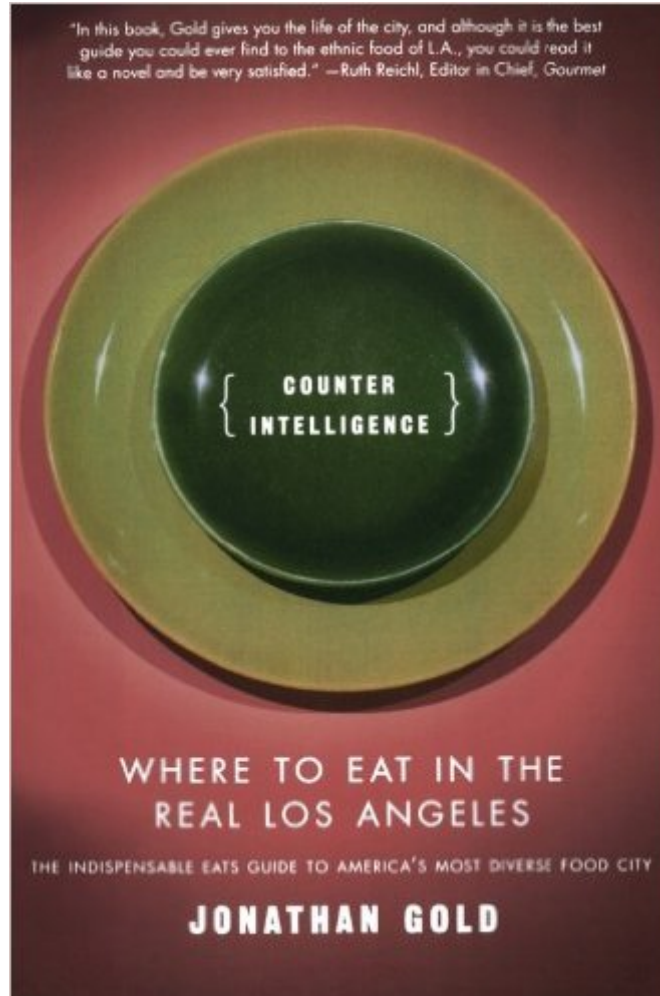


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# Counter Intelligence: Where To Eat In The Real Los Angeles



## Synopsis

Jonathan Gold has eaten it all. Counter Intelligence collects over 200 of Gold's best restaurant discoveries--from inexpensive lunch counters you won't find on your own to the perfect undiscovered dish at a beaten-path establishment. He reveals the hidden kitchens where Los Angeles' ethnic communities feed their own, including the best of cuisine from Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Burma, Canton, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Middle East, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand, Vietnam and more. Not to mention the perfectly prepared hamburger and Los Angeles' quintessential hot dog. Counter Intelligence is the richest and most complete guide to eating in Los Angeles. The listings include where to find it and how much you'll pay (in many cases, not very much) with appendices that cover food types and feeding by neighborhood.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

To paraphrase the author, Angelenos are uniquely afflicted with people who jet in here and try and explain the city and its contents (and discontents) from the safety of their own presuppositions.

Jonathan Gold takes you through LA the only way that makes sense: by hop-scotching about the city, trying every dish in every corner and reporting passionately and wittily about what he finds.

Gold began his quest many years ago by setting himself to eat his way along Pico Boulevard (a major east-west street that cuts through all sorts of cultures and cuisines), and in this book he shares all that and more. This encyclopedia of great (and mostly cheap) eats is full of great advice, great finds, and hunger-inducing prose. If only the indexing were a little more complete, this would

be *The Perfect Los Angeles Restaurant Guide*. As it is, the only way to read it is in a straight line, from start to finish...which is actually terrific! Gold is a tremendously entertaining and nimble writer. I have this final compliment to offer: OK, Jonathan, I WILL try BIRRIA! Thanks for a terrific book!JJF

Anyone worth their stuff on underground dining in LA knows Jonathan Gold from his days as a LA Times food critic. His counter intelligence reviews are still proudly displayed by restaurateurs all over LA. Mr. Gold will introduce you to the astonishing variety of authentic multi-ethnic cuisines that are hidden by LA's huge geographical expanse. The book is heavy on regional Asian and Latin cuisines. The columns are very entertaining. If you are looking for trendy dining experiences, then this book isn't for you. It could use an index that sorts the restaurants by geography. I grew up in LA and make the effort to find out of the way dining experiences, but Mr. Gold takes it to another level. He is the master. I just wish he would bring back his counter intelligence column and make my life a bit easier.

Gold, who now writes about the New York restaurant scene for *Gourmet* magazine, is a wordsmith beyond compare. Before I found this book (thank the lord I did!) I would repeatedly read and re-read his reviews in back issues of *LA Weekly*- I hungered for his words about food almost as much as I did for food itself! Gold is a true poet of food- in the same vein as MFK Fisher or Brillat-Savarin, and that is good company. He takes as his subject (for the most part) the obscure ethnic cuisines and restaurants of L.A., from Afghani to Uzbeki. He takes his food seriously, only in this book could you find recommendations for Thai frog legs, corndogs and tongue tacos. For restaurant reviews that read like great literature, and that will absolutely make your mouth water with uncannily poetic descriptions and wonderful, mature prose- this is what you are looking for.

Few maps necessary though, since 90% of the restaurants are within a couple miles of each other (Alhambra/San Gabriel/Monterey Park). Even though many of these reviews were written long ago, I've found that most of the restaurants are still around. Literally a lifetime's worth of discoveries await... . What you learn reading this book will help you in exploring new places as well.

Be forewarned: Jonathan Gold's culinary prose is compelling reading, but any attempts to use this as an actual guidebook for restaurants in Los Angeles should be heavily researched first. Perhaps I just have extraordinarily bad luck, but each time I've tried to visit one of the restaurants, something's gone wrong. Aladdin Falafel (p. 2) no longer exists, though its sign is still up there on the corner

mini-mall placard. India's Tandoori (p. 137) no longer serves Tandoori pizza, so temptingly describe in Rich's essay. Gagnier's Creole Kitchen (p. 109) in Santa Monica disappeared years ago. With that said, I would still recommend the book as a fun read for those who enjoy learning more about the culinary diversity available in Los Angeles.

I've been using this book since it was published and it's led me to some really great and INEXPENSIVE meals. L.A. has lots of great restaurants, and many of them will cause your credit card to melt. But you can eat some amazing, authentic ethnic food in Los Angeles for almost nothing, and Jonathan Gold will lead you to the best of these places. Two caveats; this book was published four years ago and that is forever in restaurant years. It is in serious need of an update. And, it also needs to be indexed by neighborhood, much like the Zagat. I went through it and wrote the name of the neighborhood at the top of each page. Nitpicking? Yes, buy it and eat.

Jonathan Gold is my favorite prose writer. I have read his reviews in the LA Weekly out loud, laughing hysterically, for years. He introduced me to Zankou Chicken and their amazing garlic sauce. This book replaces the file folder full of years of LA Weekly clippings that ride around with me in the car as I eat my way across L.A. I've also bought copies for my house, my office, and my foodie friends. I'm looking forward to Counter Intelligence II, which I hope will have Quanjude Peking Duck in it. Yes, L.A. has its own Peking duck restaurant, which I learned about through Jonathan Gold.

Jonathan Gold is a master at finding interesting, delicious, out of the mainstream kind of places. He's introduced me to so many different cuisines and he really knows what he's talking about. I always feel like he has researched the different cuisines and goes regularly, unlike most reviewers who deign to visit a hole-in-the-wall once and talk about it forever. With respect to my title, this book proves LA has more interesting ethnic and "real" food restaurants than NY. This book is a bible for serious food people, living in LA or not.

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