



FOOD

ICONIC NEIGHBORHOOD RESTAURANTS

Iconic Neighborhood Restaurants: Hollywood & Hollywood Hills

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January 4, 2016 9:47 AM



Like many of Los Angeles County's neighborhoods, Hollywood is rife with film locations and star sightings, but Hollywood has the distinction of once being the beating heart of the entertainment industry. Hollywood only became the hellish tourist destination and traffic nightmare that is it today because once upon a time, it really was the place the famous went to eat and get drunk.

It all started in the early 1900's, when Thomas Edison made a bunch of filmmakers unhappy by suing them over patent rights every time they tried to make a movie. So they took a page from English Separatists (aka the Pilgrims) and escaped Edison's

tyranny by fleeing New Jersey and going as far West as they could. If ever one of Edison's henchmen was headed their way, they could halt production and make a quick escape to Mexico to hide out.

The influx of filmmakers shaped the area, with the first movie studios opening in 1911, followed by a boom that led to film's Golden Age. That glittering boom drove the studios' need for upscale, classy spots to woo a star and starlet like he or she was the most important person in a crowded room full of important people.

Today, many of the area's most beloved restaurants of the early 20th century are still standing, despite the fact that the only movie studio remaining in Hollywood is Paramount. However, while vacationing gawkers are much more likely to get a photo with an impersonator on Hollywood Boulevard than to ever see an actual star, there are still some places with such a strong draw that even the meandering tourists can't keep the important people from coming back.

Birds: *This simple bar and restaurant opened its doors in 1994, making it an infant in comparison to others on this list. The Franklin Village hot spot is well loved by local regulars, but even a first time visitor will get the feeling that they've been going to Bird's for years.*

Co-owners Mary Preston and Henry Olek opened Birds long before that area was anything more than what Mary refers to as "modern Mayberry." It was a row of struggling store fronts and restaurants fighting to keep their doors open while supporting their neighbors. At the time, the couple experienced a financial rough patch. In trying to figure out how to make the mortgage payment, they did the reasonable low-risk thing and opened a restaurant and bar into what is now a no-frills place to get a stiff drink and a roasted chicken.

Ever animal lovers, they donate heavily to local animal rescues, heartily encourage patrons to bring along their dogs, and even provide a special menu item -- chicken for your dog. And though their marriage didn't withstand the demands of restaurant ownership, their mutual love for the place allowed them to stay best friends and continue running Birds together.

Today, Franklin Village is trendy and always bustling with life, especially at night. UCB shows bring in long lines of comedy fans stopping in for a bite after a show. The nearby bookstore, eateries, and bars are all beloved. However, it is Birds that shines as the heart of the neighborhood. It is a place that feels familiar, warm, fun, and comforting. While the youngest on this Hollywood list, becoming "iconic" can happen any time and that defines the Hollywood dream completely. 5925 Franklin Ave., (323) 465-0175