

Dono

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Paella

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First came Fia, then came Fia Steak. And now comes Dono, the team's latest mouth-watering addition to the Westside.

Planked in the former Tacoteca space on Wilshire and Santa Monica, Dono, a Spanish cuisine-centered restaurant, is

brought to foodies by Executive Chef Brendan Collins and Michael Greco. The third and final of their Greco Entertainment Group restaurants, Collins and Greco spent months in Spain before opening the restaurant, being inspired and mixing their knowledge of food.

Short for Donostia, the Basque name for San Sebastian, Dono offers a variety of unique and flavor-filled plates that are mostly meant to be shared.

“Born of a particularly memorable adventure to Spain, in which Michael and Chef Brendan stumbled upon one of the most culturally fascinating, artistically inspiring and lusciously green municipalities in Europe,” the Dono website read. “The inspiration was undeniable, and as with any good story, it began to write itself. Between kismet coincidences, unforgettable dining and the stitched-together anecdotes of the locals.”

The Dono menu features everything from extravagant seafood entrees to one-of-a-kind cocktails and beers from Spain that can only be purchased locally at the restaurant.

Like sitting along the seaside in Spain, Dono's ambiance is relaxed and serene, giving restaurantgoers the feeling of being invited to an open-door beach party.

Managed by Patrick Connolly, alongside Dono's Chef Aloise Kieffer, the staff—from the waiters, bussers and host—were a breath of fresh air in a busy city.

“We're here to treat people to exceptionalism and give them a taste of Spain in LA,” Connolly told the *Palisadian-Post*. “We want people to come here and know they can unwind with friends, and experience good food, kindness and a place where everyone is welcomed.”

For a restaurant that is not bar based, all of the drinks were up to par with the best bars in town, with every single drink I tried perfectly mixed and presented.

The beers at Dono, like the Pilsner, Zurito—also from Spain—are unfiltered with sediment of the beer still remaining, giving the drinker the most authentic taste and a memorable beer experience.

The *Martini Sucio* was one of the best dirty martinis I've had in years. Dono's goes down smooth with frozen olive leaf gin, olive brine and Spanish olive oil wash. *Cortador de Niebla* was the kind of drink one would find in a Tiki bar; this cocktail takes its sipper on vacation with every drink. Featuring mezcal, PX Sherry, Orxata, pineapple and chocolate, this was an unforgettable drink that left one craving seconds.

With so many tasty things available on the menu, it was difficult to narrow down “the best” food, as everything we tried at Dono bursted with flavor.

Off the Para Pica section, we sampled the *Croquetas Jamón*, which were the perfect way to start the meal, marking a succulent and tasty opening.

The three large, sherry-pickled *Grilled Shrimp* were marinated in garlic, with a mix of basil, thyme, chives, cilantro, drizzled with olive oil sherry and red onion, topped with pickled garlic and available under Tapas. These were not your average small shrimp, but large, perfectly seasoned and juicy shrimp that is a must have.

The entree plates at Dono are very filling and perfect for sharing with a table of friends, starting with the *Moorish Lamb Shank Tagine*, roasted for 12 hours, served over tagine and a saffron cous cous, and flavored with pomegranate, mango chutney, cilantro, mint and cucumber.

With any plate of seafood, fish or vegetables that one orders, the *Bougie Patatas Bravas*, served with a bravas sauce comprised of tomato, garlic, onion, olive oil, pimenton, garlic aioli, and topped with whipped creme fraiche, salmon roe, bowfin caviar, is an essential pairing. This was one of the most comforting foods on the menu, and coupled perfectly with literally every seafood and carne dish.

The *Whole Grilled Sea Bass*, with grilled lemon under Pescado, was crisp and soft at the same time. This perfectly seared fresh Branzino fish, lightly salted and tender to the bite, could not have been made more perfectly.

The tour de force was the *Paella*, another offering under the Pescado section, a classic Spanish cuisine dish of saffron-flavored rice, kissed in lobster broth, sitting below a bed of calamari, clams, mussels, grilled shrimp, peas and grilled lemon. A very large plate, this dish brings people together, as it is a family size meal with origins in the rice-growing areas on Spain's Mediterranean coast associated with the region of Valencia.

As though the meal could not have ended on a better note, it was topped off with the *Burnt Basque Cheesecake* with crumbles of sweet pineapple compote on top.

The combination of every tapas plate, entree, cocktail and beer felt like being at a festival of food, parking in what felt like a taste of Spain in LA. Collins and Greco have created a triumphant block, ending with the exclamation mark that is Dono neighboring Fia and Fia Steak—so far the best trio restaurants I've tried in all of the city.

The only way I have found to get dishes and drinks specialty made with the ambiance of a Spanish flamenco vibe with delectable dishes, short of visiting Spain, is going to Dono.