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Dining

<i>Address</i>	8639 Lincoln Blvd.
<i>Cross Street</i>	Manchester Ave.
<i>Neighborhood</i>	LAX & Marina del Rey
<i>Phone</i>	(310) 645-0400
<i>Type</i>	Dining, American, Southern, Soul Food

Life is a Bistro

Meatloaf and brioche?

Bistrotek keeps the party going for everyone

Just like mom used to make, only better!

I always thought I hated meatloaf. Until, that is, I realized that it was just my mother's meatloaf that I hated.

So if you too would like to give some classic dishes another chance, head over to Bistrotek at the new Custom Hotel, where chef Paul Varias' nostalgic menu breathes new (and tasty) life into old favorites.

Fitted with hangar-like touches including exposed vents and concrete walls (albeit pretty ones), Bistrotek is very welcoming despite the stark design. The playful choices on the menu are a delightful change from the usual upscale fare nowadays in which exotic main attractions are corrupted by a bevy of indiscreet flavor combinations. That's not to say the menu is boring. Quite the contrary.

Take, for instance, the clam chowder. Instead of a bowl of creamy soup, you get two gorgeous slabs of fresh trout breaded with oyster crackers and served with Manila clams in a velvety cream clam stock with bacon, leeks and potatoes. Tater Tots—that favorite childhood finger food—receive some much-needed updating in the form of little bits of smoked bacon baked in. Feel like some good old-fashioned sliders? Try the fried prawn ones on brioche with French cocktail sauce and pickled cucumber.

Southerners should enjoy the mouthwatering take on fried green tomatoes that come with a tomato vinaigrette and mozzarella—a perfect combination of salty, juicy, crispy and (arguably) healthy. Or go for the special daily “TV dinner,” classified by the meat of the day. Definitely leave room for dessert, or you'll regret missing the simple but oh-so-good homemade cinnamon and sugar donuts with coffee ice cream, or the utterly decadent nutella and mascarpone French toast with raspberry dipping sauce. And come hungry, because with so many good choices, you won't be able to settle on just one.

—Eric Rosen