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## Sky's the Limit

COMMANDERING THE BEST VIEW ON THE STRIP, HERRINGBONE WANTS TO BRING THE MOVERS AND SCENESTERS BACK TO THE MONDRIAN. BY JEN JONES DONATELLI

Red (hot) Herringbone: The Mondrian hotel's new "drink, dine, and party" destination has brought a sea change to the Sunset Strip.



A framed picture on James Brennan's wall depicts him with his wife at Asia de Cuba circa the late '90s—back when starry nights at the Mondrian hotel's restaurant and adjacent Skybar were de rigueur for LA's social set. It's a fitting precursor to today, 15 years later, now that Brennan and chef Brian Malarkey have taken over that same space to revive the buzz and mount Herringbone. An offshoot of the pair's successful La Jolla-based restaurant of the same name, Herringbone melds Malarkey's seasonal seafood sensibilities (think crudos, ceviches, and line-caught fish) with Brennan's background as a nightlife impresario.

"I put in a lot of nights at the Mondrian and Asia de Cuba back then," remembers Brennan, who helms Enlightened Hospitality Group (EHGRP). "If these walls could talk... it was everything. So when we heard that the Mondrian was interested [in Herringbone], there was a lot of sentimental value for me; I've always considered that property an icon."

Malarkey, whose first restaurant job 20 years ago was just down the Sunset Strip at Michel Richard's Citrus, is now known from his turns in the *The Taste* and *Top Chef*; he's also the driving force behind the Fabric of Social Dining restaurant group (part of EHGRP). His menus largely focus on fresh, local fare and seafood, both of which Malarkey came to appreciate while growing up on an Oregon ranch and spending summers on the coast.

Herringbone marks Malarkey's first foray back into the Los Angeles dining scene since those early years on the Sunset Strip—and what a debut it's been. The restaurant's January opening, attended by stars like Leona Lewis and Mena Suvari, is all part of reclaiming the A-list crowd and appeal once enjoyed by Asia de Cuba. "The Sunset Strip was in dire need of a shot of adrenaline," says Brennan.

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An inspired chicken liver mousse with caviar is a classic “surf and earth” Brian Malarkey creation.



## WHAT TO ORDER

Chef Brian Malarkey’s patented brand of “fish-to-field” is the name of the game here (or, as one server put it: “surf and earth”). Translation: sustainably sourced dishes like local mussels with lamb sausage, chicken liver mousse with caviar, and clam and marrow flatbread. “We’re having a lot of fun with the classics,” says Malarkey, who’s worked closely with chef de cuisine Anthony Sinsay (alum of SLS Hotel and Spago) to refine the menu. Early favorites include the carne asada fries, chicken and waffles with uni, jidori chicken coq au vin, and local abalone-uni Benedict.



FROM ABOVE: Designer Thomas Schoos crafted a globally inspired interior reminiscent of a Hollywood Hills bungalow; chef Brian Malarkey chats with guests during Herringbone’s packed launch party.

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The idea is to create a “come early, stay late” circuit (à la Malarkey’s cookbook of the same name), in which people start with cocktails, enjoy a meal at Herringbone, and

later head to Skybar. “Often with restaurants, either you’ve got the vibe and scene, but the food is just okay, or great food with not really any action,” explains Alan Philips of Morgans Hotel Group, which owns the Mondrian. “Herringbone provides that rare, great, all-around experience—from food to music to design.”

Indeed, a live DJ provides the ambient backdrop and an inspired design scheme reflects the \$2 million spent to overhaul the space. In tandem with Malarkey’s aim to make the restaurant “fun, relaxed, and playful,” designer Thomas Schoos conceived the indoor/outdoor space to be both chic and cheeky. “When sex is too vanilla, it’s no fun—same thing with furniture,” laughs Schoos, who’s outfitted Herringbone with items such as salmon-skin chairs, gilded whale skeleton fixtures, and his own hand-painted art tables bearing the Herringbone logo.

Large sharing and communal tables, and a bustling indoor/outdoor bar create the “social dining” atmosphere for which Malarkey’s Fabric restaurants are known. “We’re trying to break the rules that people have with fine dining,” shares Schoos. “It’s about creating a new type of environment where people can be easygoing and rub shoulders [with other diners].”

And the party’s just getting started, according to Malarkey. Not only are he and Brennan planning to take the brand international this year, but they’re also set on bringing back the scenesters along with the foodies. “We want it to be all about having fun,” he says. “Come spring and summer, we’ll be doing a play on street food: tacos, a raw bar, and oysters poolside—we’ll get the whole place popping.” 8440 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, 323-848-6000; [herringboneeats.com](http://herringboneeats.com) **LAC**

## BEST TABLE IN THE HOUSE

Do you prefer sitting outside or in? That is the question. If it’s the former, consider enjoying the expansive view from one of the patio’s sectional sofas, surrounded by open fireplaces and Italian cypress tree arches. If it’s the latter, dine in the restaurant’s center at a glass table with a base fashioned from the metal-coated root of a 400-year-old ironwood tree imported from Thailand. (“The root looks like it’s 24 karat gold-plated, almost like a jewel piece,” says designer Thomas Schoos.) And there are plenty of other appealing options, too, according to Enlightened Hospitality Group’s James Brennan: “If you’ve designed a place where there’s just one table that’s the best, I think you’ve failed.”

