

The City's Ten Best Delis

Los Angeles

40

GREAT HOME STORES

Where to Go to Make Your House Beautiful

EMILY BLUNT

THE LATEST BRIT IMPORT CONQUERS HOLLYWOOD

INSIDE THE BRAIN OF RADIO BAD BOY ADAM CAROLLA
BY STEVE ONEY

4.95
OCTOBER 2007



PSST...
FAVORITE
SECRET
PARKS

Plus:
Pack Your Knives!
Top Chef Tom Colicchio
Is Put to the Test

BY PATRIC KUH

The Man Who Wants
Us in Outer Space

BY M.G. LORD

\$25 Million? I'll Take It!
The Luxe Condo Boom

BY MARK LACTER



RON PESKIN

RYE WISDOM

CHOICE TIDBITS FROM RON PESKIN,
THE PROPRIETOR OF BRENT'S

"My uncles owned Linker's in Sherman Oaks. I was working there as a teenager when a man comes in and asks for two pounds of lox. I said that my uncle would be back in a few minutes. The man said he couldn't wait. So I looked at the lox and I thought, 'How hard can it be?' And I cut the lox and I felt damned proud about it, too."

"I worked in lots of places before I got the money together to buy Brent's in 1969. The reason I came out to Northridge is that the deli was \$1,800 down, which was all that I could afford. There were orange groves out here then. Even though my son, Brent, was born three years earlier, the name was pure coincidence. We did a 59¢ breakfast special. I did deliveries in a panel-sided Chevy with shelving inside."

"The difference between a deli and a coffee shop is how you treat the meat, how you cut it, how you form it into a sandwich. You can cook the meat too much, so it falls apart and doesn't look good. You have to time when to heat the cuts, or else it ends up dying on a steam table. You can't cut a salami wrong, but you can totally screw up a piece of corned beef. Cutting the meat is the whole deal. I like a loosely formed sandwich. You want it to have a bit of sponge. I teach the new guys how to make a sandwich. The way I teach them is, I stand next to the guy until he can't stand it."

"I like the look of that sandwich you're eating. It has spring, and I can hear the double crust. But I can tell you, if it had taken one minute longer getting here, I would have gotten up to see what was happening. I know how long it takes to make a sandwich."



Brent's
NORTHRIDGE

➤➤ The strip mall doesn't seem promising, but the fleet of trucks outside Brent's, ready to deliver the deli's provisions, proclaims it a favorite. From the moment you enter, you can't help feeling the joyous abandon. Groups wait by the door, the to-go counter is humming, and in the galley kitchen a scrum of countermen slice, pile, and schmear as they work through the tickets on the order wheel. No deli so perfectly combines the quality of the food with that of the atmosphere. Family patriarch Ron Peskin, or his son Brent, or son-in-law Marc, bounce from booth to booth. On the walls, pride of place is reserved for a framed ceremonial fireman's ax given to the Peskin family in recognition of the number of emergency workers it fed after the Northridge earthquake. All this amounts to an authenticity that the newer location in Westlake Village doesn't share. The whitefish salad here has a wondrous texture: part flaky, part creamy, begging for a bagel. Reubens are a specialty, and while the turkey and grilled knockwurst varieties are intensely satisfying, the black pastrami Reuben with hot sauerkraut and Russian dressing on grilled rye is a definitive sandwich. The Ortega brisket melt, with roasted chiles, grilled onions, and juicy layered meat, offers the magnificence and heft of a Reuben in burnished tones.

➤➤ 19565 Parthenia St., Northridge, 818-886-5679 or brentsdeli.com.



Langer's
LOS ANGELES

➤➤ Bite for bite, Langer's serves the best pastrami sandwich in L.A., the spiced smokiness of the hand-cut meat participating with the bread to create perfection. The Reuben has a golden hue from being pressed into the griddle; the barley, mushroom, and giblet soup has been cooked with care. The deli's interior—brown booths, large windows, crowded counter—seems both eternal and unique. Office workers, police brass, screenwriters, pensioners, and curious locals frequent this unchanging anchor of MacArthur Park. Although Al Langer recently died at 94, his son, Norm, and granddaughter, Trish, are daily presences who welcome all. To sit in a booth, looking out on the palms and ragtime movie palaces while eating a pastrami sandwich, is one of the great pleasures the city offers. The Fresser's Special—pastrami, corned beef, turkey, cheese, and tongue—is a mere feather of a sandwich.

➤➤ 704 S. Alvarado St., L.A., 213-483-8050 or langersdeli.com.