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Clockwise from top left: Fall vegetable caponata. LOCAL's outdoor patio is covered in a wood trellis from the decommissioned Chapala Street Bridge in Santa Barbara. Owner MAIRE BYRNE.

SANTA MONICA

FEAST for the SENSES

MAIRE BYRNE'S new Local Kitchen + Wine Bar ups the CULINARY ANTE in Santa Monica

> Six years after launching her first restaurant, Thyme Café & Market, on Ocean Park in Santa Monica, chef Maire Byrne has debuted her second venture, **Local Kitchen + Wine Bar**, just down the block. The concept for the new eatery, which opens in October, began as a pizza place, "but it's so much more than that," says Byrne, who hired Stephen Murray, sous chef at Michael Chiarello's Bottega in Yountville, to helm the kitchen, where he's dishing up seasonal small plates alongside Neapolitan-style pies.

"Thyme is very casual, more breakfast and lunch," explains Byrne, a third-generation Angeleno and graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in New York. "Local is more lunch and dinner." An engaging wine list and a full bar round out the offerings. "We're the only people doing craft cocktails in the neighborhood," she adds. And while Byrne



Above: Banana budino. Below: Inside, the copper bar serves as a focal point. Bottom left: Lavender bourbon sour.



has worked with culinary stars like Alice Waters and Michael Mina, and garnered plum roles at Chez Panisse in Berkeley and Ajax Tavern in Aspen, she will tell you that a stint as a private chef for a San Francisco family was the training that really honed her skills. "I was able to experiment, to develop my style," she says. "That's how I became who I am as a cook."

For Local's interiors, Byrne called on designer and longtime friend Leslie Hunt (who also designed Thyme) to create a warm, industrial feel. Hunt centered the 2,500-square-foot space on a wood-burning pizza oven, and employed exposed brick, a copper bar, subway tile, butcher-block tables and leather banquettes to set the sophisticated tone. An outdoor area is even more reason to visit—and to linger. "The clientele here wants nice things. I don't know if this could be the new Abbot Kinney, but," she says with a wink, "it's a nice spot to land." 1736 Ocean Park Blvd., S.M., 310-396-9007; localkitchenandwinebar.com. • MAILE PINGEL

LOCAL: JOHN KONKAL