

stays on the vine longer. The puckered little golden globe that results is sweeter, plumper, juicier, fruitier and tangier. Scott and Linda Peacock (and extended family) are regulars at the Hollywood and Santa Monica farmers markets. So popular is their golden flame, they don't understand why the variety isn't more common. Neither do we. Can a raisin be d available. [www.p](http://www.p)

## BEST SMOKE

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## BEST BUTCHER

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## BEST SHABU

Shabu-shabu is a Japanese one-pot meal inspired by the Mongolian hotpot, and the name alludes to the swishing noise made by the morsels of meat as you move them through the boiling broth in a vessel in front of you. The main ingredients are usually thinly sliced beef (at Ka Ga Ya I prefer the pricey Australian wagyu and the American dry-aged prime), a dark kind of Chinese mustard green, scallions, shiitake mushrooms, Japanese cabbage, some tofu and translucent potato-starch noodles. Ka Ga Ya also



entirely different, but equally 24/7-convenient comfort scene. 3201 W. Sixth St., Los Angeles, (213) 251-0078; 230 N. La Brea Ave., Inglewood, (310) 671-2049; and 7155 Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys, (818) 989-2384.

—Deborah Vankin

## BEST ROCK BAR

## BEST BUTCHER

### Alexander meats

If there were ever a destination butcher in the Los Angeles area, it's this one, a refuge of old-fashioned culinary values set in the back of Howie's Ranch Market near San Marino. The butchers at Alexander Meats, many of whom learned their trade at the legendary Jurgensen's, will cut up a slab of short ribs or corkscrew a leg of lamb without complaining too much and, given a few hours' notice, will prepare a crown roast of pork lovely enough to make Julia Child sigh. There are delicious, beyond-organic Shelton chickens; thick-sliced bacon and rather spectacular Lebanon bologna imported from Pennsylvania's Amish country; beautifully marbled lamb chops; Alpena sausages; and pork that actually tastes like pig instead of wet cardboard. The gorgeous USDA Prime Spencer steaks and shell steaks, dry-aged in the back of the store, are amazing slabs of meat that consistently grill up better than prime steaks from fancy stores that charge more than twice as much. 6580 N. San Gabriel Blvd., San Gabriel, (626) 286-8871.

—Jonathan Gold

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278-4232.  
—Jonny Whiteside

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## CAKE

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—Michelle Huneven

## TASCHEN

ars ago, I never  
stopped loving hamantaschen, the triangular cookies  
traditionally eaten on the Jewish holiday Purim. In the  
ancient story, Haman, a royal adviser who plotted to  
eliminate the kingdom's Jews, always wore a three-cor-  
nered hat. After his defeat, Jews celebrated each spring  
with tasty triangular pastries filled with poppy seeds or  
mixtures of fruit and honey. (Some prefer the softer,  
breedy hamantaschen filled with poppy seeds, but I  
prefer not to associate with such *pischers*.) I am thrilled