



Whey Ahead

HOW DID MIMMO BRUNO TURN BURRATA—SOMETHING MOST ITALIANS HADN'T HEARD OF A DECADE AGO—INTO L.A.'S FAVORITE FORMAGGIO? BY LESLEY BARGAR SUTER



IT'S NOT ONLY MIMMO BRUNO YOU SHOULD THANK FOR

that luscious lump atop your squash blossom pizza at Mozza or paired with your grilled nectarine at Gjelina. Yes, the Italian cheese maker with a factory in Baldwin Park is behind nearly every ball of *burrata*—a delicate mozzarella pouch stuffed with a rich, runny mix of cream and curd—that's ever been consumed in the United States. But handcrafting this obscure

southern Italian treat wasn't his idea. "When I came to the U.S. in the late '80s, I went to visit Mauro Vincenti at Rex," says Bruno, referring to the late restaurateur. "He asked, 'Can you make burrata for me?' I said sure." Impressed, Vincenti suggested that Bruno take his creation to a few of L.A.'s premier Italian restaurants as well as to La Brea Bakery, then co-owned by chef Nancy Silverton. "Nancy believed in the product right away," says Bruno, and it was the cheese's popularity at Mozza, her current restaurant, that spurred today's national frenzy. "When I started, we were making maybe 15 to 20 cases a day. Now we make 350," says Bruno, whose company, Di Stefano, named for his son, ships nationwide. Not bad for something that's existed in Italy for less than a century. What makes it so good? The cream, which he imports from Parma, and the passion. "If you take the time to make the recipe the traditional way, you can't go wrong." » Available at Bay Cities Italian Deli