

CIUDAD

APRIL 2007



CHEF'S SPOTLIGHT

Just Desserts

PIZZERIA MOZZA is no ordinary pie joint. The Los Angeles eatery draws a mix of foodies, families, and industry types who appreciate rustic yet refined fare (after all, culinary powerhouses Nancy Silverton, Mario Batali, and Joseph Bastianich are the owners). Mozza's menu admonishes diners to "save room for dessert," but what in the world could one want after wolfing down copious amounts of carbs?

That's where pastry chef Dahlia Narvaez comes into play. "We wanted desserts that would be simple and approachable," she says. To wit: Narvaez offers eight exquisite gelato and sorbet flavors as the backbone of her seasonal menu. Choose up to three scoops (\$7)—you won't go wrong with blood orange, pear, or vanilla—and savor the delicate, hand-pressed *pizzelle* (a snowflake-shaped anise wafer that's served atop).

Narvaez, who honed her craft for seven years at Campanile, displays her talent with the Meyer lemon gelato pie (\$8). Its buttery homemade graham-cracker crust, zesty champagne vinegar reduction, and chewy candied lemon peel garnish make it a study in sophistication. "The dessert menu is ingredient-driven. It's more about quality and flavor," says the 32-year-old L.A. native, who touts locally grown ingredients purchased from farmers she's known for years.

Raised in Highland Park by parents from Guadalajara, Narvaez has been whipping up sweet treats since childhood. It's no surprise, then, that Mozza's most popular meal-ender, the Butterscotch Budino (\$8), is a grown-up take on an American nursery favorite. Narvaez's version is decked with a layer of caramel, *fleur de sel* crystals that glisten like diamonds, and a dollop of whipped cream. Just one spoonful proves that, in her capable hands, simple is far from ordinary. —MÓNICA GULLÓN

► Pizzeria Mozza, 641 N. Highland Ave., L.A., 323-297-0101, www.mozza-la.com. L, D daily. Appetizers, \$6-\$24; entrées, \$9-\$24; desserts, \$5-\$8.



SWEET SPOT Narvaez's desserts are on par with Mozza's pies.

