

NeoMezē

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A new version of meze with broad appeal served in a lively atmosphere.



This Old Town Pasadena restaurant-lounge offers up few clues as to its location (look for the illuminated orange sign), but venture down a rather unfriendly hallway and a vibrant atmosphere awaits. The high-ceilinged space has a trendy, hip vibe, with a long backlit bar, and chocolate leather-topped tables paired with velvety banquettes. Even though half of the venue is dedicated to the lounge, with a long list of signature cocktails, NeoMezē is also a dining destination. The five young, dynamic Armenian owners have worked with chef Doug Weston to craft their own new (“neo” in Greek) version of meze, small plates of Mediterranean fare meant for sharing. Weston, formerly of Joe’s in Venice, has modernized the ancient cuisines-of-the-sun to appeal to a twenty-first-century palate. Try the bean salad made of favas, edamame, haricots verts, cranberry beans, mango and radish with a sherry-ginger vinaigrette; the seafood ceviche in yuzu-jalapeño vinaigrette; or the grilled octopus on a bed of Israeli couscous from the cold dishes. Move on to the warm plates such as red snapper with parsley-almond pesto served with orange-artichoke salad. Lamb chops are perfectly cooked, crispy on the outside, juicy and rosy on the inside, accompanied by an apple-cabbage slaw. You can also opt for duck rillettes, Calabrese or Serrano ham from the charcuterie menu and choose from a market-driven selection of cheeses. The interesting wine program was designed by David Haskell (former owner of BIN 8945) with over 70 wines by the glass, priced from \$6 to \$40 (and \$24 to \$160 for bottles). It features boutique wineries and small producers from around the globe. Desserts are a tad more classical with warm chocolate ganache, caramel crêpes and an ice cream trio.