

LA RESTAURANT OPENINGS

LA Landmark Irv's Burgers Returns After Four-Year Hiatus

Owner Sonia Hong has new partners and a new location for Irv's, the 76-year-old West Hollywood burger icon

by **Farley Elliott** | Jun 3, 2022, 10:25am PDT

Photos by **Wonho Frank Lee**



An Irv's double cheeseburger | **Wonho Frank Lee**

Sonia Hong is all smiles as she leans through a bright red window frame. She poses with a burger, shows off a few flattering articles hanging on a wall, and gives enthusiastic thumbs up looks to cameras, passersby, and business partners. It's busy days for Hong and her reborn restaurant **Irv's Burgers** in West Hollywood, and Hong is a mix of excited, eager, and a touch overwhelmed — easy to understand, **considering the attention** that Irv's is getting. Around her, workers are putting finishing touches on what has become one of LA's best comeback stories: After nearly four years away, one of Southern California's most iconic burger stand is ready to serve again.

The road to return has been rocky for Hong, who first bought the already-famous Irv's Burgers back on January 17, 2000. Then a simple roadside stand along the famous Route 66, Irv's had for decades been a staple stop on the historic LA burger tour, beloved by locals and tourists for its simplicity and heart. Tommy's was the place for stop for chili cheeseburgers, Apple Pan was for hickory sauce, and Irv's was for a moment with Sonia. Hong is at the core of what has made Irv's so enduringly popular, though she considers herself more a steward of the already-famous name than its sole proprietor.

Still, Hong's flair is unmistakable, as was her penchant for doodling on the paper plates that went out with each finished burger cooked by her and Mama Hong inside the West Hollywood stand. Just For You, each

would read, accompanied often by a small caricature or personal anecdote that attached the restaurant (and Hong) to each customer.



Sonia Hong, ready to take orders

In 2018, the doodles dried up. By then Irv's had been forced from its longtime location over a [leasing dispute](#) — only to see that original walk-up stand earn historic protection, meaning it can't be torn down anyway. The stand is now a walk-up daytime window as part of a different, larger restaurant development further down Santa Monica Boulevard. The Hong's moved east to a storefront for a while, but struggled to capture the charm and consistent customer base of the previous address. It was only at closing, in 2018, that Los Angeles collectively realized what had been so tenuous for so long. A single [wrenching image](#) remains from that final day of service of an exhausted Mama Hong, head down, having closed the place for good.

In another time and place, that might have been it for Sonia and Mama Hong: Retirement, however necessary, and the slow dissolution of an American burger dream. Except Sonia Hong is something of a local celebrity in West Hollywood — all those smiles and doodles have **added up to a new opportunity** one door down from the last location of Irv's, and a new chance to make people happy. Just standing in front of her new restaurant at 7998 Santa Monica Boulevard, brought to market by longtime restaurant broker Jay Luchs, she is besieged with questions about her return, and hugs from locals who are happy to see her donning the red and blue logo again.

The new construction comes with a remake of the original walk-up window, stools and off-white tile and all. There is communal seating inside a glassy side room, but mostly this is the same simple setup as ever, with Hong at the window several days a week. She's far from retired, but will lean on partner Lawrence Longo of **Off the Menu** to fill out the kitchen roster and hire up on days when she's at home, taking care of Mama Hong (who herself worked at Irv's with Sonia until she was 83).

The incoming Irv's Burgers, opening in mere weeks, is by necessity a blend of old and new. The brand is back, as is Sonia, but the menu has been touched up by Armen Piskouljian of **Oui Melrose**, and will feature a \$6.25 original Irv's burger as well as a pared down Just For You burger with Thousand Island dressing and thick pickles on a seeded proprietary bun. There will also be thin-shaved pastrami sandwiches, hot dogs, tuna melts, and simple salads to go along with fries and cookies and milkshakes. Opting for Brady's Way on the menu (a \$4 bump) means adding fries and cheese sauce to any dish, like on top of a burger, with \$1 from each sale donated to **Children's Hospital of Los Angeles**.

Following a celebrity-studded pre-opening party last weekend, Hong and **the Irv's Burgers team** are taking a couple of weeks to dial in the final touches for the new restaurant at 7998 Santa Monica Boulevard. When it opens this month, expect hours from Sunday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m, with an extension on Friday and Saturday nights to midnight. Sonia Hong will be there, handing out burgers and maybe even offering a doodle or two to those longtime West Hollywood customers who — like the rest of Los Angeles — have been eagerly awaiting her return.



the 'just for you!' plates are back



And so are the fries



A simple Just For You burger



Pastrami and pickles







So much history at Irv's Burgers



The redone corner with walk-up ordering window



IRV'S BURGERS		Just for you!		ADD'ONS	
*BURGERS & DOGS		WELCOME		CHILI	2
IRV'S ORIGINAL	5			BACON	3
IRV'S DOUBLE	9			PASTRAMI	3
JUST FOR YOU BURGER	4.25			CHEESE SAUCE	2
THE BIG IRV	11			IRV'S SAUCE	1
IRV'S DOG	8			BRADY'S WAY	4
*SANDWICHES				*FRIES	
BLT	9	*SALADS		REG	4
PASTRAMI	12	CHOPPED	12	CHILI	7
TUNA	10	TUNA	14	CHEESE	6
TUNA MELT	11			*SWEETS	
				BOYD COOKIE	5
				MILKSHAKES	6
				NUTELLA COOKIE	





Sonia Hong and Lawrence Longo




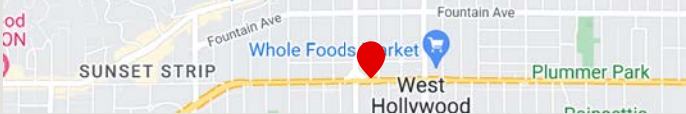
Eater LA

Sign up for our newsletter.

Email (required)

By submitting your email, you agree to our [Terms](#) and [Privacy Notice](#). You can opt out at any time. This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

SUBSCRIBE



Map data ©2022 Google

Irv's Burgers

7998 Santa Monica Boulevard, , CA 90046
(323) 650-2456
[Visit Website](#)

THE LATEST VIDEO FROM EATER

How a 77-Year-Old Indonesian Chef Opened a Restaurant





When 77-year-old Siu Chen got bored during the pandemic, she decided to start a restaurant cooking the Indonesian food she was making at home. Among her most popular dishes are her fried chicken, lontong sayur, rendang, yellow rice, and more.

SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND

4 Restaurants to Try This Weekend in Los Angeles

FIRST LOOK

Catch's New Steakhouse Is the Glitziest Spot in West Hollywood

AMINTEL

Mastro's Ocean Club Debuts Huge Seafood and Steak Restaurant in Downtown LA

Sign up for the Eater Los Angeles newsletter

The freshest news from the local food world

Email (required)

SUBSCRIBE

By submitting your email, you agree to our [Terms and Privacy Notice](#). You can opt out at any time. This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.