

99 Things to Eat in L.A. Before You Die

Fugu to foie gras, pizza to panuchos

[A A Comments](#) (46) By [Jonathan Gold](#) Friday, Feb 26 2010

Banh Mi from Mr. Baguette

The famous sandwich is probably the only good thing to have come out of a century of colonialism in [Vietnam](#): a warm, freshly baked baguette stuffed with pickled vegetables, soft liver pâté, and a deli counter's worth of sliced Vietnamese charcuterie. The sandwich adapts well to standardization. The old-line stores have premade sandwiches stacked like firewood behind the counter in anticipation of the lunch break. The new *banh mi* superstores have bakeries on-premises, drive-through windows, and advanced video-ordering systems — some of them sell 10,000 sandwiches every day. The Mr. Baguette stores may have all the technology of their competitors, but their sandwiches taste as if they were made by humans. Mr. Baguette makes its own high-quality ham and headcheese and steamed pork loaves, its soft, luscious pâté has a mildly gamy tang — and for a quarter extra, the sandwich comes frosted with toasted sesame seeds. *Mr. Baguette, several locations, including 400 S. Atlantic Blvd., Monterey Park (626-282-9966) and 8702 E. Valley Blvd., Rosemead (626-288-9166).*

Animal's Foie Gras & Biscuits and Gravy

the hot chefs are serving it with eels or in jars, glazed with Coca-Cola or encased in cotton candy. The sweet taste of cruelty may be no longer enough. Animal — which already serves the liver as part of its crazed version of the [Big Island](#) drive-in classic Hawaiian concoction, *loco moco* — a beef patty with white rice, gravy and eggs — steps up the battle by putting its seared foie gras on top of truckstop-standard biscuits with maple-sweetened sausage gravy, and the aesthetic of fat-on-fat-on-fat is successful in ways I can't begin to understand. *Animal, 435 N. Fairfax Ave., L.A. (323) 782-9225.*

[Chichen Itza's Panuchos](#)

Like Los Angeles, [Mérida](#) is a sprawling multicultural city, temperate in climate, geographically cut off from the rest of Mexico, whose trade ties to foreign capitals are in some ways stronger than the ones to its own. Its cooking has always resonated here — not least the *panuchos*: split, bean-stuffed tortillas, panfried crisp, which juxtapose the round meatiness of well-done roast pork against the slight creaminess of pureed black beans, are drizzled with citrus, and are garnished with tart, pickled onions dyed scarlet with beets. Like many cross-cultural phenomena, *panuchos* are best sluiced with the hottest habanero salsa you can bear. *Chichen Itza, in Mercado La Paloma, 3655 S. Grand Ave., L.A. (213) 741-1075.*