



**Winners of the 2019 American Institute of Architects Los Angeles (AIA|LA) Restaurant Design Awards Announced  
People's Choice Winners Also Revealed**

**Saturday, June 22, 2019 (Los Angeles)**—Restaurants, bars, cafes, and lounges from as far afield as Toronto, Canada, Austin, Texas, and Detroit, Michigan were among the fourteen winners of the 2019 American Institute of Architects Los Angeles chapter (AIA|LA) Restaurant Design Awards announced in DTLA tonight.

The awards program, now well into its second decade, celebrates and encourages design excellence that must resolve demanding functional needs while furnishing exemplary placemaking.

Winners were awarded in three categories: Restaurants, Café/Bars, Lounge/Nightclubs. Three levels of awards were noted: Honor, Merit, and Citation, with Honor representing the highest ranking.

A “People’s Choice Award” winner was also awarded in each category. Online voters selecting their favorite from among 25 “finalists” chosen by the 2019 AIA|LA Restaurant Design Awards jury. Each year, a designer with strong restaurant design experience, a restaurateur, and a food critic serve on the RDA jury. The 2019 jury was composed of: Ezequiel Farca, Intl. Assoc. AIA – CEO/Founder, Ezequiel Farca; Hans Rockenwagner – Owner, Rockenwagner Bakeries/Cafes; and Garrett Snyder – Food Editor, *Los Angeles Magazine*.

At the awards ceremony, which was held at the LA Design Festival, Rockenwagner and Snyder bestowed the honors along with designer and restaurateur Barbara Lazaroff. Rounding out the presentation, literally, were the awards themselves: custom-engraved plates fabricated by NotNeutral.

AIA|LA Executive Director Carlo Caccavale, Hon. AIA|LA, hosted the evening and moderated the AIA|LA’s “Behind Great Restaurant Design” panel immediately preceding the ceremony. The panel provided illuminating backstory into the design process of RDA finalists (as provided by the designers themselves) as well as insights from Rockenwagner.

The 2019 AIA|LA Restaurant Design Awards Winners are:

Honor Award, Restaurant:

**auburn (Los Angeles, California.) Designed by: ORA and Klein Agency. Photo: Nicole Franzen.**

Understated elegance. | Nothing is out of proportion. | There’s a nice use of empty space – it’s allowed to breathe.

Honor Award, Restaurant:

**Vespertine (Culver City, California.) Designed by: Eric Owen Moss Architects. Photo: Tom Bonner Photography.**

This could have easily turned very contrived, but didn’t. | It channels your experience of the building itself. | The experience is the architecture, the design, and the food.

Merit Award, Restaurant:

**Loro (Austin, Texas.) Designed by: Michael Hsu Office of Architecture. Photo: Casey Dunn.**

It’s beautifully designed—the exposed beams and how the materials are managed with the combination of the different woods. | All of the it is very well done. | It has a modern ranch feel. | We like the paying of homage to the Texas oak roads. It makes us want to be in Austin.

Merit Award, Restaurant:

**Westheimer Restaurant (Houston, Texas.) Designed by: A Parallel Architecture. Photo: Chase Daniel.**

This is an example of how you can emphasize function while still having good design. | This is obviously—from the layout of the tables—very functional, very efficient, but there are elements you look for in good modern design.

Citation Award, Restaurant:

**Jeune et Jolie (Carlsbad, California.) Designed by: Bells + Whistles. Photo: Lily Glass.**

A Parisian bistro filtered through a California-beach lens. | It’s familiar but also feels like something we haven’t seen quite put together. | The kitchen really adds to the entire experience and the dining mood. | The layout takes advantage of the space, bringing all of this roundness to it. | For a small space, it’s very balanced.

Citation Award, Restaurant:

**La Lucha (Houston, Texas.) Designed by: Michael Hsu Office of Architecture. Photo: Chase Daniel.**

Great details. Whether it’s the cabinetry or some of the wall art or the pattern in the ceiling – even if it isn’t always entirely cohesive—at every point, there was a great amount of thought given to details. | We like its quirkiness.