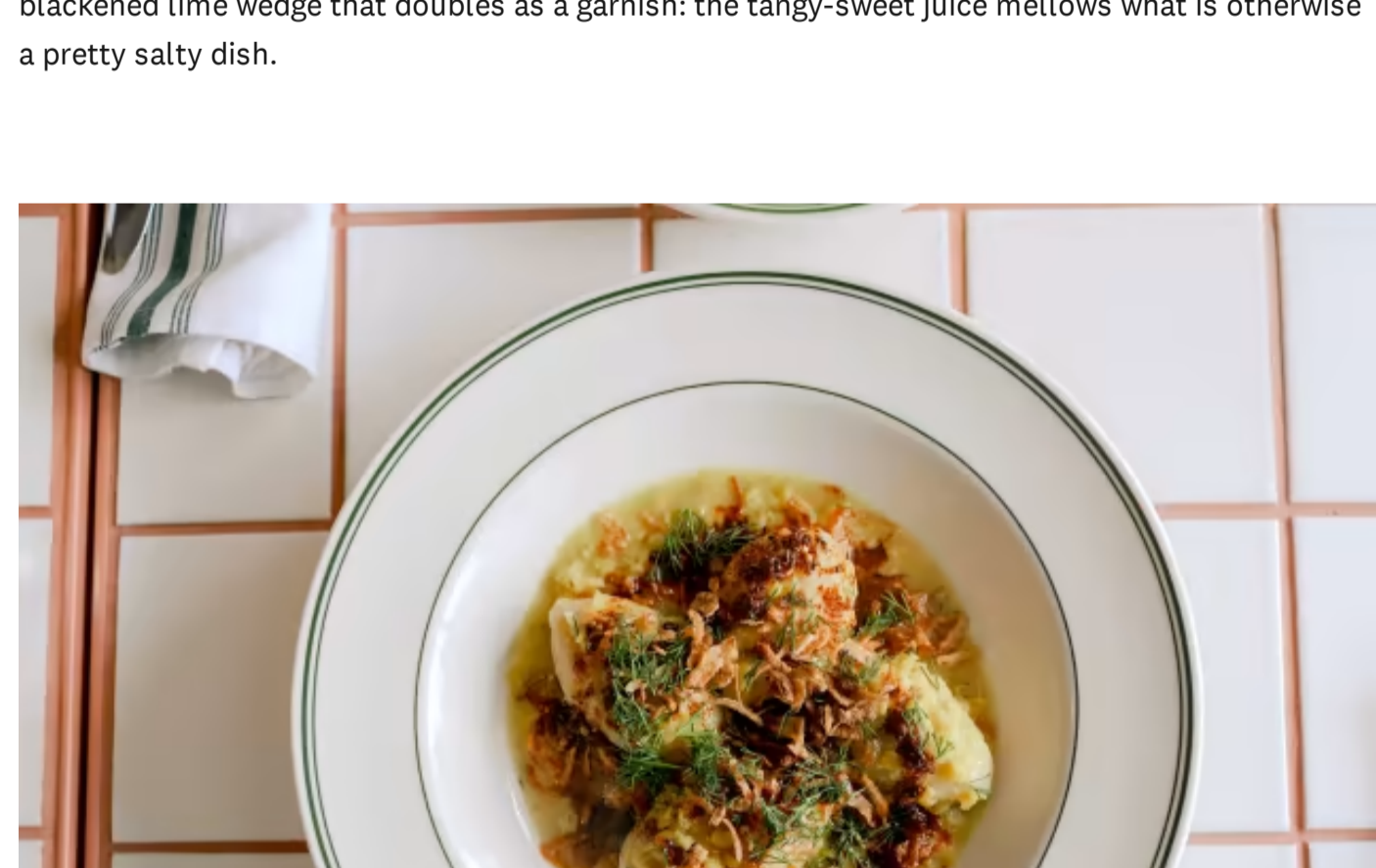
Malai Rigatoni

Thanks to [Jon & Vinny's Oregi](#), and a million other copycats, spicy rigatoni is hardly a novel dish. And yet, this version made us mutter expletives on first bite. It tastes like a warm hug or a handwritten note from a friend—comfort to the nth degree. Malai, or clotted cream, adds a distinct richness to the spiced tomato sauce. It's often used to enrich Indian puddings or curries, and here helps create a cozy, creamy bed for the al dente pasta.



Tandoori Spaghetti

Oooh, this spaghetti is spicy. If reading the words "chile-infused oil" makes your eyes water, skip this dish. For everyone else, it's a must. Thick spaghetti noodles are tossed with a scorching charred chile oil, which lends a deep, smoky aroma. Make sure to squeeze every drop from the blackened lime wedge that doubles as a garnish: the tangy-sweet juice mellows what is otherwise a pretty salty dish.



ChaaS Dumplings

These are heavy-duty dumplings. The doughy hand-shaped mounds look and feel like stones, which makes us think they could do serious damage to a window... although, for liability purposes, we don't recommend that. They come doused in a light, refreshing spiced buttermilk—chaas—and finished with a handful of dill, which provides some needed tang. Together the elements balance each other out perfectly, like a late night talk show host and their simpleminded sidekick. (We prefer Larry Sanders and [Hank "Hey Now" Kingstley](#).)

Dosa Onion Rings

These thick, bracelet-size onion rings are dipped in a dosa-style batter, made using a blend of rice, lentil, and chickpea flours. The result is a light, airy shell that shatters and crunches loud enough for the next table to hear when you take a bite. A pleasantly spiced mango chutney is served on the side, which you should definitely use for dipping.



Malted Chai Soft Serve

Is there a better way to end a meal? Other than the Dodgers winning, the answer is no. Delicious chai-spiced soft serve is swirled towards the sky and covered in roasty, toasted malted milk powder. Plus, there are some Whoppers scattered on top, which totally fits with the whole "vintage soda fountain from the '40s" theme.

SUGGESTED READING

<p>The LA Hit List: The Best New Restaurants In Los Angeles</p> <p>We checked out these new restaurants in LA and loved them.</p>	<p>Bar Moruno SPANISH SILVER LAKE</p> <p>Bar Moruno is an upscale Spanish spot that brings a jolt of energy to Sunset Junction in Silver Lake.</p>	<p>The Best Restaurants In Silver Lake SILVER LAKE</p> <p>24 great restaurants in Silver Lake.</p>
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