

Gourmet

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MARGY ROCHLIN

EIGHT GREAT STREET-FOOD VENDORS IN LOS ANGELES

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Kogi BBQ.

At the start of this year, the big thing in L.A. was Kogi BBQ, chef Roy Choi's Korean-style taco truck that pioneered the innovation of tweeting its location to loyal customers. What's the latest craze?

Twittering vans that mimic the Kogi model. Drive through the mid-Wilshire business district during lunch time, and it's like an international food bazaar—on wheels. There's *ban mi* (Vietnamese sandwiches),

dosas, barbecue, Peruvian stir fry, *bao* (Chinese pork buns), and sushi. The trend is partly fed by the blogosphere, where a new mobile vendor can get wall-to-wall coverage of its clever new idea. Rarely mentioned is the fact that what most have to offer falls somewhere between better-than-a-roach-coach-tuna-sandwich and still in the beta testing phase. Below, in no particular order, are some newcomers, some always-reliable vendors, and a handful of esteemed taco trucks.

1. KOGI BBQ

With a newly expanded, three-truck fleet and a permanent residence at the **Alibi Room** in Venice, Kogi is unparalleled when it comes to a constant stream of efficient, friendly tweets. What to get: grilled short rib tacos, **kimchi quesadillas**, steamed pork belly. Twitter: [@kogibbq](#)

2. BORDER GRILL TRUCK

Head chef Teresa Montono has somehow figured out how to perfectly duplicate **Border Grill** restaurant's refined, complex flavors even though her cramped kitchen on wheels has no oven or broiler, only a deep-fat fryer that's always on the blink. What to get: Yucatan slow-roasted pork tacos with pickled onions, chicken tacos with tomatillo and creamy salsa fresca, roasted poblano chili quesadillas with manchego, *panela*, and *cotija* cheeses in a handmade flour tortilla, watermelon lemonade that you'll want to drink by the bucket. Twitter: [@bordergrill](#)

3. LET'S BE FRANK

The L.A. outpost (sometimes in Culver City, sometimes in Silver Lake) of San Franciscan Sue Moore's bright red weinermobile serves hot dogs made with organic, grass-fed beef or organic Berkshire pork and a choice of organic condiments. Helms Ave., between Venice and Washington boulevards, Culver City; 2395 Glendale Blvd, Silver Lake ([letsbefrankdogs.com/locations](#))

4. GRILLMASTERS

The method of slow-cooking crispy-skinned, herb-coated rotisserie chickens was inspired by European spit-roasting carts. The chickens taste of rosemary, oregano, garlic, and ginger and come with a lime wedge for a citrus tang. What to get: Chicken and potatoes flavored with chicken drippings. Twitter: [@grillmastersla](#)

5. EL PIQUE

The only downside to this Mexico City-style truck is that it's almost next door to another superstar truck, La Estrella. What to get: Moist pork tacos al pastor, chorizo tacos, and a side of fiery salsa roja. York and Avenue 53, Highland Park

6. LA ESTRELLA

Which truck is better, La Estrella, which is parked in front of its bricks-and-mortar restaurant, or El Pique? It depends on the day, so it's worth it to try them both. What to get: Peppery carne asada, crunchy carnitas or shredded *al pastor* tacos, and burritos. York and Avenue 54, Highland Park

7. LE TEHUANA

This truck, which specializes in tacos, burritos, and Oaxacan-style *clayudas* (a bit like a pizza but made with tortillas), has a TV set rigged up so you can watch movies *en español* while waiting for your order—L.A. street life at its best. What to get: spicy chicken and chili tacos, chopped carne asada tacos, and griddled, bean-smeared *clayudas*. 3rd Street and Normandie Avenue, nights only

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8. GORDITAS LUPITA

Taco-truck connoisseur **Jonathan Gold** introduced me to this Highland Park mainstay, and now I want it to split and multiply. What to get: Carnitas *huaraches*, *gorditas*, puffy quesadillas, and freshly made corn tortillas. Eagle Rock Boulevard, between Ave 34 and Estara Avenue

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLIE CHU

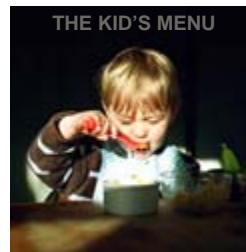
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