

## First Look: LA Mill

By -- S. Irene Virbila  
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THE question all over Silver Lake is: Have you been yet? Been where? To LA Mill, the new coffee boutique from the tony Alhambra coffee roaster that supplies many of L.A.'s top restaurants.

For coffee aficionados in the neighborhood, this is a banner year. Not only does Silver Lake now boast an *Intelligentsia* café by way of Chicago's consummate coffee roaster, Craig Min has just moved in with his LA Mill boutique, which not only serves coffee and morning pastries, but also light meals created by Michael Cimarusti of Providence, with elegant desserts by his pastry chef Adrian R. Vasquez.

OK, I'm there. And shortly thereafter, I'm there again. And again. Designed by the folks at Rubbish Interiors across the street from LA Mill's Silver Lake Boulevard location (with parking in back, I might add), it's smart and savvy -- a giddy mix of midcentury chairs upholstered in wildly colored faux alligator and ostrich skin and lovely antique pieces like the massive brass chandelier overhead or slender sideboard, with tables and banquettes against a background of hand-painted wallpaper.

LA Mill celebrates coffee with an inventive beverage menu that runs the gamut from classic espresso and café au lait to single cups of joe made in a \$12,000 Clover machine, plus an intriguing list of signature drinks. "Coffee and a cigarette" is espresso poured over tobacco-infused whipped cream, served in an egg-shaped glass set on a crystal pedestal. They've got table-side coffee service, too, in several forms, including French press, old-fashioned Chemex and an elaborate glass-and-Bunsen-burner affair called the siphon.

What's to eat? A killer *jambon beurre* -- baguette spread with butter and piled with delicious thinly-sliced ham, served, like all the sandwiches, with handmade Yukon Gold potato chips. Or the Asian BLT panini made with pork belly and preserved black bean. Soup is a deep-flavored Tahitian squash purée dotted with crème fraîche flavored with Turkish Urfa pepper, maple syrup -- and coffee. Coffee sneaks into the dressing for the lovely frisée *au lardon* salad too.

And if you have more breakfast than lunch in mind, get one of the coddled egg dishes, two farm-fresh eggs with startling marigold-colored yolks baked in a terra cotta dish and garnished with *lardons* and wild mushrooms, say.

You might want to save room for dessert, notably the passion fruit gelee topped with a subtle lychee-shiso sorbet and served in a puddle of white-chocolate-soy-coconut milk soup. I could go on, but I won't.

Better make a reservation: they're already slammed for lunch on weekdays. And weekends? Let's just say it's crazy busy.

## **LA MILL COFFEE BOUTIQUE**

**WHERE:** 1636 Silver Lake Blvd., L.A.

**WHEN:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Starting Friday, open 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. In a few weeks, hours should be extended to 10 p.m.

**PRICE:** Egg dishes, \$10 to \$12; soup, \$12; salads, \$10 to \$12; sandwiches, \$8 to \$16; desserts, \$9; morning pastries, \$3 to \$4; espresso drinks, \$2.50 to \$5; Clover coffee, \$3.50 (limited coffees more); signature beverages, \$5 to \$6.50; tableside slow extraction coffee service, \$8 to \$12; pots of tea, \$5 to \$7 (limited teas more).

**INFO:** (323) 663-4441.