

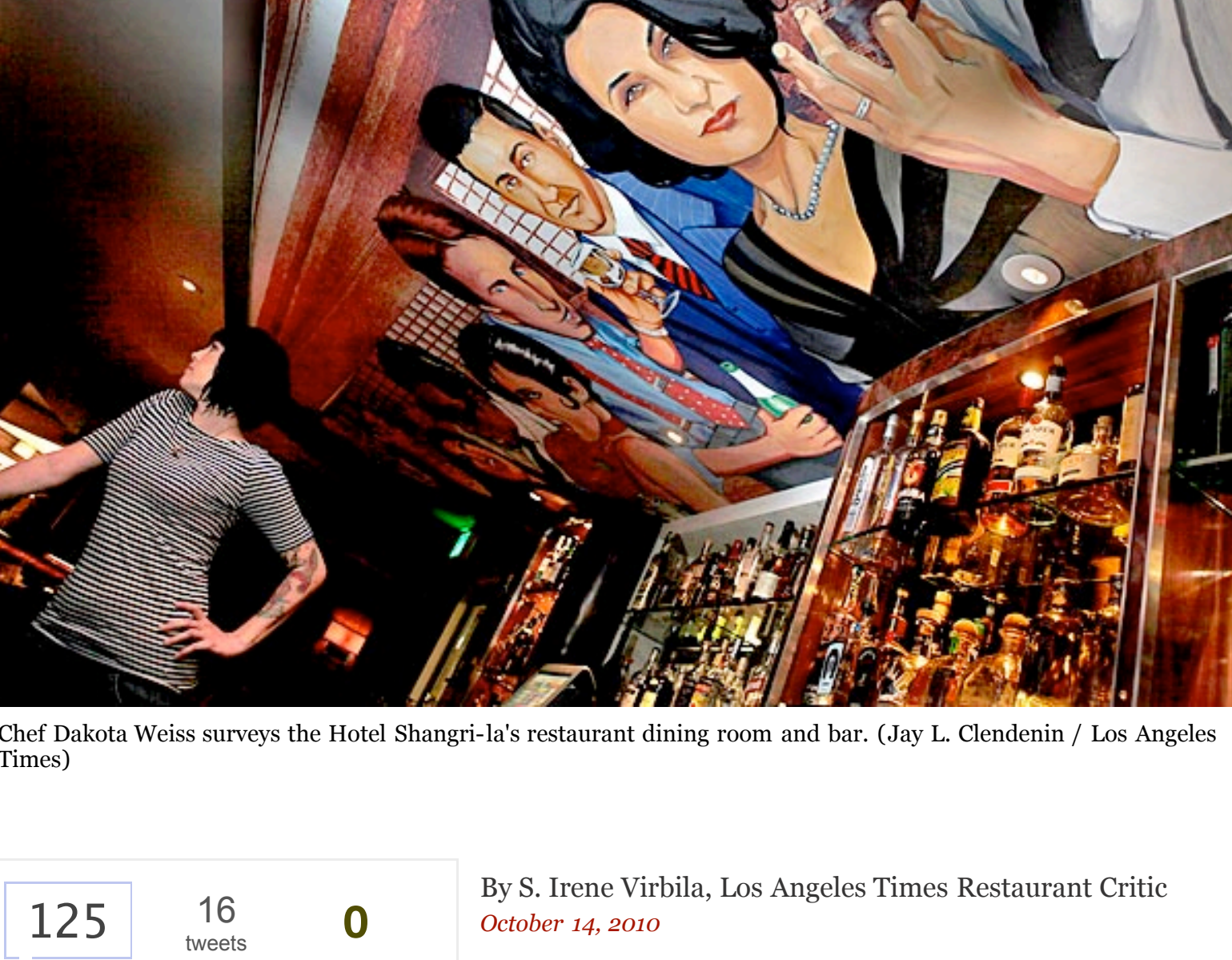
Low-Cost Mammograms
 Providence Holy Cross Medical Center
 Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center
 Providence Tarzana Medical Center
[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

IN THE NEWS: CVS FINED | FT. HOOD HEARING | 'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL' | CHILE MINE RESCUE



The Review: Hotel Shangri-la

Former Tower Bar chef Dakota Weiss has helped make Hotel Shangri-la's cozy dining room a spot to check into.



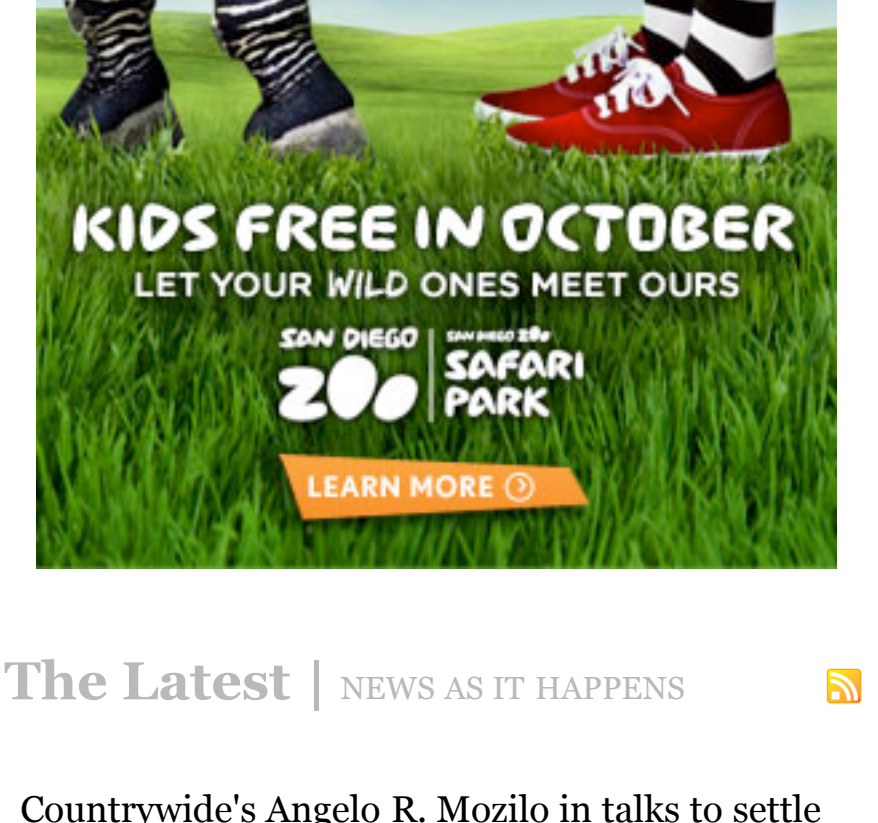
Chef Dakota Weiss surveys the Hotel Shangri-la's restaurant dining room and bar. (Jay L. Clendenin / Los Angeles Times)

Hot List: Things to Do »

What: Restaurants
Where: Hollywood

Restaurants | Theater & Stage | Nightlife | Festivals | Concerts | Galleries & Museums

M T W Th F Sa Su



The Latest | NEWS AS IT HAPPENS

- Countrywide's Angelo R. Mozilo in talks to settle SEC charges, sources say - *L.A. Times - Business* 10/15/2010, 12:00 a.m.
- Mortgage rates again set new lows - *L.A. Times - Business* 10/15/2010, 12:00 a.m.
- Google earnings outpace forecasts - *L.A. Times - Business* 10/15/2010, 12:00 a.m.
- Record gap with China sends U.S. trade deficit soaring in August - *L.A. Times - Business* 10/15/2010, 12:00 a.m.
- Extending the shelf life of frequent-flier miles - *L.A. Times - Business* 10/15/2010, 12:00 a.m.

125 tweets
16 retweets
0

RELATED

- The Dining Room in Santa Monica
- Top reviewed restaurants of the L.A. Times
- Sugar and spice make an unexpectedly nice dessert

STORIES

- Beer of the Month: Moylan's Brewing Kilt Lifter
- Culinary SOS: Chilled avocado and watercress soup with shrimp
- Wine of the week: 2009 Château d'Épiré Savennières 'Cuvée Spéciale'

[See more stories »](#)

By S. Irene Virbila, Los Angeles Times Restaurant Critic
 October 14, 2010

E-mail Print Share Text Size Like Steven N. Ewald and 131 others like this.

★★★★☆

Hotel dining rooms don't come much cozier than the one at the updated **Hotel Shangri-la** on Ocean Boulevard in Santa Monica. The chairs are round, barrel-shaped numbers with deep tobacco-colored leather cushions and a propensity for swiveling, the better to check out the quiet scene. The theme is Art Deco, to echo the 1939 hotel's architecture. And because the dining room is so, well, small, it feels more like a posh private club than like a restaurant that takes reservations.

Business has been so sparse recently, though, it's just possible I was the only one who took the trouble to make them. And that's a shame, because the food from former **Tower Bar** chef Dakota Weiss is really quite good. So is the service. OK, maybe the waiters are actors (they're all certainly attractive enough). But, if so, they're playing the part to perfection, because I really believed they knew what they were doing. Wine is never poured too high in the glass. Water is refilled when it needs it, not just to make a show of doing so. The right plates are set down in front of the people who ordered them. Cocktails are strong and well-made. All this, and the palisades and the Pacific just across the street.

Hotel restaurants used to be so formal, they were the last bastion for those in search of a quiet dinner. Though the Shangri-la's restaurant is much more casual, the noise level most nights is civilized enough that I was able to catch up with old friends one night recently without being tortured by a heavy-metal soundtrack. Another night, even though a dozen or so guests were celebrating a friend's birthday, the volume wasn't amped up so much you couldn't talk. If you want that kind of crazy scene, try **Boa** or **Ivy at the Shore** down the street. But you'll eat better here.

Get breaking news alerts delivered to your mobile phone. Text **BREAKING** to 52669.

Shangri-la's menu is not hotel solemn but lighthearted and playful. The bar and the dining room are essentially one space. Come in for a drink or a glass of wine and a small plate or two. Stop there, or stay for dinner and order something more substantial.

I like that Weiss has credited everyone on the crew at the bottom of the menu. They deserve a mention because they're doing a good job. The food comes out fast and well-executed. She's not aiming for the stars or a shot at a "Top Chef" competition, just providing hotel guests and anybody else with accessible, heartwarming comfort food at prices lower than most hotel dining rooms. She's just added a special three-course menu on Tuesday nights for \$15, and every night there's one main course priced at \$15.

You could start out with a bright octopus ceviche cut in coin-sized slices and doused in lots of lime, or a deconstructed shrimp cocktail with a gutsy cocktail sauce. Shredded short ribs on a soft bun make terrific sliders. But my favorite starter is either the spicy grilled lamb sausage or the truffled egg toast. The latter is an inch-thick slice of lightly toasted brioche with a fried egg on top, the yolk still runny. The truffled part? Truffle oil, of course, but here used so discreetly that it just gives the toast a hint of mystery. Cut into finger-width slices, it's fun to have with a glass of wine.

The flatbread is excellent. I know, I know, we've all come across some terrible disappointments in the rush to outdo pizza at its own game. Here, the oblong-shaped crust is grilled, which gives it a certain chewiness, but the toppings aren't shy about flavor. I liked the one covered with a slurry of spicy paprika-streaked Spanish chorizo sausage and Petit Basque sheep's milk cheese. And the version with wild mushrooms and a velvety layer of fontina cheese is just as delicious cut into elongated triangles.

You don't often see an omelet as an entree on a dinner menu, but here it's welcome, embellished with black truffle and cooked so it's lovely and runny at the center. Another long-forgotten dish is chicken Cordon Bleu, chicken breast pounded and rolled up with prosciutto and cheese, then dipped in panko bread crumbs and fried. It's served sliced, the better to show off its spiral structure. But it's not all looks. The flavors just pop. Coq au vin served as a special one night is made with only dark meat, saucy and luscious served on a bed of mashed potatoes dotted with green peas. Sliced sweet baby corn gives the dish a touch of sweetness.

She's got a classic steak *frites*, this one a culotte cut and served with skinny fries showered with Parmesan (and too much salt one night). Weiss turns out a good, straight-ahead burger too, which I'd be happy to enjoy before a film or after a walk on the beach. While the sirloin beef itself isn't especially flavorful, the burger is thick and juicy, cooked to a perfect medium-rare as ordered. It comes with caramelized onions, sharp cheddar and the usual fixings on a shiny domed bun.

Of the side dishes, mac 'n' cheese is a must. A svelte, creamy cheddar sauce, made with Fair Tire ale, cloaks each piece of macaroni — just the way it should. Fat asparagus are served with a bergamot-perfumed mayonnaise. And sautéed spinach is embellished with shiitake mushrooms. Vegetarians could easily put two or three of the sides together to make a meal.

For dessert, pass up the oatmeal-topped strawberry crisp for the silky butterscotch *pot de crème* crowned with a perfect lacy cookie. Or order up a chorus line of bite-size chocolate cupcakes, each wearing a swirl of dark chocolate frosting that makes it look like a little troll.

Just before leaving one night, I went through a door to the right of the bar to discover a huge inner courtyard patio where you can also eat. You won't have the same view of sea and sky, but then again those attractions are only visible before dark. You can enjoy more privacy too. And if you or your companion is dressed more for the tropics than Santa Monica, he or she can bask under the heat lamps without having to resort to a sweater or shawl.

Far north of the glitzy venues on Ocean Boulevard, the Shangri-la remains more of an insider's spot, somewhere to go for a quiet dinner away from the crowd. Good things sometimes come in surprising packages.

THE DINING ROOM AT HOTEL SHANGRI-LA

RATING: Two stars

LOCATION: The Dining Room, Hotel Shangri-la, 1301 Ocean Ave., Santa Monica; (310) 394-2791; <http://www.shangri-la-hotel.com>.

PRICE: Raw bar and seafood, \$12 to \$18; salads and sandwiches, \$10 to \$23; grilled flatbreads, \$14; small plates, \$7 to \$12; main courses, \$18 to \$39; sides, \$5 to \$7; desserts, \$3 to \$7. Tuesday night three-course menu, \$15. Bar menu items (served until midnight), \$7. Corkage, \$25.

DETAILS: Open 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday and Monday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday and 7 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday. Brunch served on weekend mornings. Valet parking, \$6 for two hours, with validation.

Rating is based on food, service and ambience, with price taken into account in relation to quality. ****: Outstanding on every level. ***: Excellent. **: Very good. *: Good. No star: Poor to satisfactory.

irene.virbila@latimes.com

Copyright © 2010, Los Angeles Times

ADS BY GOOGLE

Restaurant Coupons
Amazing Daily Deals. Get 90% off at Local Restaurants. Sign Up Now!
kgbdeals.com

Dining Room Furniture
Find dining room furniture and more online at Horchow.com.
www.Horchow.com

Pier 1 Dining Tables
Pier 1 Furniture, Fits Your Style. Distinct, Different- Just Like You.
www.Pier1.com/AutumnSavings

E-mail Print

Digg Twitter Facebook Read This Later Share

Comments (0) Add comments | Discussion FAQ

Currently there are no comments. Be the first to comment!

Comments are filtered for language and registration is required. The Times makes no guarantee of comments' factual accuracy. Readers may report inappropriate comments by clicking the Report Abuse link. Here are the full legal terms you agree to by using this comment form.

Daily Dish

The inside scoop on food in Los Angeles

- 'Just Desserts' recap: Food and fashion collide 10/14/2010, 2:50 p.m.
- Latest recipes from the L.A. Times Test Kitchen 10/14/2010, 7:59 a.m.
- Food trucks fete Long Beach marathoners, half marathoners and cyclists 10/13/2010, 12:46 p.m.

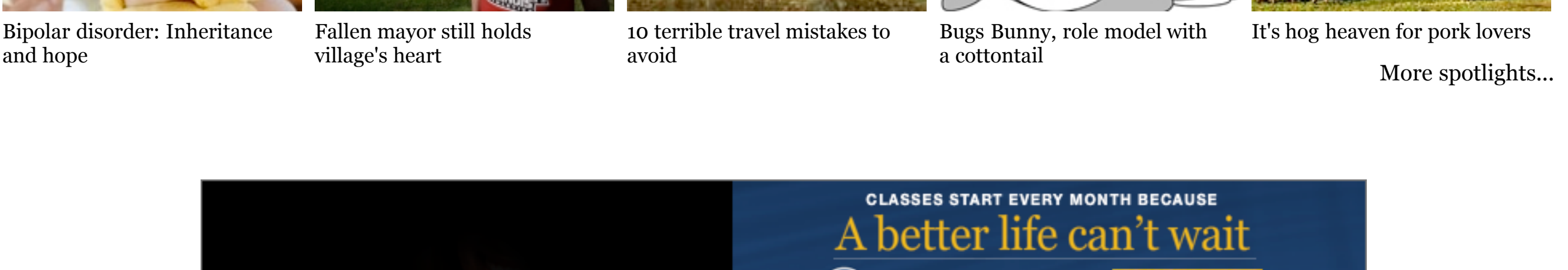
[More...](#)

Food Photos

- Save the candy for dessert: Kid-friendly Halloween recipes
- Opening the vault: 25 years of our best recipes
- 94 recipes for your favorite restaurant dishes

Enjoy more stories like this for only \$1 a week. Click here to order The Times.

In Case You Missed It...



More spotlights...

CLASSES START EVERY MONTH BECAUSE

A better life can't wait

National University [LEARN MORE](#)