

## At new L.A. concept, the cooks pull double duty

*Chef Phillip Frankland Lee is reinventing his Scratch Bar & Kitchen concept in a new location with a service model that approaches the tipping debate in a different way: no servers. That's not to say there won't be table service at the new-and-improved Scratch Bar.*

When the restaurant opens next month in the Encino neighborhood of L.A., Lee plans to have his kitchen staff working the dining room floor. "Designed with an open kitchen, Scratch Bar will have about 20 seats along the concrete counter that also serves as work surface, with cooks plating food right in front of guests in the style of a sushi bar", Lee says.

In the same room, six two-top tables will be available for those who don't want to sit at the counter. An adjacent space, still awaiting alcohol permits, will have an 18-seat bar and a 40-seat dining room, where kitchen employees will take turns seating guests, running food and being bartender. No one will have the title of "server." Lee says he isn't anti-server. The goal is to ensure that guests have direct contact with the people who know the menu best: the cooks.

"I hate it when I go to a restaurant and someone takes my order and they don't know the menu," he explains. "I wanted to have a situation where the only guy you're talking to is someone in the kitchen cooking."

At Scratch Bar there is no need to tip, a policy clearly stated on the menu. Instead, the restaurant will apply an 18-percent service charge that will be distributed to the kitchen staff and allow Lee to pay a decent salary, rather than minimum wage. "This is a team sport and it's not two teams. It's not front of the house versus back of the house. It's one cohesive unit," Lee observes. "Those guys should all make money and they should all share whatever the guest wants to give them."

The menu will include both a la carte and tasting menu options. But the a la carte listings may be minimally described as just "steak" or "salad" or "pork." How it will be prepared will depend on what the guest likes or feels like that night.

*Adapted from: <http://restaurant-hospitality.com>  
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