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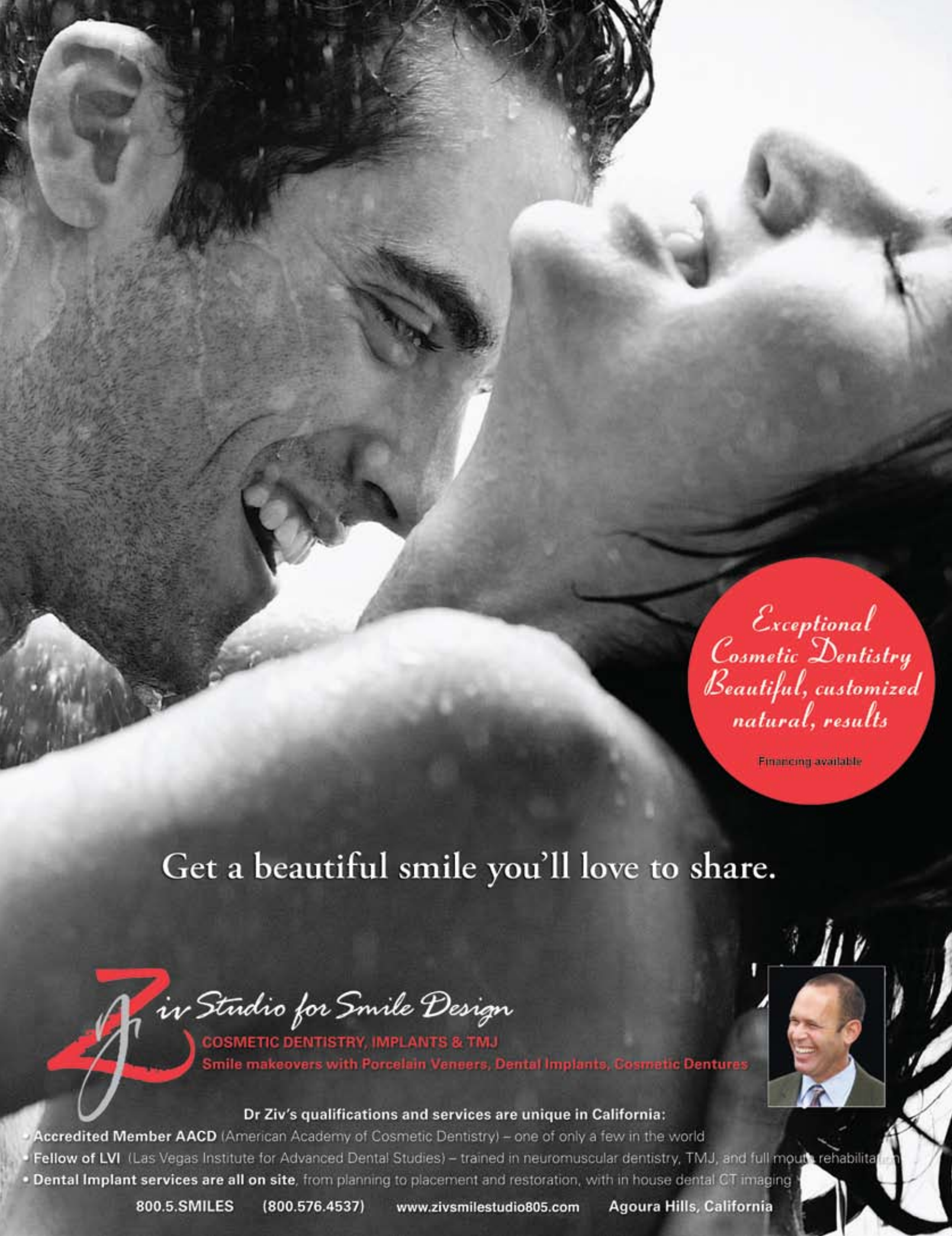
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Guest Editor's Memo

Date: June 1, 2010
To: All Men
From: Anthony Head, Executive Rules Keeper
Cc: Women and Children
Re: Being a Man—The Ground Rules

Upon adjournment of our recent meeting with all relevant sanctioning bodies, I'm reporting that the following bylaws were passed without objection. Effective immediately, these are the rules, gentlemen. Please abide them.

No more cameras at bachelor parties.
Live a life of your own creation. (See page 54.)
Be prepared to fail, just don't expect to.
Actively express love for others.
Perfect at least one magic trick (but never give away the secret).
Learn to enjoy your alone time.
Insist on having your alone time.
Don't like your job? Quit your griping and just get a new one.
The only acceptable compensation for helping a buddy move to a new apartment is alcohol.
Do good to your friends to keep them, to your enemies to win them. (Thanks to Benjamin Franklin for that one.)
Learn to throw a wicked curveball.
If your date is wearing high heels, choose to valet park.
Sometimes it's appropriate to swear. (Thanks to Peter Griffin of *Family Guy* for that one.)
Honor your masculinity.
Honor her femininity.
Stay out of the rut. (See page 20.)
If you choose to father children, then *father* them their whole lives.
Always carry at least 50 dollars in cash.
Travel often. (See page 48.)
Be a mentor.
Embrace risk, especially for a delicious payoff. (See page 64.)
No Speedos. (Exception: a competition.)
Tip generously.
At the end of the game, leave it all on the field. (See page 88.)



One more rule: Steer your own ship.

I hardly know anyone who didn't grow up watching Jacques Cousteau's fantastic ocean voyages aboard the *Calypso* on television; but few people in this world knew the man like his family. Jean-Michel Cousteau, who lives in Santa Barbara, just published a new memoir, *My Father, The Captain*, an intimate portrait of why and how Jacques Cousteau chose to steer his own ship.

Jean-Michel is also the founder of the Ocean Futures Society, and he'll appear in July's *805 Living*, which is a special issue devoted to water. You can read some of my interview with Jean-Michel now at 805living.com.



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EDITOR IN CHIEF & ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Lynne Andujar
edit@805living.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Nicola Augustson

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Anthony Head

PHOTO EDITOR

Gary Moss
photo@805living.com

SENIOR EDITORS

Mallory McCreary, Laura Samuel Meyn

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Mark Langton (Events); Cynthia House Nooney (Lifestyle);
Angela Pettera (Dining); Sarene Wallace (Food); Jemma Wildermuth (Fashion)

CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS

Billy Goodnick, Maryann Hammers, Frank Nelson

COPY EDITOR

Heidi Dvorak

RESEARCH EDITOR

Tajinder Rehal

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Gerard Bello, Judi Bumstead, Gary Moss, Kirk Weddle

ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR IN CHIEF AND PUBLISHER

Carmen Leiva

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PUBLISHER

Carla J. Blanco
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ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Ingrid C'deBaca
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ingrid@805living.com
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Amra Chudleigh
Travel, dining, and education
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310-924-2631

Marjorie Fagan
Health and beauty
mef214@earthlink.net
805-300-7570

Jennifer S. Vogelbach
Home furnishings, fine jewelry, and fashion
vogelbach@sbcglobal.net
818-427-3496

ADVERTISING DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Sophie Patenaude
sophie@805living.com

ACCOUNTING

Lori Kantor
lori@805living.com

DISTRIBUTION

Ed Savage

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ADVERTISING QUERIES

805-413-1141
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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Behind the Scenes

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

This month, we celebrate the lasting life lessons taught by our fathers and grandfathers, whether through their own examples or through a few of their carefully chosen words. Here, a few of our contributors share what they've learned from the men who came before them—and how those lessons continue to positively impact their lives.



Copy editor **HEIDI DVORAK** uses what she learned from her father every day: *My father was a Holocaust survivor and passed away when I was 20. During his lifetime, there wasn't a day that went by that he didn't tell me how much he loved me. I imagine that was because he lost so many members of his family, he knew how important it was to make the most of what time he had with the people he loved. So I follow his lead. Every chance I get, I tell my two sons how much I love them. That's how I remember my father, and that's how I want to be remembered.* As a writer, Dvorak's work frequently appears in the *LA Times Magazine* and *LA Weekly*.

Writer **FRANK NELSON** (*Arts & Culture*, page 38) remembers an unintentional yet invaluable lesson learned from his dad. *When I was a kid, my dad tried teaching me all sorts of sports, but he was a little, um, uncoordinated. Before long, I was better at most things than he was. So the lesson I really learned is that no matter how good or bad you are, the important thing is to have a go. You might even surprise yourself.* Nelson, who has worked for newspapers and magazines in England, New Zealand, and Australia, is currently a freelance writer based in Santa Barbara. He's also the author of two humorous travel books, *All You Need Is Luck* and *A Little More Luck*. To learn more, visit allyouneedisluck.com.

Contributing editor **CYNTHIA HOUSE NOONEY** (*Pursuits*, page 40, and “At Home on the Range,” page 48) learned what a difference her dad's simple, loving actions made in a time of crisis: *When my son needed a blood transfusion shortly after his birth, my dad hopped on a plane to donate a pint of blood. The next day, he watered my trees and weeded the garden. I tried to thank him, but he asked, “For what?”* Time and again, my father has taught me the value of showing up and pitching in, particularly when it matters most.

Research editor **TAJINDER REHAL** learned a very practical lesson from her father when she got behind the wheel as a new driver—before the days of electronic key fobs. *The first thing my dad taught me when I learned to drive was to always lock the car from the outside—never from inside before stepping out of the car. Thanks to that little rule being drilled into my head, I never had that problem (and therefore the drama) of locking my keys in my car like some of my friends did. It's an everyday life lesson that still sticks with me twenty years later.* Rehal is also a freelance writer; her work has appeared in *Women's Health*, *Scrubs*, and *New Parent* magazines.





Contributing editor **JEMMA WILDERMUTH** (*Finds Style*, page 22) brings the best in up-to-the-minute styles to the pages of *805 Living* every month, but she takes some personal cues from the past. *As a girl, my granddad (left) would give me a little money when it was his birthday; he*

liked to share his good fortune. Looking back, that was an early example of paying it forward—doing good turns just because. Since that time I have come to appreciate the wonder that giving provides and the magical way it inspires others to do good turns, too.

Gary's Outtake

By Gary Moss, Photo Editor



Here is Ventura County Ventures Scooter Crew member Jonny Lusche hamming it up for the camera. As a photographer, I love his wardrobe and his energy. I told him to stick his tongue out while he passed the camera and then I took this candid yet still thought-out picture.

When photographing people, it's important to always direct your subjects. And, probably most important, it's critical to always make your subject comfortable. I like to have conversation while I shoot; it takes the subject's mind off being nervous or uncomfortable in front of the camera.

Gary Moss has launched the Camera Whisperer Photographic Workshops and Seminars for all levels of photographers, from emerging to professional. These are extremely interactive seminars and workshops designed to create a positive experience for photographers who want to take their work to the next level. Gary's motto: "You own the equipment, now own your photography." Check out camerawhisperer.com for more information. ■

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Finds

By Lynne Andujar

INTO THE WOODS

Eight cool ways to go against the grain.



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"Branch & Twig Colored Pencils" (set of 8, \$8); Anthropologie at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, or Santa Barbara; anthropologie.com.



Platypus "Wood-Grain Designer Duct Tape" (\$8); fortisdesign.com.



Gizmine wooden USB drive (\$90) and wooden keyboard (\$650); gizmine.com.

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By Anthony Head Photograph by Gary Moss

SHARP-DRESSED MAN

The guy behind M. Fredric talks fashion and the future.

“Three years ago we opened our first men’s store because we saw that men were beginning to follow women in their want of the latest fashion trends in jeans and tops. And we’ve built it to eight stores,” says Fred Levine, founder of the M. Fredric retail company, which includes stores for men, women, and kids. Levine says the M. Fredric Man stores are getting a makeover in both appearance and merchandise because his male customers are much more interested in fashion than they ever have been.

“When we first opened our men’s stores, I thought it would be mostly women shopping for their men. I just never imagined the guys would come in,” says Levine. But it turns out that it’s actually about fifty-fifty when it comes to men and women customers looking through M. Fredric’s fashion racks. He says women still shop for clothes they want to see their men dressed in, but guys are coming in, too, with much more interest in modern looks. A few years back, he says, that included fun graphics and lots of flair.

“My experience of thirty years in this business says things in fashion don’t usually happen overnight. But all of a sudden those lines were no longer current,” says Levine. “Guys no longer wanted the studs, or the gothic look, or the embroidery on the jeans, or the tattoo art or all the bells and whistles.”

M. Fredric’s Man stores have adopted a “We’ve Come Clean” slogan to reflect the new “clean look” of men’s fashion, which includes toned-down graphics, solids, and simple stripes. “The fashion industry changes because people like newness and freshness,” Levine says. “We’re doing a major turnaround, which is consistent with the whole industry, because the consumers want much different things than they wanted a few years ago. Our stores today look nothing like they did just six months ago.”

Those stores will soon take on even more of a distinguished look because later this summer Levine unveils his own line of menswear, although he’s staying tight-lipped about it. “It’s kind of a secret, so I want to keep the details on the down-low for now,” he says. “I don’t want to give out the particulars but I can say that my son Adam (of the band Maroon 5) has an incredible flair for fashion, and he’s loving what he’s seeing. So it’s very likely he’ll play a collaborative role in the line. It’ll be cutting edge, and out of the box, and hopefully, very different from anything else out there.”

In addition to the upcoming clothing line, M. Fredric also has a new VIP Program only for the men’s stores: Customers who donate \$25 to the American Cancer Society inside any Man store will receive a VIP card that entitles them to 25-percent off every purchase through the end of the year. ■

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Finds^{STYLE}

By Jemma Wildermuth

GOOD STUFF

Must-haves for every man's closet this summer.

1. The Shady Fedora: Block Headwear "Knickerbocker" (\$53); Saks Fifth Avenue, Santa Barbara, saksfifthavenue.com.

"Men are gaining confidence and venturing out to wear hats other than baseball caps. This classic silhouette has been updated using crocheted natural straw." —Ciomi McCabe, founder and owner, Block Headwear

2. The Graphic Tee: Men's "Live Simply" T-shirt (\$30); Great Pacific Ironworks, Ventura, patagonia.com.

3. The Dashing Shades: Classic aviator sunglasses (\$300); John Varvatos at The Malibu Country Mart, Malibu, johnvarvatos.com.

4. The Surfer Short: Men's "Wavefarer" board shorts (\$59); Great Pacific Ironworks, Ventura, patagonia.com.

"When designing our board shorts, durability and function take precedence. These are trends that never go out of style." —Jason McCaffrey, director of surf for Patagonia

5. The Rockin' Bracelet: Designer Jose Luis' take on wrist style (\$325); K. Frank, Santa Barbara, kfrankstyle.com.

6. The Cargo Short: Jet Lag "Donald" shorts (\$108); M. Fredric Man at The Promenade at Westlake, Westlake Village, mfredric.com.

"Nothing says casual summer style like a pair of men's cargo shorts." —Elaina Karatzas, publicity, M. Fredric

7. The Knock-Around Shoe: Toms "Harbour Cordones" (\$69); Nordstrom at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, nordstrom.com or toms.com.

8. The Statement Ring: Roman Paul "Templar" (\$900); Malibu Rock Star, Malibu, maliburockstar.com or romanpaul.com.

9. The True-Blue Sandal: Olukai "Ohana Leather" (\$85); Val Surf, Thousand Oaks, valsurf.com.

10. The Tough Watch: Casio "Solar Atomic 6900" (\$140); Blue Bee, Santa Barbara, bluebee.com.

"G-Shock is back and full of color! What better way to wear a watch for summer but with color—yellow is my personal favorite." —John Douchette, co-owner, Blue Bee



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By Mallory McCreary

FAIRMONT FOR THE FELLAS

Two Fairmont properties (fairmont.com) offer deals well suited to a guys' getaway:

The "Speed Meets Spa" package (from \$5,391) at **The Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa** combines two days of F1-style racing at the Jim Russell Racing Drivers School with two 60-minute spa treatments in the on-site 40,000-square-foot spa (which has its own thermal mineral water). The package also includes sparkling wine on arrival, three nights' accommodations in uniquely decorated guest rooms, and dinner for two at the resort's Santé restaurant. Daily hike and bike adventures and complimentary wine tastings are also available, as well as access to Sonoma Golf Club, home to an 18-hole, 177-acre championship golf course.

Fish like a native at **The Fairmont Orchid** on Hawaii's Big Island. The "Shoreline *Holoholo* (Fishing) Adventure" teaches guests local Hawaiian shoreline fishing techniques from an outrigger canoe. The adventure also includes cultural lore and information: learn the favorite fish of Hawaiian royalty, why locals won't allow bananas aboard a fishing boat, and an explanation of the Hawaiian *kapu* system, which protected certain fish during breeding seasons. Several packages (from \$299) that include unlimited tennis, golf, and family adventures are available throughout the summer at this resort celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

The classic layout of the golf course at Sonoma Golf Club is available to guests of The Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa (top); traditional Hawaiian fishing from an outrigger canoes provide fun and sport at The Fairmont Orchid (below).



Hot Tip:

Plan now for the 100th anniversary of the **California Rodeo** in Salinas, July 15–18 (carodeo.com). Enjoy parades, a cowboy church service, a diamond dig, and the rodeo itself. Several budget motels dot the area including the rodeo's partner motel, Laurel Inn (laurelinnhotel.com, rooms from \$89), which was nearly full as of press time. But the luxury hotels and golf of Monterey are just over a half hour away (seemonterey.com).

Rockin' Out in Vegas

The photographs of famed rock 'n' roll photog Robert Knight (robertmknight.net) are now for sale at a new gallery in the **Las Vegas Hilton** (lvhilton.com), the site where Elvis played nearly 800 sold-out shows. Knight captured iconic images of Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Elton John, Carlos Santana, Van Halen, Jeff Beck, and hundreds of other musicians.

The Las Vegas Hilton is the world's largest Hilton, recently remodeled and located next to the Las Vegas Country Club golf course with easy monorail access to the Strip. The "World Cup Soccer Central" package (from \$70 per night; through July 31) includes accommodations plus \$100 in dining coupons, two daily breakfast buffets and cocktails, and giveaways and food and drink specials while watching all the World Cup games in HD.



GOLF IN THE 805

Ojai Valley Inn & Spa (ojairesort.com) offers serene luxury in a gorgeous setting. And then there's the golf: an 18-hole course that plays 6,292 yards with a par 70, rating of 71.0, and a slope of 132 (visit the website for an interactive course tour). Two packages (one day, one overnight) are just right for guys this month:

Ultimate Guy's Getaway: unlimited golf; group golf lesson with a pro; personal

training session; three-day, two-night stay (automatic upgrade to a suite for groups of four or more); all breakfasts and lunches; Ojai-branded golf shirt and cap for everyone (from \$905 per two-night package, single occupancy; through September 10).

Ultimate Father's Day Package: five rounds of golf, 60-minute golf lesson with a pro, club fitting, and gift bag (\$690). ■



We wish to thank all of the judges who honored us with their thoughtful decisions...

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL WINE COMPETITION

- 2006 Serenade - Platinum
- 2007 Tempranillo - Platinum
- 2005 Mountain Zinfandel - Silver



FLORIDA STATE FAIR & INTERNATIONAL WINE COMPETITION

- 2006 Serenade - Double Gold
- 2006 Pinot Noir - Gold
- 2007 Mountain Zinfandel - Gold
- 2007 Tempranillo - Silver
- 2006 Grenache - Bronze



SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE WINE COMPETITION

- 2007 Tempranillo - Gold
- 2006 Pinot Noir - Gold
- 2006 Grenache - Silver
- 2006 Montagna Mare - Silver
- 2005 Maestro - Silver
- 2007 Mountain Zinfandel - Silver
- 2007 Summit Creek Zinfandel - Silver
- 2006 Malbec - Bronze
- 2007 Reserve Zinfandel - Bronze

Opolo
VINEYARDS

Serenade
2006
Paso Robles

Opolo
VINEYARDS

Mountain Zinfandel
2007
Paso Robles

Opolo
VINEYARDS

Pinot Noir
2006
Paso Robles

Tempranillo
2007
Paso Robles

By Mark Langton

THROUGH 7/18

Through July 18: **VISIONARIES: CONTEMPORARY ART FROM SANTA BARBARA'S PRIVATE COLLECTIONS**

Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum. This exhibit of some of today's most cutting-edge artists and world-class works is created from more than 15 local, privately held, and rarely seen collections. (sbcaf.org)

June 5–August 29: **VLADIMIR'S VISIONS**

Santa Paula Art Museum. Hundreds of award-winning entries from the Santa Paula Art Show, which started in 1937, are showcased along with the works of local artist Vladimir Iwasiuk (1905–1986). The museum opened in February; the exhibit also includes the newly released book *Vladimir's Visions*, written by Iwasiuk's son, Gosta. (santapaulaartmuseum.org)

June 6: **CASA PACIFICA ANGELS ANNUAL WINE AND FOOD FESTIVAL**

California State University at Channel Islands, Camarillo. With 75 of the area's top restaurants serving up gourmet bites, and more than 100 wineries and microbreweries offering samples, this is the largest food and wine festival in Ventura County. Proceeds from the silent auction benefit Casa Pacifica (casapacifica.org); there is also continuous live music and dancing to some of the best bands in Southern California. (cpwineandfoodfestival.com)

June 12: **HOWARD J. FOX**

Akashic Bookshop, Gallery, and Café, Thousand Oaks. Local author Howard J. Fox will speak about his new book *The Truth About Men*, followed by a question-and-answer period. Fox, an attorney and men's life coach, reveals tips in his book on how to become a better husband, father, income earner, and lover. Open to men and women. (akashicbookshopandcenter.com)

June 13: **OJAI WINE FESTIVAL**

Lake Casitas, Ojai. In addition to more than 50 wineries offering hundreds of selections of wine, there will be beer tastings, food vendors, and live music. Proceeds from a silent wine auction benefit the Rotary of Club Ojai–West (ojairotary.org); and there will be free boat rides. (ojaiwinefestival.com)

June 19: **SALUTE!**

San Buenaventura State Beach, Ventura. More than 50 of the country's finest craft-brewed beers and cuisine from the region's top chefs come together for this benefit for Food Share (foodshare.org). Admission includes a commemorative tasting glass, unlimited food and beer tastings, and live music. Special VIP tickets are available. (salutebeerfestival.com)

June 24–October 7: **LASTING IMPRESSIONS: COLIN CAMPBELL COOPER**

Santa Barbara Historical Museum. Paintings by renowned American Impressionist Colin Campbell Cooper (1856–1937) are on display. This major figure in American Impressionism became the dean of painting at the Santa Barbara Community School of the Arts in 1921 and spent the remainder of his life in Santa Barbara. (santabarbaramuseum.com) ■



6/24–10/7



Here's an idea:

Ever wonder what it's like to pitch a 630-horsepower dirt-track racer sideways at 100 miles per hour? The team at **CORY KRUSEMAN'S SPRINT CAR AND MIDGET DRIVING SCHOOL** will show you the basics, all the way up to competition level. Midget cars—with around 200 horsepower—and go-karts are available for driving, but five-lap rides in a sprint car can be arranged if you'd rather leave the driving to a professional. Kruseman, a Ventura native and one of sprint car racing's most successful drivers (including two Chili Bowl wins), operates his school at the Ventura County Fairgrounds, where you can see him race several times a year. (kruseman.com)



PHOTO BOTTOM, LEFT: THE TERRACE IN SAMARKAND, 1927, COLIN CAMPBELL COOPER (1856–1937), OIL; BELOW: ROBERT BERNSTEIN



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By Mark Langton

ONGOING

Ongoing: ECOSYSTEMS

California Science Center, Los Angeles. This massive exhibit is part of the center's newly doubled exhibition space. Taking up 45,000 square feet, it features eight separate environments, including the 188,000-gallon tank that replicates a living kelp forest populated with 1,500 fish and other forms of marine life. Other highlights include the Extreme Zone, which shows how species adapt to extreme climates; the LA Zone, focusing on the delicate balance of an urban landscape and its surroundings; and the Rot Room, showing how decomposition contributes to the cycle of life. Reservations are suggested for groups of 15 or more. (californiasciencecenter.org)



June 1–September 30: PICK YOUR OWN BERRIES

Underwood Family Farms, Somis and Moorpark. June ushers in berry season, and you can pick your own to your heart's content. Blueberries are available at the Somis location through mid-July; blackberries (through mid-July) and raspberries (through September) are available at the Moorpark location. (underwoodfamilyfarms.com)

June 18–20: LIVE OAK MUSIC FESTIVAL

Live Oak Camp, Santa Barbara. Woodstock meets the Central Coast at this three-day happening in the hills near Cachuma Lake. Entertainment includes 16 performances by artists like Rickie Lee Jones, the Chicago Blues Reunion, and Dr. Lonnie Smith, voted "Organ Keyboardist of the Year" by the Jazz Journalists Association. This benefit for KCBX public radio includes music workshops, late-night dances, and a children's activities area. (liveoakfest.org)

June 19: JOHNNY CASH MUSIC FESTIVAL

Ventura County Fairgrounds. Former Johnny Cash bandmates and local tribute artists celebrate the music of the "Man in Black." There is also Johnny Cash memorabilia, a hot rod and motorcycle show, food, beer and wine, and a vendors' area with more than 100 booths. Children under 12—dressed in black—get in free. (johnnycashmusicfestival.com)



6/26

ROBERT BERNSTEIN

June 26: OJAI LAVENDER FESTIVAL

Libbey Park, Ojai. In addition to all things lavender, the Ojai artisan community sells jewelry, art, soaps, crafts, clothing, and gourmet treats. (ojaivalleylavenderfestival.org)

June 26: SUMMER SOLSTICE PARADE

Alameda Park, Santa Barbara. One of the most creative parades of the Central Coast includes 1,000 participants in spectacular costumes, as well as floats, giant puppets, dance groups, and drum ensembles. (solsticeparade.com)

June 26: WILD WEST BBQ BASH

Preisker Park, Santa Maria. The Wild West BBQ Bash is a competition that has categories for chicken, beef brisket, pork ribs, pork shoulder, "People's Choice," and of course, Santa Maria-style tri-tip. There is also live music, cultural displays, and kids' games. (santamariavalleybbq.com) ■

Here's an idea:

Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara. Whether you're a guest of the resort or not, all are welcome to its "Starry Nights" program, an educational presentation by members of Santa Barbara's Astronomical Unit astronomy club. Experts lead a stargazing session through telescopes while explaining many wonders of the universe.

Guests and the public are also invited to take a guided tour of the resort's spectacular gardens, which feature dozens of rare botanical specimens as well as Santa Barbara's second-largest tree, a Moreton Bay Fig that dates back to the 1800s. Both these attractions continue through September and require reservations. (fourseasons.com/santabarbara)

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JUNE

June 5–July 11: The two-time Tony Award-winning musical comedy **25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE** comes to the Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center. This story of six overachieving, socially awkward teens and the quirky adults who run the spelling bee is a cleverly conceived show that's part improvisation, with audience-member participation. The show can get a little raunchy, so consider this when purchasing tickets for youngsters. (simi-arts.org)

June 19: Fiddlestix Vineyard hosts **FIDDLEFEST**, a celebration of Fiddlehead Cellars wines and also features selections from 14 other Santa Ynez vintners. There will be Santa Maria-style barbecue and wine-country cuisine provided by Hitching Post II; and as the name implies, there will be live fiddle music by local players throughout the day. A silent auction will feature collectors' large-format signed bottles, special verticals, and private tastings, with proceeds to benefit the nonprofit Santa Ynez Valley People Helping People. (syvphp.org; fiddleheadcellars.com)

June 26: The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural Art hosts the **SANTA BARBARA WINE FESTIVAL**, benefiting the museum's various exhibits and educational programs. There are more than 75 Central Coast wineries that have signed on, as well as several local food purveyors with savory dishes and sweets. (sbnature.org)

June 27: One of the country's biggest music tours, the **VANS WARPED TOUR**, returns to Ventura County Fairgrounds with several stages and as many as 100 bands playing all day and into the night. While the music is predominantly of the punk persuasion, there are several other genres, plus an action sports festival with half-pipe demos by skaters, BMXers, and in-line skaters. (vanswarpedtour.com)



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JULY

July 10: With a string of rock 'n' roll hits that spans three decades, the **STEVE MILLER BAND** is one of rock's most enduring acts. Joining them at the Santa Barbara Bowl is **LOS LOBOS**, a three-time Grammy-Award winning Mexican-American roots-rock band from East Los Angeles. (sbbowl.com)

July 15–17: The **CALIFORNIA WINE FESTIVAL** in Santa Barbara features three separate events. You can attend one, two, or all three, with special discounts for multi-event passes. The first event is "Old Spanish Nights" at the De La Guerra Adobe Courtyard, with Spanish music, flamenco dancing, and tapas to go along with some of Santa Barbara's finest wines and specially selected Spanish imports. Day two showcases rare and reserve wines under the stars at Chase Palm Park, with gourmet appetizers, artisanal cheeses, and fresh chocolate-covered strawberries. The final day convenes under the sun at Chase Palm Park for the Beachside Wine Festival with unlimited sampling of more than 200 California wines, along with appetizers from local chefs, artisanal cheeses, olive oils, fresh-cut fruits, and chocolate desserts. Live music plays throughout the day. (californiawinefestival.com)

July 22: Country music star **LEANN RIMES**, whose voice and style have been compared to the legendary country singer Patsy Cline, performs at the Chumash Casino in Buellton. (chumashcasino.com)

July 23–August 1: See mice turn into horses, a pumpkin into a carriage, and a young woman into a princess when the Cabrillo Music Theatre presents the magical **CINDERELLA** at the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. Along with elaborate costumes and sets, the musical features Emmy Award-winning actress Sally Struthers as the Fairy Godmother. Classic Rodgers and Hammerstein tunes include "In My Own Little Corner," "Ten Minutes Ago," and "Impossible." (toaks.org/cap)

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AUGUST

August 4–15: The **VENTURA COUNTY FAIR** is great family entertainment, and the fairgrounds will once again be teeming with carnival rides, games, national and local bands, and a variety of food and beverages. Other events include motor sports and a Western rodeo. (venturacountyfair.org)

August 5: Re-live the music of the 1950s and 60s with three of the most popular teen idols of the time—Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell, and Fabian—together known as **THE GOLDEN BOYS**, at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza's Bank of America Performing Arts Center. Chart-topping hits include "Venus," "De De Dinah," "Bobby Sox to Stockings" (Avalon); "Volare," "Wild One," and "Kissin' Time" (Rydell); and "Turn Me Loose," "Tiger," and "I'm A Man" (Fabian). (toaks.org/cap)

August 19: **NIGHTS** at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art is an interactive-art, performance, and new media event. Held in the museum's galleries, guests can enjoy live music and specialty martinis amid the exhibit *Chaotic Harmony: Contemporary Korean Photography*. (sbma.net)

August 26: One of MTV's early stars, **CYNDI LAUPER** brings her collection of Top 10 hits to the Chumash Casino in Santa Ynez. Her latest release, *Memphis Blues*, is a collection of blues covers that took six years to produce and features B.B. King, Jonny Lang, Ann Peebles, and Charlie Musselwhite. (chumashcasino.com)

SEPTEMBER

September 23: Music icon Willie Nelson brings his act **WILLIE NELSON AND FAMILY** to the Santa Barbara Bowl. With 67 albums to his credit and a recipient of virtually every significant music award over his six-decade career, Nelson continues to produce timely and poignant music. (sbbowl.com)

September 24–26: The **WEST BEACH MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL** will turn West Beach in Santa Barbara into a three-day rock, reggae, and electro party. Concerts on four stages will feature national and

local artists, while DJs create cool grooves under a special bamboo shaded "oasis." (westbeach festival.com)

Save the Date

MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THESE CHARITIES.

JUNE

June 13: Lily of the Valley Endeavor was created in 2004 to provide financial aid to a children's HIV/AIDS village in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, and to send food to other Zulu communities. The annual fundraiser, **LOVEFEST**, takes place at Gardens of the World in Thousand Oaks and features food donated by top area restaurants, as well as contemporary Christian music by Kendall Payne and other local musicians. (lilyvalleyusa.org)

June 26: Bunko, a simple parlor game, will help raise much-needed money for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation at the second annual **BUNKO 4 BREAST CANCER** tournament in Santa Rosa Valley. Former Bunko world champion Sue Stonehouse will again host the event. (bunko4breastcancer.com)

June 28: The Men's Club of St. Paschal Baylon Church holds its annual **ST. PASCHAL BAYLON GOLF TOURNAMENT** at Moorpark Country Club. The Men's Club of St. Paschal Baylon supports the needs of the parish and school as well as various ministries and charitable organizations throughout the Conejo Valley, Catholic charities, scholarships, and other youth and senior groups. (stpaschal.org)

June 28–July 4: The **VENTURA FILM FESTIVAL** at the Majestic Ventura Theatre helps raise funds for local and international forest- and ocean-preservation organizations and other select environmental charities. Submissions include more than 100 feature films, shorts, and documentaries spanning a wide variety of genres and subjects. (ventura filmfestival.org)



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JULY

July 19: Casa Pacifica's **CARE FOR KIDS GOLF CLASSIC** will be hosted by the Rotary Clubs of Camarillo and held at Spanish Hills Golf and Country Club in Camarillo. Proceeds benefit Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families, which are crisis-care and residential treatment facilities for abused, neglected, and at-risk children in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Funds will also support community-based programs designed to strengthen families. (casapacifica.org)

July 24-25: A weekend of wine and food is in store at **A TASTE OF CAMARILLO**, taking place at the historic Adolfo Camarillo Ranch House. Saturday evening's activities feature wine tastings (including dinner wine from Wades Wines in Westlake Village) and auctions of fine and rare wines and other items. Sunday's wine tastings will be complemented with foods from more than 50 Ventura County restaurants and caterers, plus live jazz. Proceeds benefit Meadowlark Service League, which funds several public agencies and local high school scholarships in Ventura County. (meadowlarkserviceleague.com)

AUGUST

August 1: The American Cancer Society of Ventura will once again host a gala fundraiser at a Santa Rosa Valley private villa. **JOIE DE VIVRE, EVENING OF HOPE** will have a French-countryside theme. The evening begins with a poolside reception, followed by a meal of signature dishes prepared by local chefs, silent and live auctions, and dancing under the stars. (Sandy Berg, 805-644-4237)

August 1: Senior Concerns, serving seniors and their families since 1975, will hold its **ULTIMATE DINING EXPERIENCE** at the Hyatt Westlake Village. This gourmet food and fine wine event features several notable wineries and some of the area's top chefs. Guests can meet the chefs and watch as they prepare tapas-style offerings. (seniorconcerns.org)

August 7: The Paso Robles Rotary Club presents the **WINEMAKER'S COOKOFF** at River Oaks Hot Springs in Paso Robles, where 30 of the area's winemakers prepare food to serve

with their wines. Proceeds benefit the Rotary Club's Harlow Ford Scholarship Foundation, which supports a perpetual fund to assist local high school seniors with college and vocational education costs. (winemakerscookoff.com)

GIVEback

GARDENS OF THE WORLD: Located across the street from the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza, these internationally themed gardens are a gift from the Hogan Family Foundation. Interpretive docents are needed to assist visitors—some 20,000 a year—as they enjoy their stroll throughout the grounds. A six- to eight-week training session is provided. (hoganfoundation.org; gardensoftheworld.info)

WHOLE FOODS MARKET CORK RECYCLING PROGRAM. Whole Foods Market partners with Cork ReHarvest (corkreharvest.org) to help collect and recycle some of the 13 billion corks used annually in the U.S. Cork ReHarvest is the country's leading cork-recycling organization; its goal is to not only recycle cork for use in products such as shipping containers and floor tiles, but also to educate the public about the importance of Mediterranean forests to the world's ecology. Bark is harvested by hand from trees every 9 to 12 years, making cork a sustainable and renewable product. Whole Foods will be accepting natural wine corks at all of its 292 stores (locally in Santa Barbara, Thousand Oaks, and Woodland Hills) as part of this ongoing program. (wholefoodsmarket.com) ■

If you would like to submit your event or organization for possible inclusion in Insider, please email the information and a contact number/email to insider@805living.com. Please submit your request no later than 14 weeks prior to the issue in which you'd like the information to appear.

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Mind/Body/Soul

By Mark Langton



HOW THE PROS DO IT

Health and fitness tips for every man.

HEY, this may not be *Men's Fitness* magazine, but we still pass along well-being assistance to men whenever we can get it. So we spoke to three fitness professionals for their take on what they feel are some of the most important components for good health.

The Serious Athlete

CHUCK "THE ICEMAN" LIDDELL

Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and Mixed Martial Arts Superstar, San Luis Obispo (icemanmma.com)

STRENGTH [I do] squats, lunges, cleans, high-pulls, and stiff-leg dead lifts.

CARDIO I do intervals of push-ups, with my hands in different positions and at different speeds. I shadowbox, jump rope, and hit the bag. Every day, twice a day, for two hours each session, I push myself to the limit.

DIET I eat at least six small meals per day comprised of balanced amounts of protein and complex carbohydrates. I eat a lot of chicken and vegetables. I also feel that any man can benefit from a good multivitamin. Any active person should use a protein supplement in addition to their diet. (For information on Liddell's new line of supplements go to ultimateicemansupplements.com.)

For Weekend—and Weekday—Warriors

MICHAEL S. DAVIS

Founder, president, and CEO, Elite Fitness Plus, Westlake Village (elitefitnessplus.com)

STRENGTH Everyone is different. Therefore, depending on injuries and physical capabilities, it varies case by case. The five best overall functional, multijoint, or complex movements that will assist in increasing one's strength and at the same time increase one's fitness levels are: squats/split-squats, dead lifts, push-presses with dumbbells, pull-ups, and plank positions.

CARDIO There should always be cross-training or variation components to any type of exercise to decrease chances of injury due to the repetitive movements and overuse of muscles. If one has a sound cardiovascular system and has been checked out by a doctor, interval training is by far the most efficient and effective when it comes to increasing an individual's overall fitness level. Find several cardio exercises you enjoy and vary them. Remember to stay consistent; six times a week and thirty minutes minimum.

DIET Nutritional intake should consist of all three energy sources: carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. Leaving any of these food groups out of your daily intake for long terms will have more negative effects than positive. Foods to stay away from are sugars and saturated fats. I believe most men do not [get] enough of the essential vitamins and minerals via their whole foods, and therefore should take a high-quality multivitamin.

A Bigger Picture

SRI HARI MOSS

Certified yoga teacher, co-owner of Yoga Upstairs, Agoura Hills (yogaupstairs.com)

I believe that many people aren't really connected to what they're doing when they are working out. Many people aren't aware of how they are using their bodies, which can cause imbalance. For example, if you're a cyclist you are working the hamstrings and quadriceps, so you may want to complement that with some yoga to create balance.

Another aspect of yoga that is very beneficial, especially for cardiovascular activities, is breath control. When you consciously connect with the breath, it makes a bridge between the body and the mind in such a way that they are working together more cohesively. It helps to deliver more oxygen to the muscles and to relax the mind and body. Yoga teaches the discipline to focus on what you need to, and relax everything else. ■

A Few More Tips From Mark Langton

(who actually was on staff at *Men's Fitness* magazine)

Good technique is key. Whatever the exercise, pay attention to proper mechanical movements.

Keep a journal. This will make it easier to track results and create motivation.

Know thyself. Since we are all different, pay attention to your individual basal metabolic rate (BMR) guidelines to determine the correct amount of caloric intake based on physical activity, sex, age, weight, and individual goals.

Consult a physician when embarking on any exercise program. It wouldn't hurt to talk to a registered dietitian or nutritionist for proper caloric needs, either.

Consider your emotions. Stress from family or work can have a significant effect on your body and your workouts. While exercise can be a form of stress relief, being distracted or upset could cause your workout to become dangerous or ineffective.



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Arts & Culture

By Frank Nelson

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST ON THE MOVE

Tony Pro proves there is no still life when it comes to making great art.

ANYONE WHO WORKS FROM HOME knows it can be difficult at times with young children running about. Imagine how tricky it is for an artist whose studio is in the house, with all those messy oil paints around, and three children under the age of 5. That's the lifestyle Westlake Village painter Tony Pro and his wife, Elizabeth, have to juggle. And judging by the results—his work hangs in collections across the United States and around the world—they've found some perfect solutions.

"I'm more of a night person," explains Pro, whose painting time typically starts about 7 p.m. (after the kids are in bed) and runs anywhere from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. the next day. He still works during the day, but on tasks that don't require the same degree of intense concentration, such as making panels for frames, shipping pictures, marketing his art, and talking to gallery owners and clients.

Those are the sorts of things he can do while spending time with sons Ian, 5, and William, 3, and baby daughter Ava. Pro also likes to cook ("It gets the creative juices flowing," he says), so making dinner tends to lead naturally into making art.

Pro, who's 36, began painting seriously in the late 1990s, though it might seem that art was always his destiny: His father Julio is an award-winning wildlife artist and older brother Greg is a professional illustrator. Working almost exclusively in oils, Pro specializes in portraits, landscapes and still lifes. He likes to paint subjects directly, using as much natural light as possible, rather than copying from photos. "You get a better result," he says. "Even some of the best cameras cannot accurately represent certain colors in the shadow."

But more than just producing a good likeness, Pro believes his role is to capture a person's spirit. That's why he likes to spend time with his subjects who generally sit for about six hours, usually in two three-hour sessions. "It's very difficult to translate the personality if you don't know the person," he says. Pro estimates an average painting, measuring, say, 11-by-14 inches, would take him about 30 hours. Child portraits can take a little longer, partly because youngsters can't sit still for long and partly because parents can prove "finicky" about the images of their own kids. He says sometimes there's a lot of back-and-forth as he emails photos of the changing portrait to parents for approval. But Pro can be equally tough on himself, recalling occasions when he's repainted a head five or six times before feeling satisfied.



His work starts at about \$1,500 for 8-by-10-inch or 9-by-12-inch paintings, while large canvases measuring about 48-by-30 inches fetch \$18,000. Most of his work is commissioned but he sells some portraits—along with paintings of roses, seascapes, and still lifes—on his website and through three galleries in Connecticut, Arizona, and Florida. His portrait of Rose Ann Vuich, the first female member of the California State Senate, hangs in the state capitol, while the still life *Friar's Desk* was bought by the museum at the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. His paintings find buyers all over the world—a single collector in Washington state owns more than 20.

Pro is no stranger to awards but the one he treasures most came at the Oil Painters of America 2005 annual exhibition in Chicago, when his painting *Mother's Love* won best of show. Later that same year, the same portrait of Pro's wife with their first baby graced the cover of *Southwest Art* magazine. "I won't sell that painting, it's in our collection," Pro says. "It marked a turning point for me as an artist."

Despite all his success, Pro is not immune to the impact of the economic recession: In times like these, when money is tight, people are less inclined to splash out on a piece of art, no matter how much they like it. His response has been to diversify—at least slightly. Figuring that people in a down economy want more education and are looking to improve their skills, he's recently released a two-disc instructional DVD on portrait painting. Pro has been pleased with the early response to the set, which contains more than four hours of material. Within the first few weeks he was shipping copies to buyers as far away as Norway, Germany, Australia, and Sweden. He has also launched a line of art-related designs on T-shirts, aprons, mugs, and other items. Intended to appeal to artists and art lovers, this is all part of his passion to encourage more "representational art back in the mainstream."

In addition, Pro's busy schedule includes teaching classes and workshops. In February he was at the Scottsdale Artists' School, and later this year he'll be judging a show and conducting a workshop at the Richeson School of Art & Gallery in Kimberly, Wisconsin. Closer to home, he teaches weekly classes on portrait and figure painting at the California Art Institute in Thousand Oaks, where sessions cater to professional artists, students, and many hobby painters. Ages range from early teens to people in their 80s, because there's no age limit when it comes to creating art. ■

For more information on Tony Pro visit tonypro-fineart.com.



PRO'S PORTRAITS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT):
They Know No Bounds;
Le Col de Plumes;
John Allen Andross;
Mother's Love.

Pursuits

By Cynthia House Nooney Photograph by Gary Moss



EASY RIDERS


A look at today's (and yesterday's) scooters and the guys who ride them.

I MEAN NO DISRESPECT, but why on earth would guys elect to ride scooters rather than motorcycles? Are they “reformed” motorcyclists? Have they sworn off riding hogs, or never even been on one?

These were the questions I had for Matt Guccione, founder of Ventura County Ventures Scooter Crew (VCVSC). His group gathers monthly in Camarillo or Ventura for rides to Malibu, Ojai, Thousand Oaks, or wherever they feel like going. They also participate in a number of community events, like riding in Ventura's annual St. Patrick's Day parade, getting involved with the St. Baldrick's Foundation's fundraiser for childhood cancer

research, and joining other clubs for a scooter rally, such as last year's ride around Lake Sherwood in Westlake Village to honor the anniversary of Royal Bastards Scooter Club.

Guccione, also known as “Scooter Gooch,” began our conversation by explaining the practical aspects of owning a scooter: They're easy to operate, even easier to park, and more economical than driving a car. His Bajaj Chetak gets 100 miles to the gallon and has an environmentally friendly four-stroke engine. He rides it almost every day to work and it serves as his main mode of transportation.



Matt Guccioni (third from left) gathers his crew for another ride.

But for Guccione, scooters are about much more than going green. They're part of his identity, his biggest hobby, and the most fun he's ever had. As a teenager living in Orange County during the late 1980s, Guccione became interested in mod subculture, a youth movement that peaked two decades earlier in England. British beat music, Jamaican ska, and Italian motor scooters were part of the scene—and Guccione was hooked. He listened to the Jam and the Kinks, but it was the Who's *Quadrophenia* that had a profound impact. The album's hero is a misfit mod character who rides a scooter. "It resonated with me," says Guccione.

His 2005 Chetak (his third scooter) was one of the last available in the United States when he purchased it in 2007. He fixed it up to look like a vintage Vespa, reminiscent of the mod period, by adding checkered mud flaps, chrome bars and mirrors, and a custom seat to match his whitewall tires. Unsure of the clutch's sensitivity, Guccione popped an accidental wheelie the first day he bought the scooter and landed on his back. "It's never happened again!" he says.

When Guccione moved to Ventura in 2007 to teach high school art and couldn't find a local scooter club, he started his own. The crew's first ride was to Port Hueneme, followed by lunch in Ventura. Several VCVSC members (ages range from 20 to 70-plus years) ride motorcycles as well, but enjoy scooters because they're less serious. "Scooters are just about wanting to have fun," says Guccione.

Many ride old scooters from the 1960s, and others, like retired firefighter Paul Fielding, ride newer, faster ones with bigger engines. His 2009 Vespa GTS 250 can cruise comfortably at 75 mph. Fielding rode motorcycles for more than 40 years before trading his in for a scooter: "I [saw a] group of scooterists tooling along Highway 33 with camping gear and thought that looked like a lot of fun." He put his own twist on things when he joined VCVSC; last fall, Fielding hosted a "Scoot-N-Shoot Ride" to Ojai Valley Gun Club, where members fired cowboy guns (old-fashioned cock and shoot guns like those used in Westerns) on the Black Powder Range. He hopes to add camping to the mix this year.

The sense of freedom Fielding feels on two wheels is like no other. "You smell everything you go through and you feel the different changes of air temperature. Your senses come alive," he says.

Scooters also caught the eye of Santa Barbara resident Bobby Weindorf when he was working in Italy as a mechanic for a motorcycle racing team. "They were everywhere," he says. "I went from seeing thousands a day to zero when I returned home."

Soon after, Weindorf began restoring and selling Italian scooters that he imported, and ultimately opened Moto Paradiso (also called Vespa), where he sells new and classic Vespas. "Santa Barbara is a great town for scooters," he says, adding that he also helped form The Vesparados, a scooter club that's been going strong since 1999. Members often hang out at the store to glean tips from Weindorf and plan upcoming weekly rides. Occasionally, the group meets up with LA-based clubs, traveling to halfway points like Malibu. They also participate in scooter rallies, such as Rides of March (ridesofmarch.com), an annual event in San Luis Obispo.

"I love riding [scooters and motorcycles], but scooters seem to be more socially accepted. Everybody's got a scooter story they want to share; perhaps they rented one in the Bahamas, or had one growing up. People often approach us when we stop somewhere," says Weindorf. This prompts a vague vision in my mind: It's 1995 and I'm on the back of a battered scooter, hair whipping, arms wrapped around a boyfriend's waist as we travel along a narrow dirt road in Cozumel, Mexico. However, I resist the urge to share *my* story with Weindorf.

Naturally, some riders prefer modern scooters; others favor vintage models. While both are fun to ride, there is one caveat to buying vintage: "Old scooters have a lot of charm and appeal, but if you're not mechanically inclined or don't want problems, new ones are the way to go," says Weindorf, adding that some of his friends have both. "It's like driving a new car, but you also have a classic one at home in the garage." ■

Local Scooter Shops

Big Ass Motors, Northridge: bigassmotors.com

San Luis Motorsports, San Luis Obispo: sanluismotorsports.com

Simi Valley Cycles: simivalleycycles.com

Moto Paradiso/Vespa, Santa Barbara: vespasb.com

Vespa, Sherman Oaks: vespaso.com

Vespa, Thousand Oaks: tovespa.com

Scouting Along: Local Scooter Clubs

Royal Bastards Scooter Club (chapters throughout the United States): royalbastardsscooterclub.com

The Vesparados, Vespa Club of Santa Barbara: vesparados.com

Ventura County Ventures Scooter Crew: camarollersscooterclub.blogspot.com

Westside Scooter Club, Los Angeles: westsidescootclub.com

Note: To locate San Luis Obispo scooter clubs, visit ridesofmarch.com

Good Deeds

By Mark Langton Photographs by Judi Bumstead



Thomas and Carrie Tighe, Judy and Tom Beckmen



Dan and Mary Ellen McCammon, Bhupi Singh



Mireille Strasser Noone and Peter Noone



Eric Sonquist, Susan and Steve Beckmen

WINE FOR MEDICINE WORLDWIDE

Santa Barbara Vintners' Association keeps fundraising on track for Direct Relief International.

THE EVENT: Every two years the Santa Barbara Vintners' Association holds its American Riviera Wine Auction, "Vintner's Express," to raise funds for Direct Relief International (DRI). This year's event benefited Direct Relief USA and took place February 20; it was the first to be held at one of DRI's warehouse facilities. Volunteers transformed the space into a railroad setting to fit the event's theme, "Homeward Bound." Guests sampled a variety of wines from Beckmen Vineyards and hors d'oeuvres from Root 246, Hitching Post, Hungry Cat, Wine Cask, the Ballard Inn, Seagrass, and Bouchon. Dinner was provided by New West Catering and followed by a wine auction.

THE CAUSE: Direct Relief International was founded in 1948 in Santa Barbara and has remained in the community ever since. The organization has dispensed medical equipment, medicine, training, and grants to medical professionals equaling more than \$1 billion since 2000, and provided emergency disaster relief to 60 countries last year. In the United States, Direct Relief works in all 50 states through more than 1,000 clinics. *Forbes* magazine identified Direct Relief as one of only two nonprofit organizations in the country to reach 99-percent fundraising efficiency. (directrelief.org) ■



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GAME ON

Creating a testosterone-worthy fun zone.

A space to kick back and relax is essential for the man of the house. Here are some sophisticated (but not so snooty) ideas for stocking a gentleman's lair.



1.

1. FOR A 3-D EXPERIENCE: Panasonic's VIERA VT25 Plasma Full-HD 3-D HDTV (from \$2,600 for 50-inch to \$4,300 for 65-inch) offers 3-D viewing (3-D glasses included) and also integrates seamlessly with third-party providers including Netflix, Skype, and Twitter; plus it consumes less energy than a 100-watt lightbulb; Wilshire Home Entertainment, Thousand Oaks, wilshire.com.



2.

2. FOR RULING THE WORLD VIA JOYSTICK: The ARCADE LEGENDS FULL SIZE 125 GAME SYSTEM (\$3,700) includes more than 100 classic arcade games such as Asteroids, Centipede, Missile Command, and Street Fighter II. Best part: No quarters needed; hammacher.com.

3. FOR WHISTLE-WHETTING: Artistica's SAN SEBASTIAN BAR (\$4,347) and BAR STOOLS (\$900) feature etched brass panels on a hardwood frame; PTS Furniture, Thousand Oaks, ptsfurniture.com.

4. FOR RACKING UP POINTS: Maitland-Smith offers an upscale take on a classic game with the NAPOLEON FOOSBALL TABLE (\$8,997) with monkey and lion players; Islington Green, Westlake Village, islingtongreen.com.



3.



4.

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5. FOR CREATING MAN-STYLE COZINESS: A leather wall states a clear message: This is man space. Innovations OPACA LUCIDO leather tiles in "Oro" finish (price available on request through Innovations at the Pacific Design Center to the trade only).

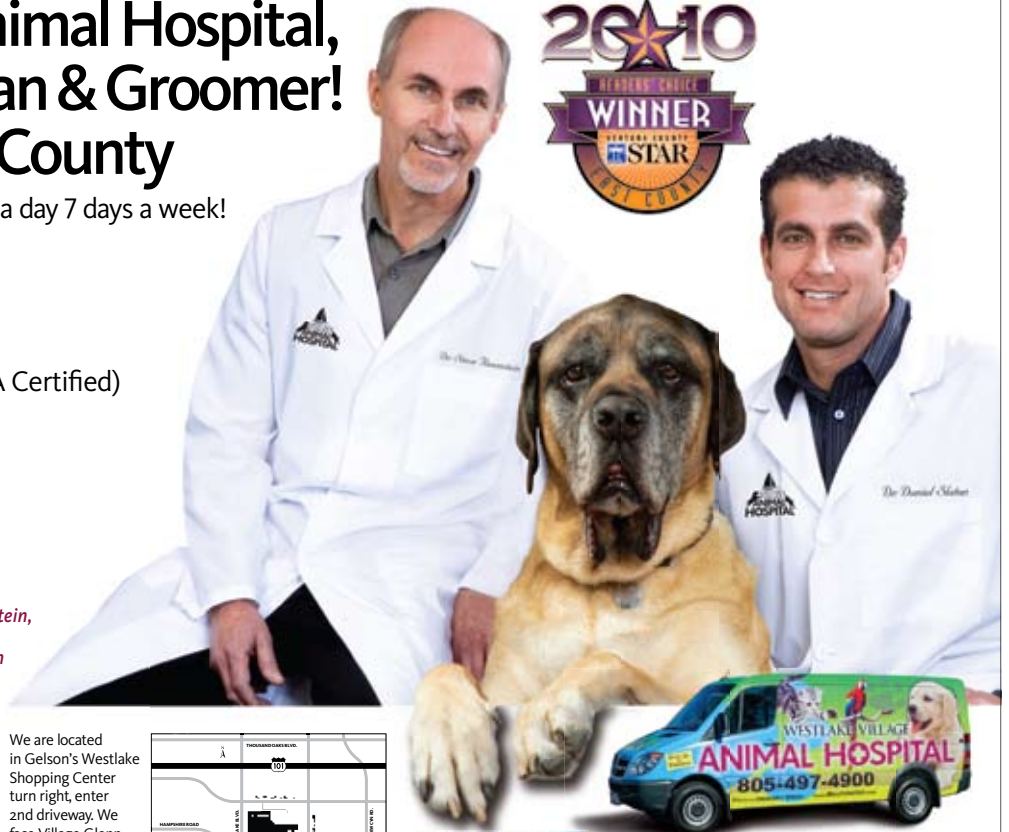
6. FOR JUST THE RIGHT LIGHT: BAR PENDANTS in "Firenze" finish (\$335-\$415) from Corbett Lighting are reminiscent of margarita, brandy, and lager glasses; Designer Lighting, Westlake Village, 818-575-9560.

7. FOR RECLINING IN STYLE: VIRGINIA reclining cinema seating with cup holders (from \$1,599-\$2,099 per seat) with optional wooden snack table and motorized recliner; Arizona Leather, Agoura Hills, arizonaleather.com.

8. FOR OPTIMAL VIEWING: Custom DISAPPEARING HOME THEATER (starting from \$20,000) only appears when you want it to. Included: a custom coffee table to house the Sony 1080p projector on a motorized lift, 110-inch motorized Stewart Film Screen, Bowers & Wilkins surround-sound speakers (flush-mounted in the ceiling and painted to blend in), Sony Blu-ray player and Integra surround-sound receiver hidden in a cabinet, and a custom-programmed Universal Remote Control (URC). Wilshire Entertainment, Thousand Oaks, wilshire.com.

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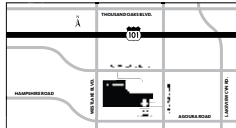
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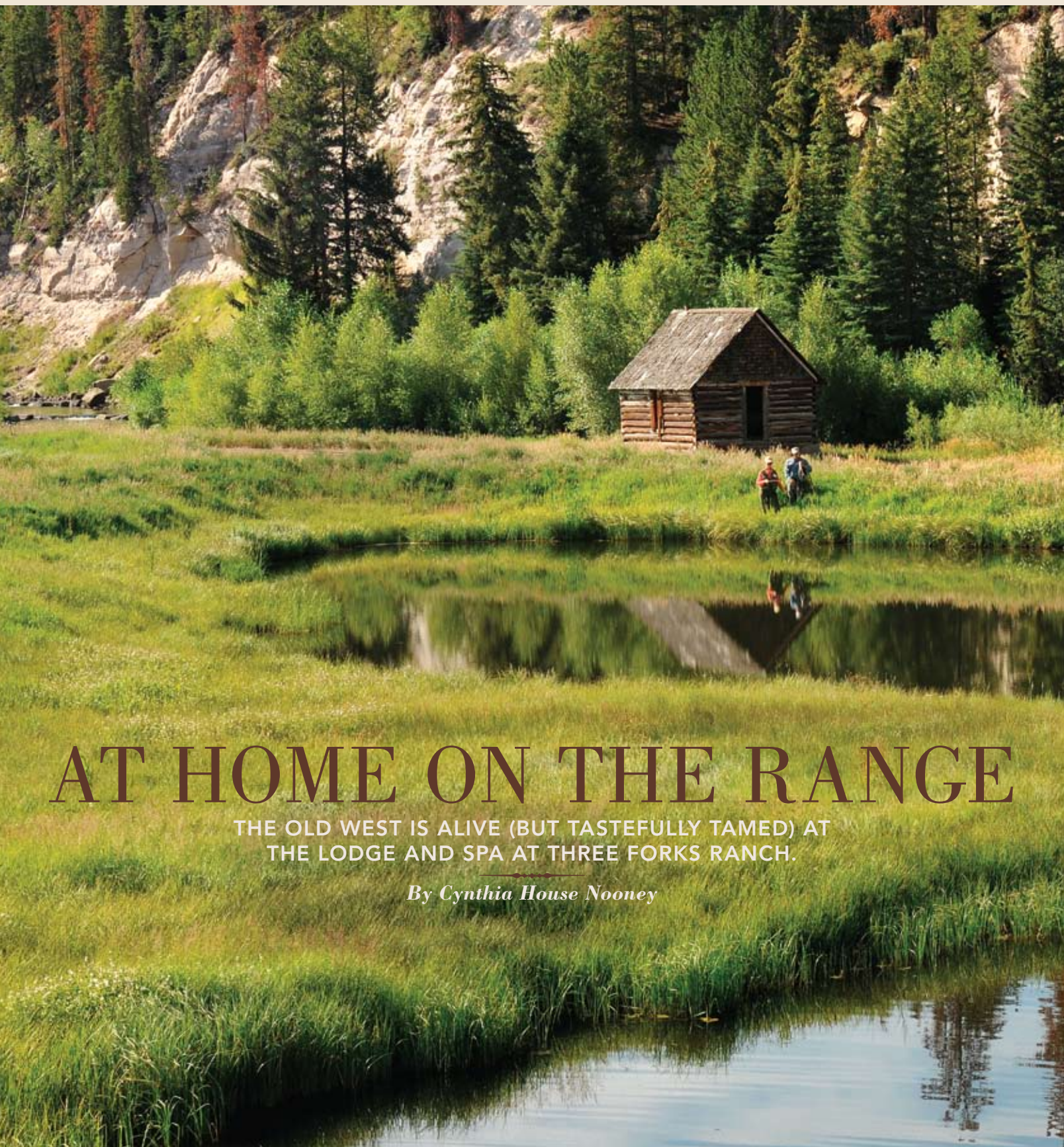
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AT HOME ON THE RANGE

THE OLD WEST IS ALIVE (BUT TASTEFULLY TAMED) AT
THE LODGE AND SPA AT THREE FORKS RANCH.

By Cynthia House Nooney



TRUTH BE TOLD,

I was at first ambivalent about traipsing 40 miles north of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, to Savery, Wyoming. Even though I grew up in the Wild West and have always loved the outdoors, I wasn't sure there'd be enough to keep me entertained in the middle of nowhere.

Turns out, my initial thinking was completely off base—for two reasons. First of all, my destination wasn't in the middle of nowhere. It was The Lodge and Spa at Three Forks Ranch, a premier destination on the Colorado/Wyoming border. Second, and, more important, from the moment I arrived until my departure, I received first-rate service, outstanding meals, access to seemingly limitless outdoor activities, indulgent spa treatments, and best of all, great times with an exceptional staff.

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THE LODGE AND SPA AT THREE FORKS.



MANNY RODRIGUEZ

It's rugged, beautiful country, so I wasn't surprised to learn that guests at Three Forks have included many famous manly men. What's even more impressive, though, is that 80 percent of the ranch's clientele are *returning* guests; and there's a simple reason why.

"The answer is always 'yes.' Anything guests want to do, we'll find a way to do it," said general manager Justin Flaherty when I inquired about the possibility of cross-country skiing the morning after I arrived. I was lingering over a delicious breakfast of pan-seared salmon and poached egg (called "The Fisherman") and wasn't quite ready to get motivated. That's okay, I learned, because the friendly, knowledgeable guides who accompany guests during activities on the ranch are always ready to lend expertise and assistance, and their schedules revolve around the guests. "Just give us a call when you are [ready]," Flaherty said.

An hour later, former competitive cross-country skier Jessica Philip took me to The Igloo, a well-appointed locker room, where I selected a warm pair of ski boots for our adventure. (Philip helped design the ranch's 46 miles of groomed ski trails that wind along rivers and through meadows. An



BIG SPACES: THE GREAT ROOM (FAR LEFT) IS PERFECT FOR SOCIALIZING WITH THE LODGE'S OTHER GUESTS; THE 200,000-ACRE PROPERTY IS HOME TO 8,000 HEAD OF CATTLE.

additional 75 miles are separately groomed for snowmobiling). When I began sweating from exertion and needed to shed my jacket while out on the trails, Philip carried it in her backpack and handed me a bottle of water.

The same top-notch treatment goes for hunting, fly-fishing, horseback riding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling—you name it. No crowds, no waiting, no heavy gear to carry, and no experience required. It's just a matter of showing up ready for exhilaration, whether that's in winter, when I went, or summer, with daily average temperatures of 80 degrees, low humidity, and lots of sunshine.

Back at the lodge, which opened in 2008, I unwound in the great room. "We want guests to feel at home, to wander around in their robes if they want," Flaherty told me. "We encourage them to put their feet up in the great room, have a cocktail at the bar, and just thoroughly enjoy themselves."

The 15-bedroom, 37,000-square-foot retreat is warm and inviting without pretension. It's exquisitely decorated with Ming vases, Chinese porcelain lamps, Oriental rugs, and 180 pieces of original Western art, including bronzes and works by legendary cowboy artists Charlie Russell and Frederic Remington. The "piano player" at the lodge's 1866 Steinway concert grand piano is an oversized stuffed bear wearing a cowboy hat. Middle Fork Lounge is comfortable and cozy, with plenty of aesthetic appeal. An array of antique rifles and shotguns is showcased, as well as a stunning wall-size painting called *War Clouds Over the Middle Fork*.



MANNY RODRIGUEZ



VALENTINE ATKINSON

Commissioned from Oklahoma artist Wayne Cooper, the oil painting depicts an imagined Ute Indian battle scene on the very land around me. I had the sudden urge to request a masculine drink, but I was due at the spa.

An outdoor infinity pool kept heated year-round is the focal point of Roaring Forks Spa, which offers a variety of treatments. I began my visit by relaxing in the eucalyptus steam room before receiving an amazing high-altitude scrub and rub, which provided just the rejuvenation I needed. (It's popular with guys too, I'm told.)

Next, I headed to my lavish bedroom suite, complete with a spacious bathroom, scrumptious bed, and majestic views of Three Forks Mountain and the Little Snake River Valley. Every amenity had been considered, no detail overlooked. Even an oxygen canister for preventing high-altitude sickness had been placed on my nightstand. (Elevation at the lodge is 7,200 feet.) Prior to skiing that day, I'd given it a try and my lungs were grateful.

Vision for the lodge was developed over time by owner David Pratt, following his purchase of Three Forks Ranch in 1999. Named for the place where the Middle Fork, North Fork, and South Fork rivers converge, the 200,000-acre property is a cattle ranch that also attracts hunters and fishermen. Pratt, an avid outdoorsman and minority owner of the St. Louis Cardinals, aimed to enhance their recreational experience. By completing the most extensive private river restoration in the United States on 16 miles of the Little Snake River, Pratt created a renewed trout habitat.

"The river is now the way it was one-hundred-fifty years ago and makes for superb catch-and-release fly-fishing," said Flaherty, listing the variety

of trout that churns its waters: rainbow, brown, brook, and the elusive Colorado cutthroat.

The next day, I quizzed my snowshoeing guide, Dave Clements, for more details. "A fisherman of average ability will easily catch two dozen fish a day here," he said, "usually more. Average length is around sixteen to eighteen inches, with the biggest fish about twenty-seven to twenty-eight inches." (Fly-fishing season begins this month and lasts through September.)

As we trekked up snow-covered hills, Clements identified tracks made by coyote, rabbit, and deer. He pointed to areas where he leads big-game hunters toward mule deer, elk, and antelope in the fall. With years of experience as a hunting and fishing guide, he's frequently requested by returning guests.

When I asked Clements what he enjoys most about his job, he spread his arms wide. "My office," he said, and we scanned the Sierra Madres, a chain of the Rocky Mountains, dotted with blue spruce, aspen, and cottonwood. He named the peaks in the distance for me: Three Forks, Piney, and Columbus.

The aspens must look amazing in the fall, I ventured. "It's electric," he replied, and I wish that had been the word I'd chosen.

Afterward, I slipped into the private hot tub outside my room, a glass of wine in hand. The sun was trying to pierce through the gray skies—enough so that I needed to wear shades (there's nothing like the sun's intensity in this part of the world, whether the skies are brilliant blue or overcast). I let the jets massage my back, shoulders, and toes. I couldn't recall when I last felt this relaxed, and it dawned on me that not once during my luxurious visit did I feel I was in the middle of nowhere. In the middle of paradise was more like it. ■

For more information visit threeforksranch.com.

MIDDLE FORK LOUNGE (TOP LEFT) PROVIDES AN IDEAL RESPITE FOR GUESTS AFTER A FULL DAY ON THE RANCH; ANGLING FOR TROUT ALONG THE LITTLE SNAKE RIVER (ABOVE) HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS NIRVANA BY MANY AVID FLY-FISHERMEN; (AT RIGHT) HAND-PICKED PIECES OF ORIGINAL WESTERN ART, MING VASES, AND CHINESE PORCELAIN LAMPS LEND WARMTH AND HISTORY TO THIS ROCKY MOUNTAIN RETREAT.





805
LIVING
Presents

QUESTIONS FOR THE FELLAS

20 Questions is a virtual roundtable discussion intended to connect the people who make our community such a special place. The premise is simple: We find four residents of the 805; each learns a little bit about another participant in order to ask five relevant questions about life, family, and work. In turn, each answers five questions from someone else.

Produced by **Anthony Head**
Photographs by **Gary Moss**

THE MEN:
(clockwise from right) John Tobias, Robin DiMaggio, Howard Horwitz, Joe Hurliman.



For this month's installment of our ongoing conversation, we chose four men with very different occupations who bring diversity and uniqueness to the 805. Read on for their 20 questions and their 20 answers.

Joe Hurliman

Oxnard

Winemaker, Herzog Wine Cellars

herzogwinecellars.com

Joe Hurliman has been in California's wine industry for a quarter of a century. Since joining the Oxnard operation in 1998, he has helped Herzog and Baron Herzog wines to become internationally recognized. Because he also helps to manage the vineyards from all over the state from which Herzog sources grapes, Hurliman is in the unique position of taking his kosher wines from harvest to bottle. His questions were asked by **Robin DiMaggio**.



1. I read that you initially studied health science and liberal arts. At what point did you realize that the wine industry was your true passion? It was on a trip my wife and I took to the Napa Valley in 1982. It was such an epiphany for me to tour a winery, be in a vineyard, and taste wine right at that spot on Highway 29. That experience drove me to try and taste every single grape variety that existed in the world, and that eventually grew into my desire to get into winemaking.

2. What exactly is kosher wine and has it been accepted by more than just the Jewish community? Kosher wine is wine made by Sabbath-observant Jewish individuals—from the point the grapes are de-stemmed and pressed in the winery until it goes into the bottle. Herzog Wine Cellars sources fruit from the best appellations in the state and this translates into wines that people can say “wow” about, whether they’re drinking it because it’s kosher or not.

3. What is the job description of a winemaker? My job is actually much like a movie director. I’m not actually involved in the acting of the movie, rather, I bring all the many parts together. For wine, that means everything from sourcing vineyards to blending the final product.

4. What does your daily routine consist of? Some days I may spend three hours tasting through twenty-six different wines to come up with a blend that I’ll be bottling in six months. Other days I’ll spend in a vineyard tasting grapes. The one daily routine that is consistent is my workout schedule. I’ve exercised almost every day since 1972. I don’t use an iPod, music, or TV; it’s my time to reflect on making wine.

5. As a drummer, [I know that] wood type is crucial to sound. I’m familiar with oak, cherry, bubinga, walnut, olive, African paduk, maple, birch, and my favorite, purpleheart wood. What kind of wood specifically do you use for barrels? My eighth-grade band teacher once told my father that I was a terrible percussionist. I realized then, that was why I was playing the bass drum. Oh wait—the question was about winemaking: This is actually one of the most personal decisions of a winemaker. It’s a key stylistic element to winemaking. For me, it depends on the type and style of the wine. For a cabernet sauvignon from Napa or Sonoma, I choose French oak. And for a rustic old-vine zinfandel I would choose American oak.



Robin DiMaggio
Agoura Hills
Percussionist, drummer for *Lopez Tonight*
myspace.com/robindimaggio

As one of the world's premier percussionists, Robin DiMaggio has toured and recorded with performers like Paul Simon, David Bowie, Jamie Foxx, Diana Ross, Johnny Cash, and Carlos Santana. In addition to his current gig as drummer for *Lopez Tonight* hosted by George Lopez, DiMaggio has recorded three solo albums and released a drum-training DVD, *Planet Groove*. His questions were asked by **Howard Horwitz**.

6. How did you get started playing music and what drove you to make it a career? My father was the conductor of the National Orchestra of Paris. I started with a classical foundation, but eventually realized that modern music was more of a cultural challenge than musical pieces written fifty to two-hundred years ago. I love all music as long as there is melody and a sense of rhythm.

7. With all the travel and fast-paced living, what drew you to the 805 as a place to live? Family is number one for me, therefore the schools and the lack of traffic here (compared to NYC or LA) were important. But mostly the better living drew me here. My life is nonstop for eighteen hours a day. I've managed to create my own little sacred temple here in the 805.

8. The touring life and the recording studio life seem so different from each other. Which do you enjoy more and why? With twenty-four years of touring in over one-hundred-ninety-two countries, I think I've paid my dues. You can only see Paris, London, Tokyo, and Sydney so many times before you get desensitized on the real beauty of other cultures. But now I see my kids' reactions when they go to a foreign place. It's kind of like me seeing it for the first time again through their eyes. The studio life is just a pure creation zone for me. It's where I can create a little piece of history and know it will live there forever.

9. Music is obviously your passion, but you've also become quite a businessman. Do you enjoy the business side of the music world? No, it's brutal and you have to have tough skin.

10. It would seem that your daily calendar is so overwhelming that you have to schedule even your bathroom visits. Is there anything that you do for recreation and winding down? I do have a hectic schedule but in the long run it's only as crazy as I allow it to be. I take a summer and winter vacation every year with the family. We travel to the most exotic places possible. The last couple years I've enjoyed some of the remote islands of Polynesia. The Internet and cell service is nonexistent (which makes my kids go nuts). In the end, though, it's about serenity.

Howard Horwitz

Ventura County
Police officer/entrepreneur
tatjacket.com

From the age of six, Howard Horwitz felt compelled to become a policeman. He realized that dream in 1994, becoming a sheriff's deputy in the Bay Area. In 2003, he and his family moved to Southern California and he joined the Simi Valley Police Department. In 2008, he formed a niche company called Tatjacket, manufacturing tattoo cover-up products for police and fire personnel. His questions were asked by **John Tobias.**



11. When you first got out of college and were not able to find a job in law enforcement right away, how were you able to stay focused on your dream and continue to pursue this profession?

I was terribly dejected. But as hard as those years were, like so many hardships, there was a very bright side. Knowing what I know now about the world and about being a cop, I was far less suited or prepared to deal with the job when I got out of school. [However,] not becoming a police officer was never a question for me. It was just a matter of time and persistence.

12. What kind of classes did you take while at Sacramento State that prepared you for the difficult decisions you have to make as a police officer on a daily basis? I chose Sacramento State because they have a remarkable police science department, including the only teaching forensics lab in the western United States. I majored in criminal justice and that gave me a great background and education in the field of law enforcement. To my surprise, it was the non-degree and off-track courses that seem to have better prepared me for the job. Police work is a people job. So any course work that teaches cultures, religions, or the humanities are right on target.

13. Where in the world would you like to travel that you have not been to before and why? I am ruling nothing out. I love to cook and am fascinated with unusual foods. I love the show *Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern*, so when I travel I try to eat all the odd, strange, and unusual local foods. Some have been awful! But most have been fantastic. Some places attract my interest for the history, some for the architecture. But they all have interesting foods. Having said that, Russia and some Baltic nations, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Peru, Brazil, and the Philippines are all on my list.

14. What lessons would you teach your sons about the dangers of driving under the influence? For the past four years I have been honored to receive an award from Mothers Against Drunk Driving for the DUI arrests that I have made. Two of those years I won a statewide award that was presented at a formal dinner in Sacramento. At the dinner, there are presenters and speakers; there are parents, siblings, wives, and husbands who tell their stories of death, survival, loss, and grief. My boys have attended the dinner both times and received a most unusual and comprehensive education in the area of driving under the influence. Now, I just hope some of it sticks.

15. How do you balance your time as a father, police officer, and business owner of Tatjacket? A favorite phrase from a family friend is that I am "carrying ten pounds in a five-pound bag." But I have become a master at time management and organization. One way I do this is to blend interests to accomplish more. For instance, I enjoy woodworking, leather craft, metalworking, motorcycle and small engine repair, cooking, gardening, and bicycling. I now do these with my sons. I get to teach them these skills, be with them, and get some recreation.



John Tobias

Camarillo
President, Tennis, Blue Entertainment Sports Television
experiencebest.com

In 2005, *Sports Illustrated* named John Tobias one of the top 30 sports industry executives under the age of 30. Today, as president of the Tennis division at Blue Entertainment Sports Television, he has represented top tennis stars, including Mike and Bob Bryan, Sam Querrey, and Victoria Azarenka, while also assisting in the representation of Andy Roddick and five-time Grand Slam Champion Justine Henin. His questions were asked by **Joe Hurliman**.

16. How does it differ representing singles or doubles players? It is more challenging to market the doubles player because singles players usually get the television and media exposure. The only doubles stars that I personally have worked with are the Bryan brothers. Due to their enormous success (number-one ranking in the world, multiple Grand Slam champions, Davis Cup champions) and the fact that they are identical twins, Mike and Bob have been able to transcend doubles and are without a doubt among the most recognized tennis players in the world.

17. How did a degree in political science and playing college basketball transition into what you do today? I majored in political science at UCSD as I thought it would prepare me better for law school. Playing college basketball taught me how to be a good teammate and deal with adversity. In both basketball and business there will be ups and downs. It's important how you learn from both and continue improving at what you do. This same type of dedication and preparation is necessary when negotiating on behalf of professional athletes. You must go into each negotiation as prepared as possible to be successful for your client.

18. What do you do in your down time? As a sports agent there really is not a lot of down time, especially in an eleven-month sport like tennis. I always need to be accessible and able to assist my clients anytime of day. When I do get the opportunity to disconnect, I love to hang out with my fiancée and enjoy the Southern California weather. I enjoy taking hikes, jogging, and just about anything at the beach. I'm a sports nut and love going to live sporting events, especially if I can just go as a fan without a business-related interest.

19. What was the biggest challenge/difference between working with pro football players and pro tennis players? Representing football and tennis athletes is almost completely opposite. There is not a lot of media or daily servicing that goes into being an agent for football players. Much of the work is centered around an individual player's contract with the particular franchise for which he plays. Due to tennis being an individual sport, there is no franchise to handle the player's daily servicing or managing needs, and nearly all my work is creating marketing partnerships for my clients with the corporate world.

20. The *Sports Illustrated* title is quite an honor. What's next on your list of goals? For the most part, being an agent is a behind-the-scenes career. The credit and exposure go to the athlete, and deservedly so. I have been very fortunate to work with some wonderful athletes and thus have gotten some nice recognition, like the *Sports Illustrated* "30 under 30" list. Now that I'm getting old and into my thirties, I guess I'll shoot for 40 under 40. Overall, I just want to continue enjoying what I'm doing, work with some really good people, and try to be successful on behalf of my clients. ■

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Jackie Bogosian



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Help the fight against cancer - Sunday August 1, 2010. 3-7pm - Joie De Vivre, Evening of Hope 2010
Limiting to 300 tickets, holding the price this year to \$125 - Visit www.JoyOfLifeGala.org to Order Tickets!



I have been asked to chair an event with a wonderful group of dedicated American Cancer Society volunteers to create a special occasion to support the community work and scientific research of the American Cancer Society by creating Ventura County's second annual American Cancer Society gala. This year's theme is Joire de Vivre, Evening of Hope 2010. This event is an opportunity to make a difference in the health of our community. It is a chance to join the American Cancer Society in the fight against cancer. We look forward to welcoming you to Joire de Vivre, Evening of Hope 2010 on **Sunday, August 1, 2010**. Plans are underway to transform a villa in Santa Rosa Valley into an inviting corner of the French Countryside. You won't want to miss this event! Beginning with a poolside reception, the evening will include a meal of signature dishes prepared by some of our finest local chefs, silent & live auction, and capped off with dancing under the stars! Call Rosemary for ticket and sponsorship information.

Call Rosemary at (805) 491-2100 email: RosemaryAllison@aol.com

CA/DRE # 00545184

This is the second of a two-part series on eating for optimal health, based on advice from the California Health & Longevity Institute in Westlake Village. For more on women's health, as well as snacking tips and a power breakfast recipe that's good for everyone, see the May issue.

INGREDIENTS FOR BETTER HEALTH

Want to live longer and lose the belly? Dietitians from the California Health & Longevity Institute have some ideas that will change the way men think about eating.

A TYPICAL MAN'S BASIC DIETARY NEEDS aren't all that different from a typical woman's: Each needs lots of vegetables and fruits, relatively small servings of lean protein, and fiber-rich whole-grain carbohydrates. But their eating habits? Now those tend to be very different.

"I think it's a gender thing; women are more health-conscious," says Erika Wong, a registered dietitian at Westlake Village's California Health & Longevity Institute (chli.com), which specializes in preventive care. While women might seek advice earlier on, years of bad eating habits can catch up with men a little later. "With men, we tend to see patients in their fifties, with high blood pressure and a little weight gain, and they're ready to change," she says. "You don't want your quality of life to go down; it's not inevitable—you always have the chance to change or improve your diet."

Choosing the right foods can improve chances for living a longer, healthier life—without going hungry. "We tend to hear 'Eat less,'" says Wong. "The message is eat more of the good stuff: Focus on what you can have and should have."

Protein check. While men do need more calories than women to fuel their relatively larger frames, they tend to eat much larger servings of red meat than is healthful. "Five to six ounces of meat is fine for the average male," says Wong. "There's a steakhouse down the street that will serve thirty-two ounces! While it seems 'manly' to eat meat, over a lifetime it's contributing saturated fats—harmful animal fats—and that's what raises cholesterol and causes heart disease, strokes, and more."

Keeping portions modest is important, but so is swapping out that steak for fish more often: Fatty fish like salmon contains healthful omega-3 fatty acids, which are key in helping prevent heart disease and cancer. Omega-3s also come from vegetarian sources: flaxseeds, walnuts, and canola oil. Vegetarian sources of protein, such as beans and soy, also provide protein sans the side dish of bad fats.

Portion control, less red meat, and more fresh produce are key for men to live longer, healthier lives according to Erika Wong, registered dietitian at the California Health & Longevity Institute.



Longevity Diet

THE LONGEVITY DIET RECOMMENDED BY THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH & LONGEVITY INSTITUTE IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING KEY COMPONENTS, FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN:

- Seven to ten servings of fruit and vegetables per day
- High-fiber whole-grain carbohydrates such as barley, oats, brown rice, and whole-grain bread, eaten in moderation
- Three to five servings of healthful fats
- Lean protein
- Eat fish at least three times per week
- Use nonfat dairy products when possible
- Substitute vegetarian protein for a third to half of total daily protein

At the Market

Shopping for health. Fresh fish like salmon, herring, and mackerel will bring those sought-after omega-3s to the table, but not all fish is equally healthful. California Health & Longevity Institute dietitian Erika Wong advises shoppers to look first for wild-caught fish, since it's generally lower in mercury and other contaminants. Wong says that farmed fish is okay, too, but check the package to see where the fish comes from. In general, farm-raised fish from the United States, Canada, and Chile (countries with tighter environmental restrictions) will be more healthful than farm-raised fish from countries that are more lax about contaminants.

Shopping for convenience. Although the least-processed foods usually top the list for Wong, she points out that a lack of time or culinary confidence shouldn't mean skipping fish altogether. The institute's Wellness Kitchen sometimes uses wild salmon found on the tuna aisle at the grocery store, which is now available in foil pouches (no can opener necessary). Wong says to mix it with light mayonnaise and make a sandwich, or use it to make an open-faced salmon melt.

Eat your produce. Like women, men need seven to ten servings of vegetables and fruits every day. But according to Wong, the average American gets about two servings, and over a lifetime, that puts them at risk for inflammation and disease. "If men can make half their plate full of produce, they'll be in good shape," says Wong. "One-quarter can be carbs (including potatoes) and one-quarter can be protein."

Leafy greens like kale and spinach are good choices; their high level of antioxidants can help reduce risk for prostate and colon cancer. Red fruits like tomatoes and watermelon are good sources of lycopene, an antioxidant that also helps reduce the risk for many diseases. And because lycopene from tomatoes is easier to absorb when cooked, canned tomato sauces and purees make a smart and convenient base for spaghetti sauces and more.

Spice it up. On the topic of spaghetti sauce, a generous sprinkling of oregano and other herbs can make it even more of an antioxidant powerhouse, not to mention adding great flavor without adding a lot of salt. "A lot of herbs are higher in antioxidants than produce, but we tend to use them as a garnish," says Wong. "Pesto is very healthful; the store-bought kind is high in oil, so we encourage people to make their own and thin it out with broth or water instead of oil."

And don't forget about spices: Ginger, cinnamon, and turmeric can do more than just make food taste better. "They've been shown to help reduce the risk of cognitive decline in both men and women," says Wong, adding that these spices also help regulate blood sugar levels. In fact, the institute's Wellness Kitchen offers a cooking class called "Herbs and Spices for Better Health," with such dishes as Indian Chicken with Cashew Paste and Strawberry Tart with Cinnamon Crust. ■

IN THE KITCHEN

ROASTED SALMON AND WILTED SPINACH

This recipe comes courtesy of the California Health & Longevity Institute (chli.com). Institute dietitian Erika Wong says that this entrée provides a healthful dose of omega-3 fats, which are essential for good health and can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Wong adds, "It also provides spinach, which is a powerhouse of antioxidants that protect and improve eyesight."

- 2 tablespoons no-trans-fat margarine, divided
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- ½ teaspoon crushed garlic
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch dissolved in 1 tablespoon cold water
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 5-ounce salmon fillets (1¼ pounds total)
- 2 6-ounce bags baby spinach leaves

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon margarine over medium heat in sauté pan. Add crushed red pepper and garlic; sauté for 1 minute. Add sugar, whisk until melted and bubbly, about 1 minute. Add lime juice and soy sauce. Increase heat and boil until reduced to about ½ cup. Add cornstarch (dissolved in water) and boil until thick, about 1 to 2 minutes. Set aside.
3. Heat olive oil in sauté pan until hot over medium-high heat. When oil is hot, add salmon fillets and cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes on each side.
4. Transfer to parchment-covered baking sheet. Spoon 1 tablespoon sauce on each fillet. Roast in oven for 5 minutes.
5. Add remaining 1 tablespoon margarine to large sauté pan. Add spinach and toss until wilted, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
6. To serve, place wilted spinach on platter and top with roasted salmon fillets.

Makes 4 servings. Calories per serving: 325

GETTING HOOKED ON WHITE SEA BASS

A real fish story (with recipes).

CHRIS WILLIAMS, a Ventura resident and owner-skipper of the *Linde*, can still vividly recall a harrowing experience from 26 years ago when an unexpected winter storm hit: “We heard a mayday call on the radio ‘Mayday, *Teddy J* going down!’ Captain Bill [Sutton, owner of Sea Fresh restaurants] immediately turned the boat directly back into some of the largest seas I have ever experienced. The sun had gone down and it was nearly pitch black.”



Using a spotlight, Williams saw something far away. As the boat closed in, his light caught the reflective tape on his friend Kip Whited’s life jacket. “The *Teddy J* was gone; Kip and two other guys from that boat were in the water,” Williams explains. Sutton maneuvered the boat to rescue the three men, but it wasn’t until the next day that they found out 26 other boats had been lost that night, too.

It’s something to keep in mind this month when white sea bass season kicks off and commercial fisherman head out to the Santa

Barbara Channel in search of the white-flesh fish. To bring in their catch, they’ll work on rocking, rolling, slippery platforms that are full of dangerous equipment. But professional fishermen don’t just have to deal with physical perils. “My life insurance provider increased my quote by 200 percent when I told him my occupation,” Williams says.

So anyone who loves this fish (which is related to redfish and not Chilean sea bass) ought to thank Williams for his tenacity. White sea bass has a clean, mild flavor and firm succulence, making it a hit with both cooks and diners. “I actually prefer my fish raw,” admits Williams, “but I also love to grill my sea bass. I’ll cut it into good fillets (left with the skin on one side), brush it with a little olive oil, (maybe add a tiny bit of lemon and pepper if you want), and just put it directly on the grill, flesh-side down first for about four to five minutes.” Williams then flips it skin-side down, taking it off the grill when the center flesh is still translucent. “It will still cook a bit when you take it off the grill, so take it off on the early side,” he advises, adding, “Overcooking fish is the worst.”

Until talking to Williams, I never considered the risks involved with catching the fish that became my dinner. Figuring I owed it to Williams for all the trouble he goes through, I followed his advice and grilled my own fillet of white sea bass (although I avoided the danger and purchased the fish at Hook, Line & Sinker in Oxnard). Topped with fresh pineapple salsa, it was the perfect weekday dinner—healthful, delicious, and quick. That same grilled white sea bass can be chunked for meaty fish tacos or burritos. Some other ideas include coating a fillet with butter, crushed macadamia nuts, and panko (Japanese bread crumbs) and browning it in a pan before finishing it in the oven; or giving it an Asian flourish as Elements Restaurant and Bar in Santa Barbara (elementsrestaurantandbar.com) does with a lemongrass-panko crust and Thai green curry sauce.



Fisherman Chris Williams (opposite page) prepares to catch white sea bass; (this page) pan-seared white sea bass with English pea puree from Ventura's The SideCar Restaurant. Want the recipe? Go to 805living.com.

RECIPES

CHORIZO CORNBREAD STUFFING WITH PEPITA-CRUSTED WHITE SEA BASS AND HARISSA BUTTER

This recipe comes courtesy of executive chef Neil Smith of Windows on the Water in Morro Bay (windowsonthewater.net). Harissa is a North African chile paste that's popular in Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian cooking.

Cornbread

- 1 cup unbleached flour
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 2 eggs and 1 yolk
- 3 tablespoons melted butter
- ½ cups buttermilk

Fold the wet ingredients into the dry until all ingredients are combined. Pour into an 8x10-inch pan that has been buttered around the edges. Bake in a preheated 375°F oven until top is browned and toothpick comes out clean. Allow to cool completely.

Stuffing

- ½ cup butter
- 6 ounces bulk chorizo
- ¼ cup minced onion
- ¼ cup diced red bell peppers
- ¼ cup chopped green onion
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- Pinch of oregano
- Pinch of thyme
- ¼ cup chicken stock or broth
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 3 dashes Tabasco sauce
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste

Melt the butter in a large fry pan. Add the chorizo and brown. Add the vegetables and sweat for about 2 minutes. Add spices and cook for a few minutes, or until fragrant. Do not burn. Add the stock, cream, and Tabasco. Bring liquid to a boil and crumble in the cornbread just until it starts to thicken. You may not need all the cornbread. Add the parsley. Check seasoning. Serve hot.

Pepita crust

- 1 cup unsalted pepitas or regular pumpkin seeds
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Pinch of salt
- 2 eggs
- 6 white sea bass fillets (6 ounces each)

Toss together the pepitas, olive oil, and salt, and bake on sheet pan at 325°F until lightly browned. Cool and run through food processor until roughly chopped. Put in a shallow dish. Leave oven on.

Make an egg wash by mixing the eggs with 1 tablespoon of water. Dip the sea bass into the egg mixture and lightly press the fish into the pepita crust. Sear over low heat for about 30 seconds per side to allow the crust to bind but not burn. Finish in the oven at 425°F for 4 minutes and serve with the stuffing and some green vegetables. (I like to use escarole on this dish because of texture.) Finish with harissa butter (recipe below).

Harissa butter

- 1 cup white wine
- 1 teaspoon chopped garlic
- 1 large shallot, chopped
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 8 ounces cubed butter
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon harissa*

Combine wine, garlic, and shallot in a saucepan over medium heat and reduce until there is a small amount of wine left. Take off the heat and stir in the cream. Return the pan to the stove and bring to a simmer. Slowly add the butter while stirring with a whisk until all butter is combined and melted. Pour through strainer and add lemon juice, harissa, and a pinch of salt.

Yields about 6 servings.

*Harissa is available at Let's Get Cookin' in Westlake Village (letsgetcookin.com) and Crate and Barrel in Woodland Hills (crateandbarrel.com). There are also recipes available online. *805 Living's* contributing editor Sarene Wallace likes cookbook author Clifford A. Wright's recipe at cliffordawright.com.

Go to 805living.com for a recipe for "BBQ Sea Bass with Mexican Lime-Chile-Tomato Glaze," courtesy of Hugh Carpenter, who will demonstrate how to cook this dish in a class titled "Hot Mexican Barbecue!" on June 15 at Let's Get Cookin' in Westlake Village (letsgetcookin.com).

Quite a Catch

WHERE TO FIND WHITE SEA BASS.

Commercial fisherman Chris Williams sells white sea bass and other seasonally available fish directly through his company Fresh Fish Fanatics in Channel Islands Harbor (805-258-8149). He'll notify fans of Fresh Fish Fanatics' Facebook page when he's heading in with a load. (Check Twitter @FreshFishFans for updates, too.)

If people can't meet Williams' boat, there are other options. "White sea bass is the big thing in June," says Steve Moore, fish guru and owner of the wholesale Moore's Seafood in Camarillo. "Fishing is pretty hot and heavy for about a month and then the fish spread out more," he says, adding that the season runs through mid-March. Moore recommends casting a line at one of these area fish markets: Hook, Line & Sinker Seafood in Oxnard (hooklineandsinkerseafood.com); Ocean Pride Seafood in Ventura (oceanprideofventura.com); Sea Fresh Channel Islands in Oxnard (seafreshci.com) and its sibling Sea Fresh Seafood in Ojai (seafreshseafood.com). (Sea Fresh and Hook, Line & Sinker are restaurants/fish markets, so hungry customers can indulge in local white sea bass dishes there, then order fresh fish to bring home.)

At The SideCar Restaurant in Ventura (thesidecarrestaurant.com), white sea bass is pan-roasted with olive oil and thyme. "Because the local white sea bass is so good, we put it on the plate with sides that are not overpowering," explains Tim Kilcoyne, executive chef and owner. The fish comes with a puree of English peas and shaved baby carrots tossed with mint and Meyer lemon. Kilcoyne also offers sea bass tartar as a starter, and as a burger at lunch.

Johnny Church, executive chef of Root 246 in Solvang (root-246.com) says the restaurant's white sea bass is poached in olive oil before being grilled on oak. Heirloom tomato broth with basil pistou sauce and crisp-fried Morro Bay oysters complete the dish.

Neil Smith, executive chef of Windows on the Water in Morro Bay (windowsonthewater.net) describes his menu as "world cuisine." At the restaurant, *pepitas* (shelled raw pumpkin seeds) coat the local white sea bass, which arrives with chorizo cornbread stuffing and harissa butter (a spicy chile paste). See the recipe on this page. ■

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ON DRINKING MEZCAL IN MEXICO

—Both the Old and the New



I REMEMBER THIS CLEARLY: The first time I tried mezcal I was in Taos, New Mexico. It was sometime during the mid-1990s and I had no idea what mezcal was. A fellow named Ron Cooper (who, I learned while writing this story, grew up in Ojai) told me it was kind of like tequila, only much better. Not being much of a tequila man, I initially declined. But Cooper persisted, explaining how each colorfully labeled bottle of his Del Maguey Single Village Mezcal (he had three or four) represented a different Oaxacan village in Mexico, and that the flavor differences between the spirits inside were striking.

I relented and sipped—he insisted I sip and not gulp it like a shot—from a small earthenware cup. It was immediately warm and spicy, but also fruity. The word that truly captured its essence, though, was “smoky.” Seeing my smile, Cooper offered me a different bottle of mezcal, which turned out to be sweeter with a touch of mineral and that same smokiness. By tasting each bottle side by side I picked up citrus notes or a bit of unexpected creaminess or roasted fruits, yet each had that elegant smoke flavor and each was as warm as a New Mexico sunset.

Flash forward about a decade to the small town of Coatepec in the Mexican state of Veracruz. I was drinking beers with some other writers in the town’s oldest cantina, Estrella de Oro. The place wasn’t pretty—just a fluorescent-lit room dating back to the late 1800s, and it sure looked every year of its age. The tiled bar was chipped, the floor a bit dirty, the patrons quiet and suspicious. Someone brought a bottle of Láaz, a small-batch mezcal, to the table. It was terrific—a crisp herbaceous sting followed by the same long and smoky finish that I had remembered from Taos. I looked around with supreme pleasure at the scene of Old Mexico before me, figuring this was as close to a Hemingway moment as I would probably ever get.

Not wanting to forget those moments, my home bar these days always has a bottle or two of mezcal, and I’ve boned up on its history. Mezcal has been produced in Mexico for more than 400 years. Distilled from the hearts of several varieties of agave plants, mezcals have different flavor profiles influenced by the soil, water, and microclimate of where the agave comes from. Like tequila, mezcals come in *blanco* (unaged), *reposado* (aged in oak barrels up to a year), and *añejo* (aged in oak for at least one year). Less aging means more pronounced agave notes, while more aging lends complexity of flavor from the barrels.

Thankfully, more bars and restaurants across this country are stocking mezcal, but the reputation that has preceded its arrival is mostly inaccurate. For one thing, mezcal is not a type of tequila. The opposite is true. Mezcal is produced from many different varieties of the agave plant, while tequila is made only from the blue agave. Another popular misconception of mezcal (and tequila, for that matter) is finding a worm in the bottle. There is no Mexican tradition of putting worms inside bottles of either spirit. That was purely a marketing gimmick dreamed up in the

mid-19th century, which, in fact, damaged the reputations of both agave-based spirits in the United States.

Finally, while it's true that mezcal has traditionally been a rural Mexican fixture, it is also turning up in greater frequency in Mexico's urban areas. On my last trip south of the border, I dined at one of Mexico City's most fashionable restaurants, Izote de Patricia Quintana, and enjoyed a fantastic mezcal *blanco* from Los Danzantes. It was smooth and smoky, complex yet delicate. Mezcal is meant to be sipped neat (no ice) by itself, but at Izote I was shown how Mexico City's hipster culture likes to enjoy it: Dust a few orange slices with chili powder; take a bite and let the citrus and spice mingle; then sip the mezcal. It's one of the most taste bud-popping experiences I've ever had, and another delicious moment of mezcal and Mexico. ■

Stocking the Bar

WITH A GROWING NUMBER OF MEZCAL BRANDS BEING IMPORTED FROM MEXICO, IT'S MUCH EASIER TO FIND TERRIFIC EXAMPLES OF THIS ARTISANALLY PRODUCED SPIRIT.

DEL MAGUEY, SINGLE VILLAGE MEZCAL

Vida de San Luis del Rio (\$40)

Ron Cooper has never relented on his passionate pursuit of introducing the United States to Oaxacan mezcal; he has several premium mezcals on the market that are traditionally crafted in small batches and 100-percent organic. The latest in his collection, "Vida," has a light maple syrup aroma and smoldering flavors of earth, pungent spices, and smoke.

DEL MAGUEY, SINGLE VILLAGE MEZCAL

Crema de Mezcal (\$40)

For those still undecided about mezcal, "Crema" is a fine, mild introduction. It's softer and sweeter than straight mezcal because of the addition of roasted agave syrup.

SCORPION MEZCAL REPOSADO (\$50)

This has an amber appearance with a warm vanilla nose. There are bright notes of fruit and pepper when first sipped, and its smoky finish is crisp and zingy. Scorpion still capitalizes on the kitschy days of the past by bottling its product with a dead scorpion. It's not very PC, but it's FDA-approved and the mezcal is undeniably superb.

METL 2012 AÑEJO MEZCAL RESERVA ESPECIAL (\$45)

After being double-distilled and aged for 13 months in new American oak barrels, Metl's *añejo* features a complex character of sweet mesquite, toasted caramel, and a clean smoky finish.

MIJES JOVEN MEZCAL (\$57)

Crystal clear in the glass. With fresh tropical sweetness and classic agave flavors, this *blanco*-style mezcal reveals marvelous depth of character the longer it sits. The only problem is having the fortitude to let it sit and develop.

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CENTRAL COAST WINES MADE EASY.
By Anthony Head

If past performance is any indicator of future results, this June will again be bookended by Doughnut Day on the fourth and the commemoration of the first *Superman* comic on the 30th. (FYI: Superman's actual birthday is February 29; Clark Kent's birthday is, oddly, June 18.) In-between these two important days there are many other super observances to observe, including, but not limited to: Aesop's birthday (June 4), Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's birthday (June 13), Father's Day (June 20), United Nations Public Service Day (June 23; also check out uspublicserviceacademy.org for info on establishing an American academy for public service), and Waffle Iron Day (June 29).

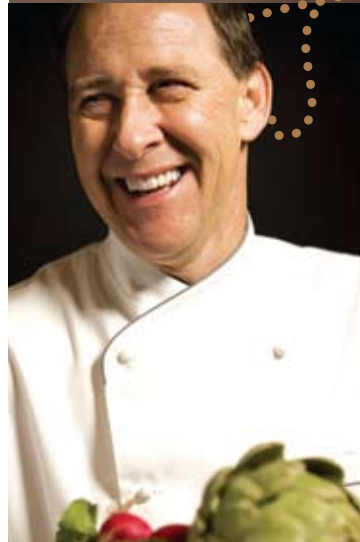
I've found a wine to go with this entire month of celebrations: Vina Robles 2009 Sauvignon Blanc. It's fresh and fruity but not cloying; it has soft, round citrusy flavors that fill the mouth; it's versatile (try it with cinnamon doughnuts and light seafood); and at 16 bucks a bottle, it's easy to stock up for June—which, once again, will see the debut of summer and celebrate the birthday of Ray Davies of the Kinks, both on the 21st. ■

Vina Robles 2009 Sauvignon Blanc, Jardine, Paso Robles (\$16)
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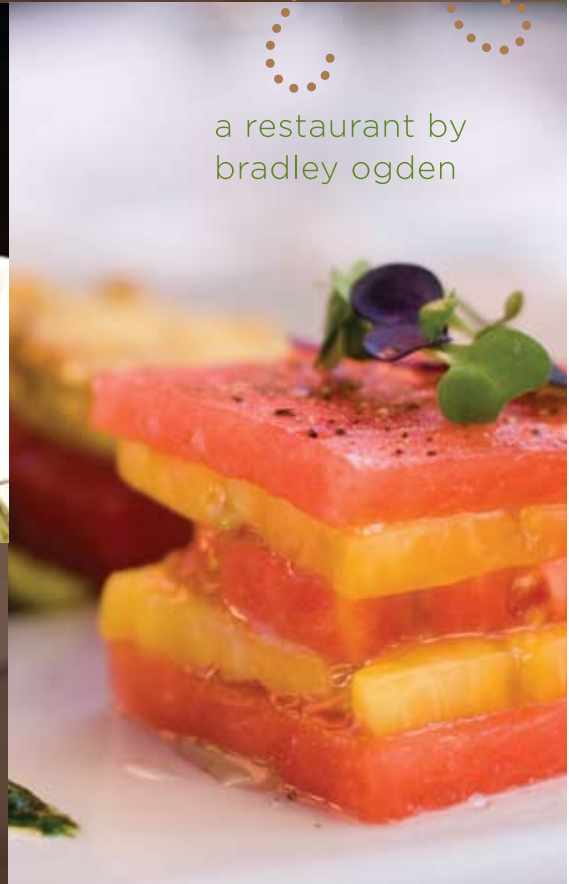


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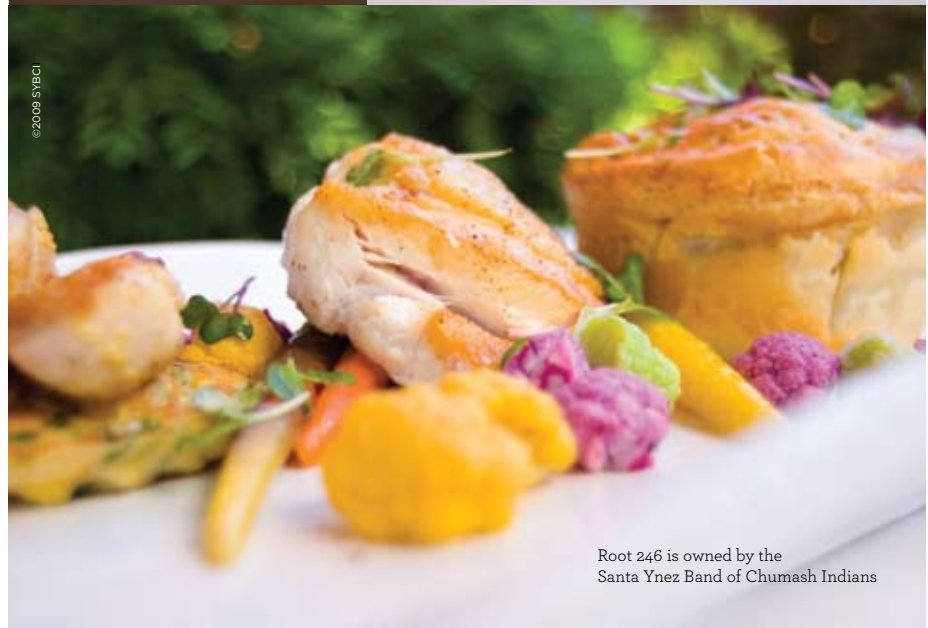


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Taste of the Town

By Angela Pettera Photographs by Gary Moss



EAT LIKE A GUY

Man up and get your grub on.

FOOD TRANSCENDS CULTURE, yet culture is vividly expressed through unique eating habits. Nations can be understood, in part, through their collective love of distinct favorite dishes such as kimchi, osso buco, bratwurst, and lutefisk. On a lesser level, what people eat and their preparation methods form staunch alliances and divides (ever argued the merits of a dry rub versus a wet mop?). And, of course, it's only natural that men have different dining preferences than women.

Gnawing on a large hunk of protein that's been hanging over smoking wood for 18 hours helps to affirm a dude's masculinity. Sipping tea from ultra-thin china and nibbling on tiny cakes helps ladies stay dainty.

This story ain't about dainty.

Today we leave precious behind and join the testosterone race by celebrating great places to raise a beer, plunk down our sturdy frames in solid seats, and get our grub on.

Any restaurant listed in the phone book under "Auto Parts" has already earned a certain macho standing, and the **Junkyard Cafe** in Simi Valley (805-520-5865) dishes up breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily with a definite guy-friendly lack of pretense. License plates, hubcaps, and corrugated-metal wainscoting adorn the walls. The chairs, dishes, and flatware are all mismatched. Owner Tony Falato and his wife, Evelyn (known as "the Queen"), laugh and joke with their patrons, who chow down on giant hot dogs, "stinkin' fries" laced with garlic, patty melts (called "fatty melts"), and fried Twinkies. Falato makes the red sauce for the Italian dishes himself. It's good stuff and comes alongside the pastry-wrapped cheese bites called "dipsticks." The 17th of every month is excuse enough for a St. Patrick's Day celebration complete with green beer, corned beef and cabbage, and a performance from bagpiper Jack Daly.

Barbecue has got to be the most masculine of all cuisines: partly it's the scent of smoke; certainly the vast quantities of meat helps; and definitely eating with



Chow down on the monster hot dog and stinkin' fries at the Junkyard Cafe in Simi Valley (left); the Junkyard's decor is guy-friendly (above).

one's hands all add up to man-nirvana. One of the coolest places for barbecue is the somewhat new **Smokey's House of BBQ** in the Seabridge Marketplace in Oxnard (smokeyshouseofbbq.com). The ginormous fake tree in the middle of the dining room is wired with LED fireflies; and one of the booths is cordoned off, jail cell-style, with iron bars (a good place to put the kids during a meal). Owner Mike Christian traveled the country searching out the best barbecue practices and has fused them into Smokey's menu. Tri-tip, brisket, pulled pork, and ribs are smoked 24/7. The chili is made Texas-style (no beans) and the creamed corn has a spicy Cajun flair. The original sauce is mustard-based like they do it in South Carolina, and the sweet apple-pie barbecue sauce is great on the pulled pork. There's even pizza topped with your choice of barbecued meat, barbecue sauce, and mozzarella cheese.

Out in Santa Paula, tucked away in an industrial park, sits ARP (Automotive Racing Products), the maker of high-performance engine fasteners for IndyCar, NASCAR, and NHRA drag racers. At the front of this plant sits **Hozy's Grill** (hozys-grill.com), which serves breakfast and lunch daily, and dinner Wednesday through Saturday. Hozy's is decorated with chrome, black, and orange accents and posters of race cars. A Hendrick Motor Sports' engine replica is housed in a Lucite box at the front. Race-car drivers have signed the orange walls above a few of the booths. ARP co-owner Gary Holzapfel got his love of cooking from his

chef-father, nicknamed "Hozy." Hozapfel and his son Mike help develop the all-American recipes with chef Merced Robles. Burgers, sandwiches, and salads are served along with heartier fare like crispy chicken-fried steak with smoky gravy, sliced potatoes, and sautéed veggies. A chicken pappardelle has a spicy cream sauce with mushrooms. The wine cellar won an Award of Excellence from *Wine Spectator*.

Stocking beer and a British vibe is the **Crown & Anchor** pub in Thousand Oaks (crownanchor.com). The Smithwick's ale and Guinness stout on tap (there's also plenty of other beers, hard cider, and spirits) go down easy with the delicious Scotch eggs and house-made potato chips (or "crisps" as they're called here). For a full meal, tuck into the fish-and-chips or toad-in-the-hole (sausage, onions, and gravy in a Yorkshire-pudding bowl). Don't miss Monday's Trivia Night from 8 to 10 p.m. led by Rick Saldin. It's \$2 per person to try and answer Saldin's 50 random questions (some of them pretty tough). Most people form teams for a better chance at winning the pot, usually around \$100. (By the way, the team name Crown & Wankers is already taken.) Come early, because the place fills up with other guys (and gals) looking for a manly night out. The World Cup soccer tournament begins June 11 in South Africa and the Crown & Anchor plans to show select matches live, even if that means opening the doors at 6:30 a.m. Come on England! ■

DIALED IN

News from the local dining scene.

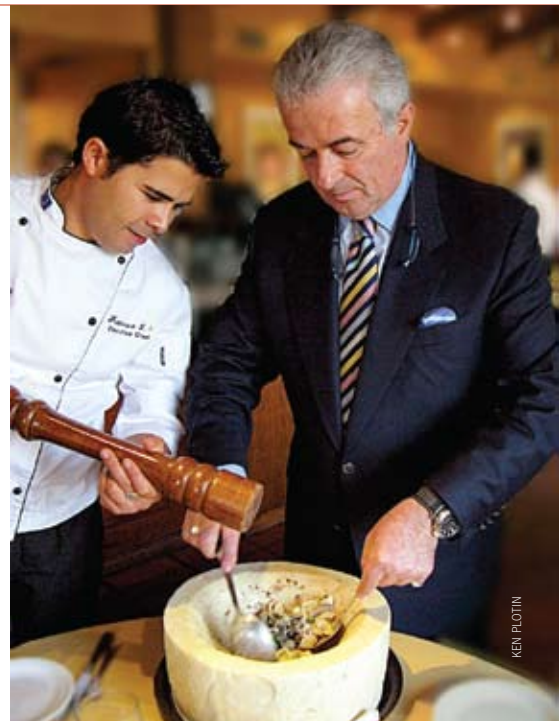
For more dining news, visit our blog, "Angie Eats," at blog.805living.com.

MENU MAKEOVER AT TRA DI NOI

For almost 20 years, **Tra di Noi Ristorante** (tradinoimalibu.com) has been serving Italian food to the residents of Malibu and visitors to the Malibu Country Mart on Cross Creek Road, but the menu has never been as attention grabbing as it is now. What's changed is the arrival of chef Francesco Velasco. Born in Chile but raised in Italy, Velasco spent nine years working at Il Grano, a much-lauded contemporary Italian restaurant in West Los Angeles. At Tra di Noi, Velasco has taken more than a year to completely remake the menu. He doesn't skimp on portion sizes (even though half of his clientele seems to be professional models and actors). An appetizer of layered eggplant, zucchini, mozzarella, and tomato sauce is large enough to work as an entrée;

the flavors are bright thanks to the freshness of the produce. A very light tomato sauce with tender chunks of veal cradles handmade pappardelle in the *pappardelle alla Genovese*. The *petti di pollo al limone* is a juicy, boneless chicken breast sauced in a tangy lemon-caper concoction. Thin-crust pizzas run from the simple *Margherita* to the elaborate *alla griglia* with ricotta, chicken, arugula, and a broccoli puree.

"All our special dishes are seasonal now," Velasco tells me proudly. One night there's calamari from the East Coast, grilled and served over salad greens tossed with a lemony vinaigrette. Duck confit is tucked into delicate, handmade crescent-shaped agnolotti and drizzled with a mouthwatering brown-butter sage sauce. For dessert,



Chef Francesco Velasco and owner Tarcisio Mosconi serving the signature orecchiette pasta with truffles in a cheese wheel.

Harry's Berries strawberries are showcased in a tart with a paper-thin crust and a smear of pastry cream. It's heavenly. Truffle season is coming soon and Velasco will create an entire truffle menu, including a dish with orecchiette (ear-shaped) pasta and white truffles from Alba.

Bocchino Food Truck

Chef Chris Bocchino and his wife, pastry chef Kristine Bocchino, have sold their Malibu restaurant, Terra, and launched a food-truck concept called **Cal-Fresco** ("calfresco" on Twitter). The truck features casual California cuisine in the form of salads, wraps, and flatbreads. There's also a cheese plate and an antipasto platter. Look for the truck parked at the outdoor Malibu Family Wines tasting room (malibuwine.com) every Friday from 1 to 9 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from around noon to 5 p.m. This summer, the tasting room will have live music in various styles ranging from country to jazz on Fridays from 7 to 9 p.m., Saturdays from 1 to 3 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m., and on Sundays from 1 to 3 p.m.

The Vineyard at Mediterraneo

The **Westlake Village Inn** (westlakevillageinn.com) has added a half-acre vineyard to its property at the corner of the parking lot on the west side of Mediterraneo. Bob Kelly of Pacific Ridge Vineyards partnered with Westlake Village Inn to cultivate plots of cabernet, cabernet franc, and syrah vines, 500 in all. His own vineyard is located in Camarillo on a ridge overlooking the ocean. "This was a custom installation, you could say," Kelly said. "It was a great deal of trouble to change a vacant lot into a vineyard."

In a couple of years, when the grafted vines have matured enough, Kelly will help process the grapes into wine at the Terravant Wine Co. collective in Buellton. In the meantime, visitors to the hotel can wander through the vines along pathways lined with rosebushes. A row of olive trees separates the vineyard from the tennis courts. A large fountain and a picnic table are positioned within the vineyard giving it a quaint Old World feel even though the land is brand new. ■

HAVE A TIP FOR DIALED IN? Email our dining editor at angela@805living.com.

805 DINING GUIDE

The *Dining Guide* includes restaurants from Santa Barbara to Malibu. Our aim is to inform you of restaurants with great food that you might not have experienced yet. The guide is arranged not by cuisine type, but by style of restaurant. "Fine Dining" choices have an elegant atmosphere and very professional service. Restaurants included under the "Foodie" heading are heralded for their wonderful chef-driven cuisine, regardless of atmosphere. "A Good Bet" listings are just that—solid, casual, and delicious. "The Chain Gang" highlights the best of the national restaurant chains, and the "Fun, Fun, Fun" category brings you spots geared toward a good time. Enjoy!

KEY TO SYMBOLS:

NEW Denotes restaurants new to the *805 Living Dining Guide*.

LOOK Indicates an update to an existing listing.

Restaurant information is subject to change without notice.

We will be adding new listings to the Dining Guide each month. Please send any comments and suggestions to angela@805living.com or write to us at 805 Living, 3717 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Westlake Village, CA 91362, attn: Taste of the Town.

FINE DINING

These restaurants have a skilled kitchen team, a lovely dining room, and great service. Some of the spots require elegant attire, but most allow for all styles of dress, from fancy to casual.

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Entrées \$8–\$28
Romantic

More casual than it might seem at first, this brasserie-style eatery proves very friendly through and through. For instance, there are bowls of water on the porch of this Craftsman house to welcome pets; and the patios upstairs and down are great for kids. The bar area offers beer, wine, and cocktails with its own happy-hour specials. The French-American menu from chef Didier Poirier offers addicting nibbles, like french fries with garlic aioli, black tiger shrimp cocktail, Alsatian-style pizzas, and warm duck confit salad. Main courses include steaks, a double-cut pork chop, a Kobe burger, Atlantic salmon, and New Zealand rack of lamb. Poirier teaches cooking classes each month that culminate in a three-course meal paired with wines. He also hosts occasional winemaker dinners featuring wines from the Central Coast, Napa, and Sonoma. 71 Palm is open for lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday.

NEW BELLINI OSTERIA BAR & LOUNGE

951 S. Westlake Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-497-8482
belliniosteria.com
Italian
Entrées \$11–\$34
Romantic

Delicious Italian food comes from the hands of chef Gianluca Sarti at this stylish trattoria. Patrons enjoy authentic pastas, osso buco, and a few fish dishes inside the main dining room or out on the patio, where black-and-white movies—mostly Italian in origin—are screened. A wine bar near the entrance has a communal table and a happy hour (4 to 7 p.m., Sunday through Friday). Service from an attractive wait staff is attentive and helpful. Bellini is open for lunch and dinner daily.



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BOCCACCIO'S

32123 Lindero Canyon Road
Westlake Village, 818-889-8300
Continental
Entrées \$12–\$27

Saturday & Sunday Brunch, Great View

The floor-to-ceiling windows offer great views of the lake from inside the restaurant. The outdoor patio is the most popular spot for dining, however. Either way, it's a perennial favorite for ladies who lunch and the senior set. The seafood is always perfectly cooked in the Mediterranean manner (fried calamari, lobster ravioli, seafood risotto, Dover sole meunière). At lunch, a wide range of salads from Waldorf to Cobb to niçoise really satisfies. Brunch dishes up classics like French toast, omelettes, and eggs Benedict.

BOUCHON

9 W. Victoria St.
Santa Barbara, 805-730-1160
bouchonsantabarbara.com
Wine Country
Entrées \$24–\$35

Romantic

The name is French for "wine cork" and this theme carries throughout the restaurant. Wines from the Santa Barbara area (the Santa Ynez and Santa Maria valleys), especially chardonnay, pinot noir, and syrah, are the focus of the wine list. More than 40 varieties are available by the glass. The highly seasonal cuisine is created to pair well with the wines. (In other words, no strong vinegars or sauces that might fight with and kill the flavor of the wine.) Ingredients are mostly secured locally, especially produce and seafood. Some dishes you might see more regularly than others include baby beet and carrot salad with goat cheese; bourbon-and-maple-glazed duck; lightly smoked Pacific ahi tuna; venison loin in a blackberry demi-glace; and apple tarte tatin.

CA' DARIO

37 E. Victoria St.
Santa Barbara, 805-884-9419
cadario.net

Italian

Entrées \$15–\$28

Romantic

Chef and owner Dario Furlati features dishes from his native northern Italy at this popular trattoria that gets high marks for service from regulars. His menu features some unusual choices like fusilli pasta with artichokes, shiitake mushrooms, and truffle oil; radicchio and ricotta-cheese crêpes; terra-cotta-baked chicken with a tomato and red-wine sauce; and a classic rib-eye steak with white beans and sage.

CAFÉ PROVENÇAL

2310 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-496-7121
cafeprovençal.biz

French

Entrées \$16–\$37

Romantic

This small French bistro run by Serge Bonnet in the Select Conejo Plaza can get you in and out quickly at lunchtime with its "Formule Express" three-course lunch (\$16). Dinner offers a more relaxed experience but there are still bargains to be enjoyed. Come on Monday night for a surf-and-turf special (\$26); on Wednesday and Thursday nights a "Deluxe" five-course dinner is paired with wines (\$45). On the à la carte menu you'll find a few pastas plus fish—like sand dabs, sole, and salmon. Meats include veal, lamb, chicken, and beef prepared in a Continental style. Café Provençal serves lunch Monday through Friday and dinner nightly.

CHAPTER 8 STEAKHOUSE & DANCE LOUNGE

29020 Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-889-2088
678dine.com

Steakhouse

Entrées \$17–\$39

Live Music, DJ, Dancing

Chef Michael Carierro has fancied up the menu at this over-the-top dance lounge with a red and black color palette. The pan-seared scallop appetizer gets a kick of flavor from some Spanish chorizo and basil oil. Lobster lollipops are complemented by white-corn sauce. The truffle and Parmesan fries are addictive, but there are plenty of other potato options that go with the à la carte wood-grilled steaks. Fish lovers can enjoy a chilled seafood platter served with tequila cocktail sauce and spicy mustard sauce. For dessert, the warm rockslide brownie comes with chocolate lava, pecans, and a caramel macchiato shot. Live music on Friday and Saturday nights. Dinner Tuesday through Saturday nights.

CHARLIE'S MALIBU

22821 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-456-3132
charliesmalibu.com

American

Entrées \$16–\$45

Romantic

Across the street from the Malibu Pier, Charlie's feels like a Malibu resident's living room. The bar is usually stocked with locals checking out wines by the glass, taste, or flight via the Enomatic system. Sommelier Caitlin Stansbury focuses on small producers like the vintners in Malibu. In the dining room, beautiful leopard-print chairs and paintings by Jane Seymour lend color to the otherwise minimalist white decor. A few tables dot the raised back patio, which sits behind a pane of glass. The menu is chock-full of steakhouse classics by chef David Linville. Charlie's is open for dinner nightly.

COAST RESTAURANT & BAR

31 W. Carillo St.
Santa Barbara, 805-879-9100
canarysantabarbara.com

California Bistro

Entrées \$13–\$28

Romantic, Sunday Brunch

This restaurant sits a bit below street level in the fun Canary Hotel. The main dining room is quiet and comfortable, but most people seem to take dinner in the bar area where it's much livelier. The entire menu is available in either venue. Go for the Santa Barbara mussels with chorizo, the tasty wild mushroom ravioli, the perfectly grilled and juicy pork chop, and the pudding-like chocolate lava cake. Chef Brian Parks keeps things interesting with his farmers' market dinners on Tuesday nights and a Sea Captain's dinner every Friday with fresh seafood from that day's fishing boats. Sunday brunch has live music from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Happy hour has great deals Monday through Friday from 4 to 7 p.m. Coast is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily.

ELEMENTS

129 E. Anapamu St.
Santa Barbara, 805-884-9218
elementrestaurantandbar.com

Eclectic

Entrées \$19–\$36

Romantic, Great View

Soaring ceilings inside plus fresh air on the patio with great views of the Santa Barbara courthouse keep everyone happy. Dishes here are eclectic and imaginative. A panko-lemongrass-crust sea bass comes in a green coconut-curry sauce. Short ribs get the Szechuan treatment and a ginger-orange gremolata, while a veal burger benefits from caramelized onions and Gruyère cheese. Save room for desserts, like the mini cupcake sampler or the mint-chip ice cream sandwich. The bar scene is lively, especially during happy hour (4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday). Bottles from the wine list can be purchased from the Elements website.

ENOTECA TOSCANA WINE BISTRO

2088 E. Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-445-1433
enotecatoscanawinebistro.com

Mediterranean

Small Plates \$8–\$18; Entrées \$22–\$39

Live Music

The emphasis is on the wine at this intimate space in Camarillo's downtown district. Owner/chef Antonio Anderson personally selects all the bottles to showcase wines from Spain, Italy, and California. Anderson puts together a different flight of wines every day. Every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. there's a wine-tasting session that includes a cheese plate (\$14). The menu of small plates—like the wine list—skews to Spain and Italy, with dishes like shrimp in olive oil with lemon and garlic, or marinara meatballs. The large plates appear as nightly "Bodega specials." You might see braised short ribs or Tuscan chicken. At lunchtime, panini sandwiches are available. Enoteca Toscana is open for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday.

ERIC'S RESTAURANT & BAR

495 N. Ventu Park Road
Thousand Oaks, 805-716-4100
palmgardenhotel.com

Californian

Entrées \$15–\$36

The minimalist decor and the slate water wall lend a peaceful ambience to this large space. A wraparound patio fills up when the weather is nice. The service is polished, making this a fine spot for a business meeting at lunch or dinner. Chef Robin Nishizaki's plates are all well-executed; we haven't found any clunkers on the seasonal menu. Salads, sandwiches, pizzas, and pasta dishes dominate the lunch menu; chicken penne with kalamata olives and a chardonnay sauce is particularly nice. At dinner, there is grilled salmon in a basil sauce as well as steaks and chops. The full bar features a long martini list and its own tantalizing small-plates menu with beef and taters and a lobster quesadilla. Such nibbles can be paired with 20 wines by the glass, many from California vintners. Eric's serves lunch and dinner daily with happy hour specials Monday through Saturday from 4 to 7 p.m. Check the website for weeknight dinner specials on items like prime rib and lobster.

FINS CREEKSIDE

23504 Calabasas Road
Calabasas, 818-223-3467
and FINS SEAFOOD GRILL
982 S. Westlake Blvd.

Westlake Village, 805-494-6494

finsinc.com

Seafood

Entrées \$12–\$32

Live Music

The creekside patio is the draw at the Calabasas location. The owner and chef also run Moz Buddha Lounge. The menu features interesting takes on seafood like macadamia-crust halibut, oven-roasted seafood over yakisoba noodles, and a lazy-man's bouillabaisse in which the shellfish are removed from their homes for you. You can also choose your cut of steak and its preparation.

FLEMING'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR

6373 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Woodland Hills, 818-346-1005
flemingssteakhouse.com

Steakhouse

Entrées \$24–\$40

Romantic

This snazzy steakhouse keeps the prices relatively low while maintaining high energy levels, especially in the bar, which has its own appetizer menu. Big salads, prime meats, and seafood dishes rule the dining room, though, and sides are meant to be shared (read: big), so order accordingly. Desserts are large and come with a huge bowl of freshly whipped cream. The wine list is encyclopedic and award-winning. Almost every style is represented, from sparkling whites to petite

siraHS to deep cabernets. There are also 100 selections by the glass available nightly. Check the website for special-event wine dinners and seasonal prix-fixe menus. Fleming's is open for dinner nightly.

GEOFFREY'S MALIBU

27400 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-457-1519
geoffreysmalibu.com
Cal-Eclectic

Entrées \$25-\$77

Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

The alfresco dining and the panoramic ocean views from every table make this a spectacular dining venue. You can't help but feel like a Malibu socialite when sipping a glass of gewürztraminer with your lobster Cobb salad at lunch or brunch under the umbrellas. For dinner, there's ahi tuna, Chilean sea bass, seasonal oyster selections, and the Kobe New York steak. Service is always polished and polite, beginning and ending with the efficient valet parking.

GIANNFRANCO'S TRATTORIA

666 Linden Ave.
Carpinteria, 805-684-0720
Italian

Entrées \$13-\$28

Great Patio

The family of owners welcomes you here with open arms. In good weather, opt for a seat on the back patio with its garden setting. Some customers always start dinner with a glass of wine and the calamari appetizer, which comes with perfectly grilled baby squid and shrimp next to a crock of slightly spicy dipping sauce. It's a great idea. Salads are also quite nice and take advantage of the local growers. The pastas are lightly sauced and there's a daily fresh risotto. Meats include grass-fed free-range lamb chops and rib-eye steaks as well as farm-raised chicken. Giannfranco's is open for lunch and dinner Wednesday through Monday.

THE GRILL ON THE ALLEY

120 E. Promenade Way
Westlake Village, 805-418-1760
thegrill.com

American

Entrées \$19-\$42

Sunday Brunch

The glass-walled kitchen and the low partitions between booths keep the energy level of the room high while the dark wood floors against white walls and the marble-bedecked bar area add a bit of refinement to the mix. Expect to see some TV stars chowing down here, and for good reason. The chicken potpie is one of the best items on the menu. Steaks and lamb chops are popular, especially if you're indulging in an old-fashioned cocktail like a whiskey sour or sidecar martini. The Grill also offers lobster bisque and calf's liver with onion. Open daily for lunch and dinner.

GRISSINI RISTORANTE ITALIANO

30125 Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-735-9711
grissiniristoranteitaliano.com

Italian

Entrées \$10-\$32

Live Music

The name means "breadsticks" in Italian and you'll find one of two kinds on your table: either long and crunchy or rectangular and soft, depending on the day. The pretty rooms are lit by chandelier and candlelight, making it a sweet spot for romance. Host and owner Giuseppe Bellisario works the room like a master, making guests feel special. The large menu offers good versions of Italian standbys plus a few new twists. The salads are fresh with zingy dressings. There are multiple shapes of pasta and ravioli with fillings like mushroom, walnut, and lobster. Mix and match any pasta with sauces like pesto, puttanesca, carbonara, Alfredo, or limoncello with cream. The wine list offers many reasonably priced bottles and glasses.

HAMPTON'S AT THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL WESTLAKE VILLAGE

2 Dole Drive
Westlake Village, 818-575-3000
fourseasons.com/westlakevillage/dining.html
Californian

Entrées \$23-\$50

Romantic, Great View, Sunday Brunch

The view of the rock waterfall is soothing and beautiful, whether you sit outside on the back patio or inside the posh main dining room. Service is Four Seasons spectacular with waitstaff nearby for all the right moments and none of the wrong ones. Chef Jelle Vandembroucke's cooking is well-thought-out. He uses foams intelligently: piquing the palate, not confusing it. Dishes are spa-light on cream and butter but rich with texture and flavor. His cooking technique is magnificent so don't be afraid to order lobster or pork loin. The menu here is seasonal so dishes will change, but all of the ingredients are top-notch. Salads are dressed with interesting vinaigrettes, often employing fine aged balsamic vinegar. Black truffles might show up to wonderful effect in mashed potatoes or under dabs of goat cheese. Meats are organic whenever possible. Desserts follow the fresh and light philosophy, too.

HOLDREN'S STEAKS & SEAFOOD

1714 Newbury Road
Newbury Park, 805-498-1314
and 512 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-965-3363
and 6920 Marketplace Drive
Goleta, 805-685-8900

holdrens.com

American

Entrées \$19-\$41 (more for surf-and-turf combos)

Romantic

The decor here is masculine enough for business, while the lighting is low enough for romance. The comfy seating and the friendly servers encourage lingering. The cheese-heavy menu is not for the faint of artery, but the food sure is good. Appetizers—like the cream-cheese-laden spicy crab-and-artichoke dip, and bacon-wrapped prawns stuffed with feta—are hearty enough to be main courses. The grilled Castroville artichoke has a nice smoky flavor to it. Steaks are well-marbled, tender, and seasoned right. The signature Cowboy Cut is huge and sits atop a pile of onion rings. All steaks come with a crock of sauce, a side dish, plus soup or salad. Check the website for dinner specials Monday through Wednesday. Holdren's is open for lunch Monday through Friday, and for dinner nightly. The original Santa Barbara location serves brunch on Sunday.

MASTRO'S STEAKHOUSE

2087 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-418-1811
mastrossteakhouse.com

American

Entrées \$26-\$76

Live Music

For an extravagant night out, try this expensive and posh steakhouse. The cocktails are huge and potent. The salads serve at least two (unless you ask for a half-portion) and the seafood tower starter is a showstopper. For your entrée, stick with the meats unless you want to eye your date's dinner with envy. The veal porterhouse is fantastic. All the cuts are thick and outsized. Sides are à la carte, and the list of potatoes and veggies is long but unremarkable. Resist ordering more than one so that you can indulge in a giant dessert, which will be ferried out with a bowl of freshly whipped cream. The wine list features local vintners as well as highly rated wines from France and Italy.

MEDITERRANEO

32037 Agoura Road
Westlake Village, 818-889-9105
med-rest.com

Mediterranean

Entrées \$14-\$33

Kid-Friendly, Great View, Sunday Brunch



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>> 805 DINING GUIDE

A marble bar, wrought-iron screens with glowing candles, and jet-black crystal chandeliers lend a luxurious feel to this dining venue on the grounds of the beautiful Westlake Village Inn. Roomy booths and large tables inside and out make for a comfortable night. Chef Alberto Vazquez cooks with style. His dishes will change seasonally but look for a wonderful calamari salad with crispy fried squid tentacles and grilled rings over warm potatoes with a mustard vinaigrette. The shrimp Brindisi appetizer has sautéed shrimp on a square of grilled bread, which soaks up the white-wine-caper sauce. You can always count on fresh fish dishes in zesty sauces with interesting accompaniments. Amongst the pasta dishes, the orecchiette (little pig's ears) with sausage and Swiss chard is already a classic. Steaks, pork, lamb, and occasional game dishes round out the menu. Sunday brunch is served buffet-style with lots of wonderful pastries, salads, and egg dishes to choose from.

MOZ BUDDHA LOUNGE

30105 W. Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-735-0091
mozbar.com
Pan-Asian
Entrées \$17–\$36
Live Music

The crowds come for the cover-free live music in the lounge, but the large plates of pan-Asian cuisine hold their own in the dining room. Tiger prawns are tossed with *yakisoba* noodles and a ginger-garlic sauce; mahimahi comes with coconut rice and tropical fruits; chicken is stuffed with crab and asparagus. Though dishes can be ordered in individual portions, the menu suggests family-style servings for sharing, so bring some friends. If your friends are energetic and hip—all the better. In warm weather, the patio with expansive views is a nice place to be.

NOBU

3835 Cross Creek Road
Malibu, 310-317-9140
nobumatsuhisa.com
Asian-Fusion
Entrées \$8–\$32 or Omakase menu \$80–\$120

The stars love to come to Nobu Matsuhisa's small sushi bar and Asian fusion restaurant for the *omakase* (chef's choice) menus, the yellowtail with jalapeño, the lobster salad with lemon dressing, and the black cod. The rest of us like to go to see the culinary stars, for the rock shrimp tempura, and for the bento box of desserts (you have to ask for that one), but be prepared to pay the price.

ONYX AT THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL WESTLAKE VILLAGE

2 Dole Drive
Westlake Village, 818-575-3000
fourseasons.com/westlakevillage/dining.html
Japanese
Entrées \$10–\$45
Romantic, Great View

This lovely Japanese restaurant inside the Four Seasons offers salmon skin rolls and crunchy shrimp with jalapeños as a hand or cut roll. Amber jack, tuna belly, and sea bream are sliced into sashimi. Hot dishes include asparagus tempura, wok-fried Manila clams, and a whole fish of the day. The room is adorned with thinly sliced onyx and other semiprecious stones that are lit from behind, giving it a gorgeous glow. The seats on the patio and some spaces at the main bar and sushi bar overlook an outdoor rock waterfall. Onyx serves dinner nightly.

PADRI CUCINA ITALIANA & MARTINI BAR

29008 Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-865-3700
padrirestaurant.net
Cal-Italian
Entrées \$11–\$26
Live Music

Chef and owner Saverio Posarelli also shares a partner interest in Cafe Fiore on California Street in Ventura. The spirits flow freely at the Martini Bar's happy hour from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. The outdoor patio is great

for smoking cigars or tucking yourself away in a private cabana and listening to live music Wednesday through Saturday nights. Inside, get cozy with a Cal-Italian menu of beef carpaccio, crab cakes, *burrata* cheese with arugula and pine nuts, lobster and leek ravioli, seafood risotto, osso buco (braised veal shank), and coconut crème brûlée with caramelized bananas.

RIVIERA RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

23683 Calabasas Road
Calabasas, 818-224-2163
rivieracalabasas.com
Continental
Entrées \$14–\$39
Beautiful glass doors open into a cozy lounge offering a full range of cocktails and about 30 wines by the glass. At dinner, Chef Maurizio Ronzoni serves Northern Italian dishes with a twist like *fritto misto* with sand dabs, veal parmigiana, or *bucatini* pasta topped with strips of filet mignon. He also adds California dishes like tuna tartare with cucumber, sweet carrot and ginger soup, or Sonoma County rack of lamb in a mustard crust. European classics show up, too. Witness the five-spice crispy duck with port-cherry sauce or the salmon fillet with lobster sauce and a potato crust. At lunch a panini sandwich of lamb and bell pepper and the chopped Cobb salad are standouts.

ROY'S

6363 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Woodland Hills, 818-888-4801
roysrestaurant.com
Hawaiian Fusion
Entrées \$21–\$33
Romantic

Blazing tiki torches greet you as you enter this lovely homage to the islands created by Roy Yamaguchi, the father of Hawaiian-fusion cuisine. It's basically Pacific Rim cooking using products like macadamia nuts, Maui onions, and Kona coffee. The fish is always fresh and the menu is mostly seasonal, but some classics are always available like the Aloha Roll (spicy tuna topped with *hamachi*, salmon, avocado, and a ginger-ponzu sauce), lobster potstickers, Maui Wowie shrimp salad, macadamia-crust mahimahi, and a hot chocolate soufflé cake. On special occasions, drummers and hula dancers perform in the restaurant.

SEAGRASS

30 E. Ortega St.
Santa Barbara, 805-963-1012
seagrassrestaurant.com
Seafood
Entrées \$25–\$36
Romantic

A charter member of the Sustainable Seafood Program through Santa Barbara's Ty Warner Sea Center, Seagrass serves local seafood without promoting overfishing or taxing the ocean. Owner Mitchell Sjerven and his wife, Amy, also own Bouchon in Santa Barbara, so the atmosphere is classy and the wine list deep. Chef John Pettitt does everything imaginable to fish and shellfish. On any given evening, his seasonal menu offers appetizers like chilled oysters, and fresh seafood such as sashimi, carpaccio, or in a bisque. Scallops might be seared or suspended in a panna cotta. Santa Barbara halibut, salmon, and sea bass serve as main courses. There are also meat dishes, like the veal duo (rack and belly with sweet potato puree, turnips, pink lady apples, and caramelized shallot jus), a Kobe beef rib eye with a bordelaise sauce, or a rack of lamb with its braised shank in a rosemary sauce.

THE SIDECAR RESTAURANT

3029 E. Main St.
Ventura, 805-653-7433
thesidecarrestaurant.com
Continental
Entrées \$10–\$25
Sunday Brunch, Live Music

Set in a 1910 Pullman train car, this restaurant has been around since 1933. The current owners have a devotion to fresh, locally grown produce; artisanal cheeses; and farm-fresh eggs. Chef Tim Kilcoyne turns out beautiful steaks,

creamy polenta, and a build-your-own salad with options like organic greens, niçoise olives, roasted butternut squash, English cucumber, Point Reyes blue cheese, smoked salmon, focaccia croutons, and spiced hazelnuts. At brunch, the hollandaise is tangy and the house-made lemon curd is irresistible. Tuesday night is grilled cheese and jazz night. Look for purveyor dinners and murder mystery theatre nights.

SPARK WOODFIRE GRILL

1555 Simi Town Center Way
Simi Valley, 805-823-4756
sparkredfish.com
Seafood
Entrées \$14–\$28
Live Music

Value is the unexpected pleasure at this good-looking grill in the Simi Town Center. The open floor plan lets you scan the whole room as well as the kitchen for interesting action. At lunch, one page of the menu is devoted to 10 items under \$10, and they're all high-quality. The pub burger is thick and flavorful; the fish-and-chips moist on the inside and crispy where it counts. At dinner the prime pepper-crusted sirloin steak is only \$14. The smashed new potatoes are creamy and laced with butter and chives. In the lounge (and sometimes on the patio) live music plays Wednesday through Saturday nights. You might hear classic rock, jazz, or blues while noshing on addictive fried artichoke hearts, crispy hot chicken wings, or zingy baby back ribs.

SUZANNE'S CUISINE

502 W. Ojai Ave.
Ojai, 805-640-1961
suzannescuisine.com
Cal-Med
Entrées \$15–\$28
Romantic

Travelers to Ojai make Suzanne's a part of their itinerary so they can explore what she's up to in any given season. Relying heavily on the produce around her, Suzanne Roll turns out lunch and dinner dishes that are interesting and handcrafted. Breads for the sandwiches are made by a local bakery; soups change daily. You might see a rainbow trout grilled with rosemary and lemon or a stuffed Cornish game hen with an apricot-marsala sauce. The atmosphere is casual with seats on the back patio next to the garden and a most pleasant gurgling fountain and outdoor fireplace. For cooler weather, there's also an enclosed patio. Note: The restaurant is closed on Tuesdays.

TIERRA SUR RESTAURANT AT HERZOG WINE CELLARS

3201 Camino Del Sol
Oxnard, 805-983-1560
herzogwinecellars.com
Kosher Californian
Entrées \$25–\$44

Kosher food is complex and flavorful here at this restaurant inside Herzog Winery. Chef Todd Aarons employs local ingredients for his seasonal dishes. You might see butternut squash soup with lemon oil, ahi tuna carpaccio with an avocado gelato, or a spicy venison and bison sausage with a potato croquette. Desserts include a flourless Mexican chocolate cake with caramel frozen custard and an orange-almond flan. Aarons puts together three-course menus paired with wines for easy ordering. Reservations are required on Sundays. On Fridays, only lunch is served. The restaurant is closed on Saturdays in observance of the Sabbath.

TRATTORIA FARFALLA

160 Promenade Way
Westlake Village, 805-497-2283
farfallawestlakevillage.com
Italian
Entrées \$10–\$20
Romantic

The warm and sexy environs here make this a superb spot for a date. The lighting is flattering at the high pub tables in the lounge, at the brown leather booths running the length of the restaurant along the open kitchen, and on the

tented patio. The cooking from chef-owner Santino Coccia is good enough to swoon over. Any selection from the fresh Mozzarella Bar will be wonderful. Add some prosciutto to the cheese selection to create a light meal. The mushroom risotto is scooped out of a giant wheel of Parmesan onto your plate. Flavorful skirt steak comes as a main course or on the Piemontese salad. The popular dessert, Torta della Nonna (grandmother's cake), is a warm and sweet ricotta cake with lemon zest and pine nuts.

TUSCANY IL RISTORANTE

968 S. Westlake Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-495-2768
Italian
Entrées \$18-\$32

Romantic

Village dwellers pack this beautiful space for its warm, friendly service and top-notch food. The menu is small, but the nightly specials are worth investigating. High rollers and celebs consider this their neighborhood boîte. Others come just for special occasions. The lobster and shrimp martini salad has hearts of palm, avocado, and pink grapefruit segments; the baby greens salad has shaved fennel and toasted pine nuts; the whole Dover sole is topped with a lemon-herb sauce; and the chicken breast comes under a sun-dried tomato pesto.

VINEYARD HOUSE

3631 Sagunto St.
Santa Ynez, 805-688-2886
thevineyardhouse.com
Eclectic

Entrées \$11-\$28

Sunday Brunch, Kid-Friendly

The large, wooden, wraparound deck allows diners to gaze upon the rolling hills of Santa Ynez Valley—whether enjoying the fruits of its vines or teetotaling with the Bleeding Heart spritzer (ginger ale, grape juice, and lime). A wide range of cuisine styles share the menu space. Sandwiches are filled with pesto chicken, Virginia pulled pork, or the catch of the day with wasabi mayonnaise. Burgers, pizzas, and pastas compete for your attention with the spicy venison chili verde with tomatillos and green chiles. The crispy chicken salad and the crab cake spinach salad are also crowd pleasers. At night, choose from a 12-ounce rib eye, rack of lamb, chicken “three ways,” or butternut squash ravioli (among other things). Sweet endings include a warm, chewy, chocolate-walnut brownie topped with McConnell’s vanilla ice cream and caramel sauce.

WATERMARK

598 Main St.
Ventura, 805-643-6800
watermarkonmain.com
New American
Entrées \$23-\$45

Romantic

Gorgeous Art Deco surroundings make for a “swellegant” evening at this posh downtown Ventura landmark. Large tables and oversized booths plus friendly service keep the atmosphere comfortable and inviting, not stuffy or snooty. Drag out the vintage duds and you’ll enjoy the evening even more. The menu isn’t inexpensive but the cuts of meat are excellent, especially the 18-ounce bone-in rib eye and the herb-crusted rack of lamb with mint hollandaise. Most of the items are rich, like the braised short ribs, lobster potpie, and ono drizzled with green curry coconut sauce—so go easy on the appetizers. The Watermark Signature Salad is a refreshing start that won’t fill you up. Taking dessert and after-dinner drinks up on the third-floor lounge allows you to cap the night by soaking up the views of downtown Ventura and the ocean.

ZIN BISTRO AMERICANA

32131 Lindero Canyon Road
Westlake Village, 818-865-0095
zinbistroamericana.com

American

Entrées \$15-\$35

Great View, Romantic

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30315 CANWOOD STREET - AGOURA HILLS | 818.991.2170 | WWW.PIKEYSPUB.COM

Right on the lake in Westlake Village, Zin takes advantage of the gorgeous view with floor-to-ceiling windows that double as doors; the small patio is cozy with a fire pit. The tables inside without a water view let you focus on your date in the romantic booths. Executive Chef Roberto Leyva (also of FINS and Moz Buddha Lounge) turns out comfort food like chicken-fried lobster, braised short ribs, an Angus beef hamburger, and the cioppino from FINS. Lots of little starters like fried oysters and cheese fondue make tasting different wines easy.

FOODIE

Restaurants whose cuisine shines—regardless of decor, service, ambience, or even views—to make food lovers swoon time and time again.

BROOKS

545 E. Thompson Blvd.
Ventura, 805-652-7070
restaurantbrooks.com
New American
Entrées \$17–\$28

Part of the upscale dining scene in downtown Ventura, Brooks has a classy vibe without being too fancy. Chef-owner Andy Brooks gets lots of inspiration for his seasonal menu from local farmers. You can depend on seeing plenty of seafood including some form of oysters coated in cornmeal and fried just until crispy on the outside. There's usually a flavorful cut of steak or two. Desserts are fun, including parfaits, chocolate pound cake, crème brûlée, and cinnamon roll bread pudding. Bottles on the deep wine list go for half-price on Wednesdays. Every night Andy offers a three-course menu for a bargain price of around \$35, and his signature five-course menu (for the entire table) for around \$60 (\$90 with wine pairings).

CAFÉ 14

30315 Canwood St.
Agoura Hills, 818-991-9560
cafe-14.com
Eclectic
Entrées \$24–\$34

Chefs and co-owners Neil Kramer and Claudine Bernard turn out very nice eclectic cuisine in this small space, tucked in the corner of the Reyes Adobe Plaza. The patio feels a bit more expansive than the main dining room if you like a little elbow room around your table. The menu changes frequently but you'll always be treated to a mélange of flavors and styles from around the world. A steak au poivre might be listed next to short ribs in hoisin sauce with sticky rice; or seasonal fish might vie for your attention with a bouillabaisse or Parisian chicken fricassee. Desserts tend toward hearty American crumbles and dense flourless cakes with ice creams made daily. The full bar mixes cocktails with fresh fruits and herbs. Café 14 is open for dinner Wednesday through Sunday nights.

DOWNEY'S

1305 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-966-5006
downeyssb.com
Cal-French
Entrées \$29–\$37
Romantic

Chef and owner John Downey sources ingredients like meat, seafood, and organic vegetables locally and prepares them in imaginative, but not overwrought, ways. His wife Liz runs the front of the house, which is dotted with her own paintings of local scenes. The menu, which changes daily, might include a porcini soup with crème fraîche and chives; squab salad with a garlic-mustard dressing; or a boneless veal chop with chanterelles, marjoram, and fettuccine with spinach.

THE HUNGRY CAT

1134 Chapala St.
Santa Barbara, 805-884-4701
thehungrycat.com
Seafood
Entrées \$16–28

A tiny raw bar and seafood house that specializes in New England-style food and cocktails, this Santa Barbara twin of the Hollywood original celebrates the purity of oysters, clams, lobster, Santa Barbara spot prawns, and fresh vegetables. Preparations from chef and owner David Lentz are sometimes simple, sometimes complex, but always spot-on delicious. The Maine lobster roll is smeared with a Meyer-lemon aioli instead of standard mayo. Baltimore crab cakes sit on frisée with pancetta and a coddled quail egg. The space is small and reservations aren't taken, so some waiting may be involved, but an East Coast cocktail with muddled fruit ought to take the edge off. Open for dinner nightly.

LOOK KANDA SUSHI

3637 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-230-0101
kandasushito.com
Japanese
Sushi \$5–\$18; Small plates \$4–\$14

Serene and beautiful with comfy white leather chairs, this Japanese restaurant is perfect for a date. The small plates and sushi rolls are high-quality and delicious. Service at the tables from kimono-clad girls is very sweet. Note: If you sit at the sushi bar, be prepared to follow proper sushi etiquette.

LEILA'S RESTAURANT & WINE BAR

752 Lindero Canyon Road
Oak Park, 818-707-6939
leilasrestaurant.com
Cal-Eclectic
Entrées \$15–\$30

An exhibition kitchen dominates this little but lovely space so diners can watch chef Richard De Mane turn out his Peking duck confit pancake, port-roasted pear salad, and Moroccan spiced salmon. There's also a communal table up front for more social dining. The adjoining wine bar and patio expand the space nicely for comfortable dining everywhere.

MARCELLO RISTORANTE

140 W. Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, 805-371-4367
marcelloristorante.com
Italian
Entrées \$13–\$29

Whether you're at a table inside or out on the front patio, the service here is snappy and professional. Owner and chef Tino Di Marcello doesn't speak much English (only Italian and Spanish) but what he lacks in words he gives to his customers in flavor. The specials are always interesting and he's not afraid to put salt cod or tripe on the regular menu. The olive oil is first-rate and many of the pasta shapes are handmade. The *cappellacci* sheets, folded around ricotta and spinach then splashed with a tomato-cream sauce, are wonderful. For dessert, don't miss the chocolate crème brûlée with a hint of lemon. The wine list is long with plenty of pinot noir, chianti, and a few barbaresco choices, not to mention a nice assortment of pinot grigio (and friends).

OLIO E LIMONE

17 W. Victoria St.
Santa Barbara, 805-899-2699
olioelimone.com
Sicilian
Entrées \$16–\$34
Romantic

Husband and wife Alberto and Elaine Morello treat this gem of a restaurant like a precious stone. No ingredient is too good to employ. The olive oil (from a family grove in Sicily) is so fantastic, people take home bottles of the stuff. Chef Alberto's salads are fresh, his pastas are handmade, and his sauces are excellent. If you do veer from the pasta or risotto (which is hard to do), you won't be disappointed with the fresh fish or tender veal. There's also fantastic roasted chicken or rib-eye steak at dinner. Lunch has a nice range of salads, pastas, and a couple of panini sandwiches. Cocktails and spirits now accompany the award-winning wine list, too.

ROOT 246

420 Alisal Road
Solvang, 805-686-8681
root-246.com
New American
Entrées \$14–\$35
Romantic, Sunday Brunch

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians tapped celebrity chef Bradley Ogden to create this temple to New American dining in downtown Solvang. The decor is modern and whimsical with oversized armchairs in one of the bar areas, lounge furniture on the outdoor patio, flat-screen televisions in a subdued interior lounge, a mixture of sleek booths and tables in the main dining room, and a glass-walled chef's table adjoining the huge kitchen. Executive chef Jonny Hall collaborates with Ogden on the seasonal menu, which changes ever so slightly each day. Fresh vegetables are the stars of the show here, along with artisanal cheeses and sustainably raised meats. The New American creations aren't exotic, but they do bring together familiar tastes in new ways. For example, a Maytag blue cheese soufflé is paired with Bing cherries while ahi tuna gets a companion five-bean salad, olive tapenade, and a quail egg on the plate. Everything from the small collection of breads that hit the table at the start of the meal to the diminutive desserts is top-notch. The entire menu is available in all of the different seating areas. The collection of wines is impressive, with 90 percent coming from California. Every Wednesday night a different local vintner plays guest sommelier. Root 246 is open for dinner nightly, for lunch on Saturday, and for brunch on Sunday.

SADDLE PEAK LODGE

419 Cold Canyon Road
Calabasas, 818-222-3888
saddlepeaklodge.com
New American
Entrées \$37–\$47, Tasting Menus \$80–\$200
Romantic, Sunday Brunch

Step through the wooden doors into another world where the elk is delicious and buffalo heads serve as decoration. You'll feel like a 19th-century gourmand dining on a game reserve in Alaska or Africa. Chef Adam Horton creates wonderful seasonal tasting menus with either four or seven courses using produce from the farmers' market and the best game from all over the world. That elk tenderloin grown in New Zealand benefits immensely from the accompaniment of *griottines* (morello cherries macerated in a French liqueur). A warm lobster salad includes matchsticks of green papaya and leaves of sweet basil. At brunch a duck confit hash is plated between a fried egg and rye toast. The wine list has increased dramatically so be sure to ask for suggestions.

LOOK SAFIRE

4850 Verdugo Way
Camarillo, 805-389-1227
safirebistro.com
New American
Entrées \$12–\$41
Romantic

The prettiest dining room in Camarillo dishes up excellent New American fare from chef Chris Bryan. A wood-fired oven crisps up a variety of flatbreads and pizzas. Nice seafood dishes and steaks hold up the expensive end of the menu, while special bistro dishes come in under \$20. Happy hour in the bar area (4 to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday) features even more value-driven dining. Check the website for live musical performances and wine dinners.

SLY'S

686 Linden Ave.
Carpinteria, 805-684-6666
slysonline.com
American
Entrées \$12–\$55
Saturday & Sunday Brunch

Sort of casual, sort of stylish, this Carpinteria gem is a must-visit. With its Vespa hanging over the bar, glass-walled wine room, and polished wood accents, it's great for

formal occasions. But the service is super-friendly and most of the patrons are comfortably dressed, so there's nothing stuffy about an evening here, either. Chef and owner James Sly has been cooking for more than 40 years, and his cuisine tastes like it. You really can't go wrong with anything on this American menu of steaks and seafood, but the abalone is a real treat. Unlike most chop-houses, Sly's offers a list of pastas as well as sandwiches and small cuts of steak for those who don't have a huge appetite. Desserts are wonderful, too. Sly's is open for lunch Monday through Friday, dinner nightly, and lunch and brunch on Saturday and Sunday.

NEW WINE CASK

813 Anacapa St.
Santa Barbara, 805-966-9463

winecask.com

Wine Country

Entrées \$19-\$32

Romantic

Minimal decor enhances the attention paid to the food on the plate and the wine in the glass. Proprietors Doug Margerum and Mitchell Sjerven have so much experience serving wine and food to Santa Barbarans, they typically know just what their clientele wants. Chef David Sundeen crafts a seasonal menu of wonderful treats using wild fish, farmers' market produce, and meats like quail, lamb, and beef. Open only for dinner, it's Santa Barbara's signature restaurant and next-door wine shop (called The Alliance).

A GOOD BET

Not too fancy, not too expensive, and a good experience all around—these are the qualities you'll find at the restaurants in this section.

BELLA TERRAZA RESTAURANT AT THE HYATT WESTLAKE PLAZA

880 S. Westlake Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-557-4710

hyattwestlakeplaza.com

Californian

Entrées \$10-\$28

Kid-Friendly

Open for breakfast and lunch daily, this airy, classy space is great for meeting friends or conducting a business conversation. Try to get a table near the windows or on the patio for a view of the green lawn and waterfall. Breakfast items include smoothies, steel-cut oatmeal with roasted fruits, and the California Benedict with artichokes, avocado, and roasted red pepper. At lunch, a roasted tomato soup comes with crème fraîche and croutons. The Cobb salad gets a light lemon-Dijon dressing. The pressed turkey panini is topped with smoked Gouda and pepperoncini. The half-sandwich, half-salad lunch deal is a steal at \$10.

BODEE'S

3304 Maricopa Highway
Ojai, 805-646-5300

bodecs.net

Californian

Entrées \$18-\$34

This small indoor dining room with its dark wood and low-beamed ceiling has been around since the late 1940s; the sprawling patio area with its sculpted stream and waterfall was revamped in 2005. Tables are set up on terraces under trees and a large canopy. In the winter months, a huge stone fireplace keeps everyone warm. The peaceful environs go together with relaxed service, so meals can take a while. Chef Myk Aviles turns out seasonal Cal cuisine like lollipop lamb chops with cherry mint sauce in the spring or spinach salad with strawberries in the summer. Main dinner courses tend toward the exotic: Aviles stuffs chicken with spinach and sun-dried tomato pesto, then wraps it in prosciutto and serves it over a Gorgonzola-basil risotto. Filet mignon gets wrapped in pepper bacon and topped with a crab butter. Just off the main drag of Ojai, it's a quiet place to while away an evening or weekend.

BRENT'S DELI

2799 Townsgate Road
Westlake Village, 805-557-1882

brentsdeli.com

Deli

Entrées \$6-\$20

Kid-Friendly

For amazingly good Reuben sandwiches on rye bread piled high with pastrami or corned beef, sauerkraut, and Thousand Island dressing, you can't beat this slick deli. The booths are cushy and roomy, leaving space for your tummy to expand as you down a four-layer slice of chocolate cake or a plate full of stuffed cabbage rolls. A separate bar also offers the full menu. The patio out back allows for even more seating. A counter up front expedites take-out orders. Brent's Deli is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily.

CAFÉ FIRENZE

563 W. Los Angeles Ave.
Moorpark, 805-532-0048

cafefirenze.net

Italian

Entrées \$15-\$39

Romantic, Live Music

Dramatically high ceilings and beautiful chandeliers make this an elegant spot for dinner. Seating is broken up into many different spaces, like the bustling bar area, a main dining room with a long family table, a quieter wine room, and the pretty back patio with a gurgling fountain. Classic Italian dishes rule the menu: There are wonderful pastas, pizza, antipasti, and salads. If that's not enough, check out the main courses like a dry-aged rib eye, chicken marsala, and lamb shanks.

NEW CHOCOLATINE

2955 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-557-0561

chocolatine.net

Bakery

Entrées \$7-\$10

A chocolate café with a Parisian accent, Chocolatine offers tiny treats of chocolate, cookies, pastries, coffee, tea, and hot chocolate made from scratch by baker and owner Sabrina Barthe. The *macarons* are perfection. Check the blackboard for daily specials of salads, sandwiches, quiches, and crêpes. The service is friendly but very laid-back. Don't expect to be in and out in a hurry. Once a month Chocolatine opens its doors in the evening for a special dinner; check the website for details.

CHOLADA THAI CUISINE

1282 Newbury Road
Newbury Park, 805-498-7801

choladathaicuisine.com

Thai

Entrées \$9-\$17

Kid-Friendly

The Malibu location has been a well-kept secret for years. The second location, in Newbury Park, is equally unassuming; the attention goes into the food. Thick juicy chicken strips are grilled on skewers and served with very tasty peanut sauce and cucumber relish as the satay appetizer. The fried spring rolls are sliced and given a fancy presentation. You can find curries and steamed fish dishes here alongside unusual offerings like roasted duck salad and fried rice with pumpkin and Chinese broccoli. Most entrée prices are around \$10. Beer, wine, and soju cocktails are available.

CIGALE CAFÉ

702 Lindero Canyon Road
Oak Park, 818-991-2442

cigalecafe.com

Cal-French

Entrées \$14-\$32

Chef and owner Denis Rion named his café after a cicada, the symbol of hospitality in southern France. He creates some classic French dishes like onion soup, steamed mussels, frog legs, and *boeuf bourguignon* for dinner, but he also offers some Mediterranean and Californian fare. At

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TORO.

lunch a wide range of salads is on offer including one with the grain quinoa and some grilled veggies. There's also paella, pasta dishes, and a bouillabaisse for both lunch and dinner. The surroundings are great for a business meeting.

LOCK COSMOS GRILL

23663 Calabasas Road
Calabasas, 818-591-2211
cosmosgrill.com

Eclectic

Entrées \$9–\$20

Whether you sit on the sunny patio or inside the small dining room, service is friendly at this casual Calabasas eatery across from the Commons. The menu has a little of everything, from salad to pasta to fish to burgers to panini. The flavors are all over the map, from American (yam chips) to Latin (spicy adobo chicken salad with a cilantro-lime dressing) to Asian (“tilapia Bangkok” in spicy Thai peanut sauce) to Italian (cheese ravioli).

THE COUNTER

30990 Russell Ranch Road
Westlake Village, 818-889-0080
thecounterburger.com

American

Entrées \$7–\$14

Kid-Friendly

It's mod and hip at this burger bar, where you can build your own creation for lunch or dinner. Start with a menu on a clipboard and begin checking off preferences for your patty, cheese, toppings, sauce, and bun. It's a control freak's dream. Those who want a little less decision-making in their life can simply opt for one of the signature burgers (the Old School is quite good). The fried pickle chips are way too tasty, as are the thick milkshakes.

C-STREET RESTAURANT

450 E. Harbor Blvd.
Ventura, 805-652-5151
cpventura.com/dining.html

Californian

Entrées \$15–\$45

Kid-Friendly

If you sit close to the windows of this dining room in the Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach hotel, you can just make out the surfers riding the waves here where the ocean meets California Street. Chef Nic Manocchio honors the sea and its bounty along with the local farmers in his seasonal cooking. The fish tacos taste as fresh as Baja. The lobster—in a club sandwich layered with flatbread and bacon at lunchtime or simply served with drawn butter and asparagus at dinner—is perfectly cooked. Entrée salads are ferried out in huge bowls, and any salad can also be made into a wrap using a spinach tortilla (a nice option) upon request. At dinner, salmon is planked on cedar wood and topped with a balsamic reduction. Lamb chops get a pistachio crust and cherry compote. Desserts are presented to you on a tray for optimum choosing conditions.

DARBAND GRILL

868 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-449-1323
and 19337 Ventura Blvd.
Tarzana, 818-654-9918

Middle Eastern

Entrées \$10–\$19

Live Music

Both locations of this Persian eatery have a slightly lush look thanks to nice fabrics. The service is quick and the patrons are usually large families or groups of friends having a nice time together. If you like crispy rice, the *tadig* won't disappoint. Plenty of delicious soups and stews are made daily, sounding more exotic than they taste—don't be afraid to try them. The kabobs are more straightforward, threaded with fish, chicken, beef, or lamb and set on a bed of basmati rice. Turkish coffee and baklava make a nice finish to a large meal. Look for guitarists and singers on weekends and belly dancers on Friday nights.

ELADIO'S

1 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-963-4466
harborviewinnsb.com

Italian

Entrées \$10–\$20

Great View, Sunday Brunch

The outdoor patio here is wonderful for people-watching since the restaurant is at the beginning of State Street near the beach. Since it's on the ground floor of the Harbor View Inn, a lot of tourists congregate here, but locals love it, especially for breakfast. Sunday brunch offers brioche French toast filled with mascarpone cheese; eggs Florentine over English muffins; and smoked salmon and red onion scrambled with eggs and crème fraîche.

FEAST BISTRO

254 E. Ojai Ave.
Ojai, 805-640-9260
feastofojai.com

New American

Entrées \$12–\$20

Romantic

This small bistro in Ojai's arcade has a long open kitchen near the front with counter seating. At it, patrons can partake of espresso and pastries, taste wine or beer, and eat a full lunch or dinner. Tables scattered inside and out back on the patio provide more seating options. Chef and owner Susan Coulter turns out seasonal New American eats like crispy oysters on polenta cakes, shrimp Louis salad, five-spice duck, and flatiron steak with mission fig butter. At lunch there's an organic beef burger, a frittata of the day, and an oyster po'boy. Check the website for occasional winemaker dinners.

GINO'S BISTRO

1620 Newbury Road
Newbury Park, 805-498-3188
ginosbistro.net

Italian

Entrées \$13–\$29

Kid-Friendly

Gino DeFelicce and his family run this friendly *cucina*. No salt is added to any dish and many options are quite heart-healthy. The pastas are plated in large portions, enough to serve as main courses. The lasagna Bolognese is rich, meaty, and filling. Meat dishes are made from high quality veal, lamb, beef, and chicken. The veal à la Gino is pounded, breaded, pan-fried, and layered with eggplant, tomato, and cheese. (A nice twist on the usual veal Milanese or Parmigiano, which he also serves). For dessert, the cannoli gets a dash of banana liqueur for that extra zing. Gino's bistro is open for lunch Monday through Friday and for dinner nightly. Happy hour runs from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

KING'S FISH HOUSE

4798 Commons Way
Calabasas, 818-225-1979

Seafood

Entrées \$10–\$39

(and up to \$72 for a 3-pound lobster)

Kid-Friendly

Huge dining room, large menu, well-executed. Part of the King's Seafood Company (Water Grill, I Cugini), so the fish is always fresh. The menu is printed daily; expect the best picks to be sold out by the end of the evening. The fried oysters and the clam chowder are reliable favorites. This place is big enough to handle energetic kids and good enough to satisfy adult tastes.

KUMO SUSHI

860 Hampshire Road
Westlake Village, 805-494-5250

Japanese

Entrées \$13–\$26; Sushi \$3–\$13 per roll

Kid-Friendly

Set downstairs in the Water Court office building, this somewhat secluded sushi bar has a loyal following. Most

diners just eye the specials board hoping for live scallop, Japanese snapper, or mackerel, but plenty of options can be found on the printed menu. The owners like to emphasize healthful eating, so any dish with rice can be served with brown rice. Alternately, rolls can be made riceless and wrapped in thin sheets of cucumber for a carb-free experience. Tofu salad and grilled sea bass will also satisfy health-conscious eaters. Full bar with Japanese beer and sake. Open for lunch Tuesday through Friday, dinner Tuesday through Sunday.

THE LANDING GRILL AND SUSHI BAR

32123 W. Lindero Canyon Road
Westlake Village, 818-706-8887
thelandinggrill.com

Californian/Sushi

Entrées \$8–\$21; Sushi \$3–\$11 per roll

Great View, Kid-Friendly

The buzzword for The Landing is “flexibility.” There's a sushi bar, tables inside for those who prefer milder temperatures, tables outside with great views of the lake, grassy areas for kids to run around on, and a menu so diverse that no one can complain. Choose from sushi, sashimi, Japanese bento boxes, seafood chowder, seared albacore, Greek salad, a burger with bacon and avocado, pasta dishes, or stir-fries. It's all there and all well-executed.

MARMALADE CAFE

4783 Commons Way
Calabasas, 818-225-9092
and 3894 Cross Creek Road
Malibu, 310-317-4242
and 3825 State St.

Santa Barbara, 805-682-5246
and 140 Promenade Way
Westlake Village, 805-370-1331

marmaladecafe.com

American

Entrées \$8–\$24

If you like Country French decor, this is a cozy lunch spot and a perfect wedding- or baby-shower location. Breakfast and lunch are more popular than dinner due to the great sandwiches like the Reuben, turkey with cranberry sauce, and New York steak on garlic bread. Portions are big enough for two, so don't be afraid to doggy bag it or order the half-portion of the many pasta dishes.

MI PIACE ITALIAN KITCHEN

4799 Commons Way
Calabasas, 818-591-8822

Italian

Entrées \$8–\$20

Sunday Brunch, Kid-Friendly

We love the pumpkin ravioli in the butter and sage sauce and all of the freshly baked breads. There's also a great chicken piccata and shrimp scampi. Baked goods and sweets are displayed in a glass counter that beckons you as you walk by it to your table. Smart.

MY FLORIST CAFÉ & BAKERY

76 S. Oak St.
Ventura, 805-653-0003
myfloristcafe.com

American

Entrées \$10–\$14

Live Music

The name of this chain is confusing, but it hearkens back to the Phoenix location that opened in a historic building originally housing a florist. Here in Ventura there aren't any flowers for sale but there are freshly baked breads and pastries (not on display—only on the menu). The menu is casual with breakfast dishes like baked oatmeal or two poached eggs on ciabatta (available from 8 to 11 a.m. Monday through Friday and until noon on the weekends). The delicious pastries sell out fast. The lunch/dinner menu is served from 11 a.m. to midnight daily. It features an assortment of fresh and large salads like the Caprese with pesto dressing and roasted garlic cloves or The Asparagus with its namesake plus feta cheese and artichoke hearts. Each salad gets its own two slices of toasted bread so carbaholics don't have

to be jealous of the sandwiches. On Saturday nights, take advantage of the full bar and live piano music while snacking on a cheese plate or mini tuna melt.

THE NATURAL CAFE

508 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-962-9494
and 361 Hitchcock Way
Santa Barbara, 805-563-1163
and 968-12 Westlake Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-449-0099
and 840 New Los Angeles Ave.
Moorpark, 805-523-2016
and 1714 Newbury Road
Newbury Park, 805-498-0493
thenaturalcafe.com

Healthy
Entrées \$5-\$9

Kid-Friendly

The Santa Barbara State Street location launched all the others. Lots of vegetarian and vegan options make this a magnet for the health-conscious. The same casual menu is available for lunch or dinner with extremely reasonable prices. At night there are soup, pasta, and fish specials. Fresh vegetables abound in the Buddha Burrito wrapped in a whole-wheat chapati. The Zen Burger is a Gardenburger done right. The Ranch Salad is a favorite with grilled chicken breast over baby greens with carrot, jicama, and feta cheese.

PIERRE LAFOND WINE BISTRO

516 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-962-1455
pierrelafond.com
Californian
Entrées \$13-\$21

A modernist setting in downtown Santa Barbara with plate-glass windows and exposed ductwork displays bottles from the Lafond Winery in refrigerated cases and on racks. Tourists and locals pop in with their kids for breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. The bistro menu from chef Nathan Heil offers classics like French onion soup, a Kobe beef burger, a half-roasted chicken with crispy fingerling potatoes, and a hanger steak with spoon bread. An artisan cheese plate is available all day with selections changing regularly.

POOKIE'S THAI CUISINE

900 Hampshire Road
Westlake Village, 805-381-0094
Thai
Entrées \$7-\$13

Kid-Friendly

Downstairs in the Water Court Plaza office complex, owner Pookie creates delicious Thai dishes for lunch and dinner daily. Lunch specials are a steal at \$7 to \$8 each. She also has a wide selection of interesting salads like the Outrageous Beef Salad with a spicy lime dressing and the protein-rich Yam Yai salad with shrimp, chicken, egg, and peanuts in a sweet-and-sour dressing. Noodle dishes are generously sized and include the classic pad thai and the interesting Hi Yo Silver with fried noodles, shrimp, and bean sprouts. Curries, vegetarian options, and fish dishes (such as the crispy sole with tamarind and chili sauce) give diners lots of great choices not found elsewhere.

THE RANCH CATERING

30843 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, 818-575-9033
theranchwestlake.com
American
Entrées \$4-\$10

Kid-Friendly

A catering company decided to create a small dining room for its biggest fans, who wanted to be able to chow down on amazing sandwiches at lunchtime. This is the result. A few pub tables provide seating. Order at the counter and the staff will bring out your sandwich or burger in a foil carrying case. The buns are a kind of brioche with mondo caps that look silly but taste fabulous. You'll need a fork to get through the Philly with cheese spread. It's juicy with tender meat inside. The staff recommends trying the whole-wheat

bun on the chicken salad sandwiches. Sides, like the pasta salad, are quite tasty. So are the homemade sweets. The Ranch is open daily for lunch and early dinners.

STELLA'S RESTAURANT

2385 Michael Drive
Newbury Park, 805-498-0989
American
Entrées \$10-\$21

Kid-Friendly

Stella Scholle has been charming her customers for more than 25 years with eggs with creamed spinach and artichokes over an English muffin, stacks of pancakes, and omelettes. Since breakfast is her most popular meal, she offers it seven days a week, from opening to closing. At lunch, the burgers are named after stars, the sandwich selections are extensive, and the salads move fast. Try stopping in for dinner—served Tuesday through Saturday—when it's less crowded. Look for specials like clam chowder, reasonably priced steaks, chicken with chardonnay-cream sauce, and the amazing apple pie.

NEW STONEFIRE GRILL

3635 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-413-0300
stonefiregrill.com

American
Entrées \$7-\$15

Kid-Friendly

Entrées come in varying sizes, from single to family, so feeding a crowd here is easy. The lemon-garlic chicken is unbelievably juicy and tender. Salads are big winners, too, from the Caesar to the "BBQ Chopped" with chicken or tri-tip. Don't miss the garlicky breadsticks. The quick-serve format requires ordering at the front and then fetching drinks before sitting down in the Craftsman-style environs. Take-out orders get their own entrance and counter, making it super-easy to pick up dinner on the way home from work.

LOOK! THE SUNSET RESTAURANT

6800 Westward Beach Road
Malibu, 310-589-1007
thesunsetrestaurant.com

New American
Entrées \$12-\$30

Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

A lounge-like setting keeps things relaxed at this beachside eatery in the north end of Malibu. Brunch on Saturday and Sunday offers French toast, salmon Benedict, seafood, and salads. Dinner Tuesday through Sunday nights keeps things casual with crispy whitefish sandwiches, burgers, mussels and fries, and flatbread pizzas. A full bar pours cocktails and plenty of wines.

SUSHI AGOURA

5015 Cornell Road
Agoura Hills, 818-991-0245
Japanese
Entrées \$11-\$14

Unusual ingredients like soft-shell crab, lobster, quail eggs, and giant clams (when in season) in their sushi rolls keep diners devoted to this intimate space with an army of sushi chefs. Easy-to-order dinner combinations and reasonable prices also put this spot on the top of most lists.

TERRI'S CAFÉ

30135 Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-707-1934
American-Italian
Entrées \$8-\$15

Huge café lattes, addictive lemon-ricotta pancakes, and delicious eggs Benedict over crab cakes draw fans of breakfast (served until 3 p.m.) to this charming spot. Tables on the patio outside or inside the cheery dining room have equally friendly service. Lunch, also served daily, offers plenty of salads (like tuna), sandwiches (turkey), and wraps (chopped barbecued chicken). Chili, tortilla soup, and a soup of the day can stand on their own or come alongside sandwiches and salads. Dinner, with entrées like meatloaf and grilled vegetable pasta, is served Thursday through Saturday nights.



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LOOK TRA DI NOI

3835 Cross Creek Road
Malibu, 310-456-0169
tradinoimalibu.com
Italian
Entrées \$14–\$34

In the Malibu Country Mart, just a stone's throw from Nobu Malibu, this laid-back Italian spot draws all the same celebs. Chef Francesco Velasco has solid control of his menu of Italian salads, pastas, pizzas, chicken in a lemon-caper sauce, veal Marsala and a whole branzino. Specials are market-driven, so Velasco always uses truffles when he can get his hands on them. The take-out window has its own menu of quick-serve salads, pizzas, and pastas, which can be eaten in the Mart's park.

TUTTI'S OFF MAIN

34 N. Palm St.
Ventura, 805-643-0880
tuttisoffmain.com
Mediterranean
Entrées \$13–\$33

Kid-Friendly, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

About a half-block off of Main Street in downtown Ventura, this bustling restaurant has a courtyard covered with a vine-laced pergola. The eats are solid, if a bit on the mild side. Pizzas are blistered in a wood-burning oven, which makes for a chewy crust. The mushroom pizza is topped by cremini, shiitake, and portobello 'shrooms plus Gorgonzola cheese, then drizzled with balsamic vinegar. At lunch, salads and sandwiches (open-faced or deli-style) both get plated with crunchy house-made potato chips. At dinner, large plates offer seafood choices (cioppino, grilled ahi tuna), pasta (penne with mushrooms and asparagus, capellini with shrimp and tomatoes), and meat (pork chop with whipped sweet potatoes, grilled rib-eye steak, braised lamb shank). A full bar offers plenty of local wines.

VIVOLI CAFÉ & TRATTORIA

3825 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-373-6060
vivolicafe.com
Italian
Entrées \$10–\$24
Kid-Friendly

A cute, casual little spot for lunch and dinner any day of the week, Vivoli Café makes its own pastas, daily breads from scratch, and desserts (tiramisu, cannoli). The healthy salads (19 of them for lunch, seven for dinner) made with low-fat dressings and grilled fish are hugely popular. Pastas like the spaghetti in a veal and mushroom sauce can be ordered as appetizer or half-portions at lunch. The main meat dishes are plentiful, ranging from chicken breast with artichoke hearts and white wine to pork medallions in a strawberry-balsamic vinegar sauce to veal parmigiana. The small area off of the bar is great for private parties or business gatherings. Look for live entertainment on the weekends in the future.

THE WHALE'S TAIL

3950 Bluefin Circle
Oxnard, 805-985-2511
thewhalestail.com
Seafood
Entrées \$10–\$43

Great View, Sunday Brunch

Set in the Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard, this wooden seafooder affords fantastic views of the harbor with its boats and surrounding mountains. Sit in the Shellfish Bar upstairs for drinks and live entertainment (although in the afternoons it's a quiet spot to watch the water). The main dining room downstairs also has great views, so don't fret over where to sit. The bar mixes up martinis, mojitos, and mai tais. Lunch and dinner is served daily; brunch on Sunday. The owners are dedicated to natural foods, buying organic when possible, and only using sustainably raised or wild-caught fish. The menu lists the origin of each fish whether it swam in local waters (swordfish, red snapper, halibut), Alaskan waters (cod), or Scottish seas (salmon). Lunch has lots of sandwich and salad options while dinner has more pasta and steak choices.

WILLY'S SMOKEHOUSE

28434 Roadside Drive
Agoura Hills, 818-991-7227
Barbecue
Entrées \$9–\$24
Kid-Friendly

The meat is smoked for hours and hours over hardwoods using a formula from a former USO chef named Willy, who served this authentic 'cue to Bob Hope, among others. The pulled pork is very popular, but the tri-tip is great, too, as are the baby back ribs. If you want to venture outside the world of barbecue, you could opt for the prime rib, Atlantic salmon fillet, ahi-tuna-topped salad, shrimp scampi, or New York strip steak.

WOLFGANG PUCK L.A. BISTRO

30990 Russell Ranch Road West
Westlake Village, 818-597-1902
wolfgangpuck.com/bistro
Californian
Entrées \$9–\$15

Kid-Friendly, Sunday Brunch

This hot restaurant has delicious pizzas, focaccia sandwiches, and fresh salads that hit your table less than 10 minutes after ordering. Heartier dishes include meatloaf, rotisserie chicken, and teriyaki salmon. Some menu items change seasonally (with Puck himself vetting every dish). The look is smart and sleek with indoor dining plus two outdoor patios. Wine bottles hanging on the wall suggest good drinking options; by day there are GuS sparkling sodas. Brunch gets the addition of egg dishes and waffles. It's tasty; it's fast; it's crowded; so go at off-peak hours if possible. Curbside pickup is a handy alternative to dining in.

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THE CHAIN GANG

Chain restaurants run the gamut from casual to very elegant, but the main component of any chain is consistency. You know what you're getting when you walk into a chain. There are no star chefs, but if you find the listing here, you will get good food, good service, and clean environs. We've left out those places with interminable waits and mediocre fare.

CALIFORNIA PIZZA KITCHEN

2200 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-777-1778
and in Westfield Topanga
6606 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Canoga Park, 818-884-8858
cpk.com
Cal-Italian
Entrées \$9–\$15

CPK has so much more than pizza these days. Take the sautéed salmon, for instance, which comes with asparagus and pasta in a lemon-caper sauce. Or the Thai Linguini with a spicy peanut-ginger sauce to which you can add shrimp or chicken. Even the surroundings have changed dramatically since this chain's beginnings. The Lakes location features a large dining room decorated nicely with stone walls and wine displays plus a separate bar and lounge area. You can still get huge salads like the original chopped version that helped propel this restaurant to fame. And there are definitely pizzas—more than 30 of them with

interesting toppings like pear and Gorgonzola, BBQ chicken, steak and chiles, and goat cheese and roasted red peppers. A call-ahead seating list plus curbside service makes the Westfield Topanga location a bit more user-friendly.

CHAMPAGNE FRENCH BAKERY CAFÉ

180 Promenade Way
Westlake Village, 805-379-5911
champagnebakery.com
French
Entrées \$7–\$9

A quaint bakery that harkens back to France with chalkboard menus and large mirrors, this outpost of the chain is a welcoming place. Nice sandwiches, quiches, crêpes, and salads vie for your attention with an array of delicious baked goods including croissants, madeleines, custard brioche, and crispy *palmier* cookies.

THE CHEESECAKE FACTORY

442 W. Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, 805-371-9705
thecheesecakefactory.com
American
Entrées \$9–\$32

Kid-Friendly, Sunday Brunch

Still going strong after all these years, The Cheesecake Factory excels in offering generous portions of stylish food in a casual setting. This branch of the chain that began in 1978, set in The Oaks, has a slightly Egyptian-movie-set look. On the encyclopedic menu you'll find everything from a Kobe hamburger to Cajun Jambalaya Pasta to orange chicken to chicken marsala. Really, there's a bit of every cuisine imaginable. Most folks come here with one dish in mind: cheesecake. Look for flavors like Godiva chocolate, Kahlua-cocoa-coffee, chocolate-chip cookie dough, lemon-raspberry cream, key lime, Oreo, low-carb cheesecake made with Splenda, or The Original cheesecake topped with fresh strawberries.

CLAIM JUMPER

2150 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-494-9656
claimjumper.com
American
Entrées \$10–\$31
Kid-Friendly

You would never know this casual dining spot with Craftsman-inspired architecture (stone walls, fireplaces) began life as a gold-miner-themed chain restaurant. There are still huge portions of ribs, steaks, and rotisserie chicken, but there are also daintier dishes like cedar plank grilled salmon, personal pizzas, and a veggie burger. The adjoining saloon celebrates happy hour (Monday to Friday, 3 to 7 p.m.) with small bites of food and deals on cocktails, craft beers, and wine. Open for lunch and dinner daily.

DAMON & PYTHIAS

4719 Commons Way
Calabasas, 818-224-1555
damonandpythias.com
American
Entrées \$8–\$13

Create your own salad or sandwich using their gourmet ingredients or choose from the regular menu, which features items like Cuban black bean soup and smoked turkey and chicken habañero sausage. A long list of salads includes Southwest Steak Salad and a spinach and bacon salad. Sandwiches can be healthy like the California Garden Sandwich. Dinners include teriyaki salmon or turkey with all the trimmings. Beer and wine help make this an upscale quick-food experience.

P.F. CHANG'S CHINA BISTRO

2250 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-277-5915
pfchangs.com
Chinese-American
Entrées \$6–\$18

Two huge Ming horses guard the entrance to this Chinese-American temple at The Lakes where you can sip up-to-date cocktails and down large portions of minced chicken in

lettuce cups, double-pan-fried noodles, Cantonese roasted duck, salmon steamed with ginger, wok-seared lamb, and New York-style cheesecake or the The Great Wall of Chocolate (cake). Big round tables make gathering in groups a treat.

WOOD RANCH BBQ & GRILL

5050 Cornell Road
Agoura Hills, 818-597-8900
and 540 New Los Angeles Ave.
Moorpark, 805-523-7253
and 1101 E. Daily Drive
Camarillo, 805-482-1202
and 3449 E. Main St.
Ventura, 805-620-4500
woodranch.com
Barbecue
Entrées \$11–\$27

Kid-Friendly

Many find it worth waiting in line for the slowly roasted meats and grilled steaks at this beloved local chain. The barbecue-sauced ribs, chicken, and tri-tip are tender and flavorful. The Original BBQ Chopped Salad with black beans, crunchy tortilla strips, and ranch dressing is perfect when topped with tri-tip. The turkey sliders on the appetizer menu make a satisfying meal for a low price, especially at happy hour when the full bar offers drink specials (except in the Ventura location, which offers half-priced appetizers). They will soon add Illy coffee to the dessert menu to make the end of your meal even more satisfying.

FUN, FUN, FUN

Whether they have crazy food, a festive atmosphere, or high-energy servers, these are the places to go if you're looking for a good time.

ADOBE CANTINA

29100 W. Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-991-3474
Mexican
Entrées \$9–\$17
Kid-Friendly

This wide-open cantina has all-outdoor seating for a festive atmosphere. Don't worry, there are heaters on the many patios for the winter months. Choose from 40 premium tequilas to wash down achote pork fajitas, crab enchiladas, shrimp in a tequila-cream sauce, fish tacos, or even baby back ribs or a pulled-pork plate.

ALOHA STEAKHOUSE

5800 Santa Rosa Road
Camarillo, 805-484-1422
and at 364 S. California St.
Ventura, 805-652-1799
alohasteakhouse.com
Steakhouse
Entrées \$20–\$50

Ten different cuts of steak are available at these two Hawaiian-themed steakhouses with laid-back servers. All the entrées come with soup or salad and a side of potatoes, rice, or veggies at dinnertime. The house salad with hearts of palm and a good vinaigrette is nice. The tables are large to accommodate the big portions. If you don't want meat, the salads can be topped with shrimp, salmon, or ahi tuna. There are plenty of fresh fish dishes, too. Early-bird specials from 4 to 5:30 p.m. will save a bundle, as will the lunch specials, some from \$10. Desserts are great fun, from bananas Foster flambéed tableside to volcanic soufflé.

AZU

457 E. Ojai Ave.
Ojai, 805-640-7987
azuojai.com
Mediterranean
Tapas \$6–\$17; Entrées \$24–\$31

A long, dark-wooden bar is the focal point of this popular lunch, dinner, and tapas spot. Happy hour stretches from 4 to 7 p.m. nightly. A long list of cold and hot tapas are offered, like olives, a cheese plate, stuffed dates, lamb kebabs, and fried calamari. Larger entrées cast a wider Mediterranean

net and might include Moroccan chicken cooked in a tagine, veggie paella, or filet mignon with a cabernet reduction sauce. Eat in the lounge area or at one of the many tables inside or on the sidewalk out front. Cocktails and homemade gelato help keep everyone happy.

BANDITS' GRILL & BAR

589 N. Moorpark Road
Thousand Oaks, 805-497-7427
and 1980 Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-445-4742
banditsbbq.com

American

Entrées \$10–\$20

Kid-Friendly

Barbecue goes high-tech here, where the meat is slow-cooked in gleaming stainless steel smokers and slow cookers kept at the perfect temperature for 24 hours at a time. The decor is Frank Lloyd Wright meets the Old West and it works. The bar is hopping and so is lunch, so come early if you have limited time. The potato skins topped with ranch-style beans and cheese are a meal in themselves. Jalapeños stuffed with crab and cream cheese are a unique touch. But the real draw is the barbecue, of course. The tri-tip sandwich and the beef ribs move fast. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights go for the prime rib. The burgers and salads are satisfying lunch options.

THE BEACHCOMBER MALIBU PIER

23000 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-456-9800
thebeachcombercafe.com

American

Entrées \$19–\$45

Great View, Kid-Friendly

The fantastic decor here celebrates seaside life in the 1940s when tiki bars were first trendy. Waiters deliver old-fashioned wide-mouthed bottles of purified water to set the tone. Wooden tables keep things casual. Jazz and swing music on the sound system is low enough to hear the waves crashing below. Food here, like in the forties, is decadent—rich with flavor and calories but new in style and ingredients. Clam chowder is creamy. The velvety mac and cheese has flecks of black truffle along with a touch of white truffle oil. The lobster potpie has chunks of tender seafood in a fantastic brandy sauce with a slice of crust sticking out. The s'mores dessert is brilliant: scoops of vanilla ice cream pierced with graham crackers and drenched in hardening chocolate and a torched marshmallow. It's hard not to have fun here, and a walk on the pier or the beach after a meal makes it even better.

BELLA VICTORIAN VINEYARD WINERY & BISTRO

2135 Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-383-8800
bellavictorianvineyard.com

California

Entrées \$9–\$12; Specials \$17–\$35

Part tasting room for the Bella Victorian Winery, part lingerie boutique (tastefully done), and part bistro. Chef Gâel Lecolley works the tiny open kitchen to create small plates like sushi and thin-crust pizzas to go with flights of wine. If you stop by at lunchtime, there are a few tables on the sidewalk out front to settle into for dishes like Chinese chicken salad and roasted leg of lamb sandwich topped with caramelized onions and feta cheese. The bistro is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Tuesday and Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

BOGIES NIGHTCLUB AND LOUNGE

32001 Agoura Road
Westlake Village, 818-889-2394
bogies-bar.com

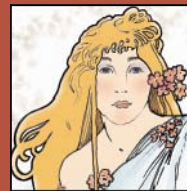
American

Small plates \$8–\$15

Live Music

This mostly outdoor bar is a beautiful place to relax—what with all the surrounding greenery and water. Grab a cabana or a spot on one of the couches near the outside fireplace.

MEET THE LADIES



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➤➤ 805 DINING GUIDE

Entertainment in the form of bands or DJs happens Thursday through Saturday nights. On Friday and Saturday nights there is a cover charge. Nibble on small bites of food like chicken lettuce cups, flatbread pizzas, Southern fried chicken, or a cheese plate.

BROPHY BROS. CLAM BAR & RESTAURANT

119 Harbor Way
Santa Barbara, 805-966-4418
and 1559 Spinnaker Drive
Ventura, 805-693-0865
brophybros.com
Seafood
Entrées \$10–\$21
Great View

Both locations are strategically located on harbors with wonderful views of water and sailboats. The outdoor tables are the most sought-after, but the indoor seating near the bar can be just as fun. Lacquered wood tables hold bottles of Heinz malt vinegar (a must for fish). The seafood is always fresh and simply prepared. Main courses include classics like shrimp scampi, blackened mahimahi, and seafood pasta. Daily specials might include local thresher shark marinated in olive oil and citrus juices, or local swordfish with a mango-papaya salsa. All meals come with coleslaw, clam chowder, and fries or rice. A clam bar menu has seafood nibbles that go well with beer and cocktails.

CAFÉ FIORE RESTAURANT & MARTINI LOUNGE

66 S. California St.
Ventura, 805-653-1266
fiorerestaurant.net
Italian
Entrées \$14–\$28
Romantic, Live Music

Lively and loud, this martini bar and restaurant is beautifully decorated. A tall, dark-wood bar dominates the room in which it stands and showcases the bartenders mixing up cucumber martinis and blueberry cosmos. Booths and tables are usually crowded with friends enjoying themselves either indoors or out on the patio. The kitchen turns out many flavorful Italian dishes like pizza with pesto sauce, grilled chicken, mozzarella, and sun-dried tomatoes; or ravioli filled with lobster and braised leeks then doused in a tomato-cream sauce. A classic osso buco is served over saffron risotto, as it should be. Whole-wheat pasta makes an appearance on the spa menu, which is geared towards lighter fare. The dessert list offers plenty to smile about including a chocolate trio with molten-chocolate cake, bittersweet chocolate pot de crème, and a frozen custard with pistachios and white chocolate. Live music plays in the lounge area Tuesday through Saturday nights.

CHAR FASL

5843 Kanan Road
Agoura Hills, 818-889-9495
Persian
Entrées \$13–\$20

A handmade Persian backgammon set beckons patrons to linger over tea and a friendly game. Kabobs of filet mignon, lamb, chicken breast, or ground beef are served over heaps of fluffy basmati rice. The *tahdig* appetizer is the crispy crust of the rice from the bottom of the pan topped with your choice of stew. It's crunchy and addictive. Try the pomegranate juice; it's a great source of antioxidants. On Friday and Saturday nights there's singing and belly dancing after 8 p.m.

DON CUCO MEXICAN RESTAURANT

254 W. Los Angeles Ave.
Moorpark, 805-523-2261
doncucorestaurants.com
Mexican
Entrées \$8–\$19

Kid-Friendly, Sunday Brunch

The Yucatan style of cooking prevails in this appealing Mexican restaurant with stained-glass depictions of what look like Aztec pyramids. Inside, booths are styled in tan-and-green striped fabric while lanterns and an iron candelabra hang from the ceiling. On the covered patio, wooden tables and chairs are comfortably spaced. The

food enlivens your palate with zesty flavors, starting with the spicy salsa. An intense mole sauce blankets a chicken enchilada. The long bar pours plenty of tequilas and mixes large margaritas.

DUKE'S MALIBU

21150 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-317-0777
dukesmalibu.com
Hawaiian/Seafood
Entrées \$17–\$30
Great View

The gorgeous ocean views are maximized in the dining rooms and bars of this large Hawaiian-themed seafood and steak house. Every staff member sports a laid-back smile and friendly demeanor. Skip the starters and go straight for the main courses. The seasonal fish choices are prepared six different ways—the Parmesan-crusting version with macadamia nuts and a lemon-caper sauce rules. For dessert, the Mile-High Hula Pie is stuffed with macadamia-nut ice cream and topped with fudge. Check the website for happy-hour specials and hula dance performances on the patio.

NEW EL REY CANTINA

2302 Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-484-4433
and at 294 E. Main St.
Ventura, 805-653-1111
elreycantina.com
Mexican
Entrées \$3–\$13

This pair of tequila bars in Old Town Camarillo and downtown Ventura pays homage to The King ("El Rey" in Spanish) of rock 'n' roll: Elvis. Fun decor, complete with velvet Elvis paintings, sets the mood at these cantinas with happy bartenders and servers. The food is reasonably priced and unbelievably good. Super-fresh guacamole and chips, beer-can chicken, and baby back ribs in tomatillo sauce are some of the delights that await.

FIAMME

3731 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-497-9444
fiammerestaurant.com
Italian/American
Entrées \$12–\$26
Live Music

Red is a major accent of this restaurant, whose name means "flames" in Italian. The fire theme carries through to some of the grilled menu items, like the baby back ribs and the spicy heat of the *peperonata* sauce on the pork chops. Along with those American dishes, you'll find Italian specialties like thin-crust pizzas, pastas, veal marsala, and tiramisu. The large and attractive space, complete with its own bar/lounge area and tented patio, can handle a crowd. A small stage in the main dining room offers live music and there are plans for other forms of entertainment. If that's not enough, rides in a Simcraft racing car simulator can be had for \$5 a pop (about five laps). Fiamme is open for lunch and dinner daily with a short breakfast menu available until 4 p.m. Happy hour in the lounge runs from 4 to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday.

FOX SPORTS GRILL

30970 Russell Ranch Road
Westlake Village, 818-338-7080
foxsportsgrill.com/westlake
American
Entrées \$6–\$27

Sports on 20 screens

Say hello to the modern sports bar: a sophisticated environment with more than 20 plasma and projection televisions, which all broadcast different channels. A full bar mixes up martinis, frozen drinks, margaritas, beer, and wine—even beer cocktails. The most fun way to eat is to grub on all the appetizers while your eyes are glued to the tennis match or football game. The spinach-artichoke dip comes with toasty crostini for dipping; the blue cheese-covered potato chips are absolutely addictive. Jumbo lump crab cakes have a bit of a Cajun kick; the build-your-own pizzas have a nice chewy crust.

LOOK GALLETTO BAR & GRILL

982 S. Westlake Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-449-4300
gallettoбарandgrill.com
Italian/Brazilian
Entrées \$15–\$26
Live Music

The Brazilian dishes are nice and full of flavor: Marinated chicken and mesquite-grilled meats come with black beans and rice and plantains; skirt steak is topped with chimichurri sauce, (parsley, lemon, and olive oil); chimichurri sauce also tops a breaded, pounded chicken breast in a dish called Milanese do Borghetti. Italian dishes here are also solid, from chicken piccata to mushroom risotto in a Parmesan wheel. Live music comes from a Spanish guitarist (Monday through Wednesday) and bands of various genres (Thursday through Saturday), which provide the appropriate ambience, as does the long bar in the front.

GINO'S TRATTORIA

720 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-494-7743
Italian
Entrées \$10–\$17
Kid-Friendly

Owner Gino Setola likes to be very personal with his patrons. Instead of writing menu specials on a board, he prefers to give them out to the whole room verbally. It's casual, it's friendly, and the menu has classic Italian dishes like veal picatta, fettuccine Bolognese, pizza, and Caprese salad. Don't miss the gelato truffles for dessert.

KABUKI JAPANESE RESTAURANT

20940 Ventura Blvd.
Woodland Hills, 818-704-8700
kabukirestaurants.com
Japanese
Entrées \$10–\$18
Kid-Friendly

Groups of coworkers and friends gather here for reasonably priced sushi and cocktails, delivered with a smile in a boisterous room. Some of the special rolls are a bit unusual but tasty, like the Ana-Kyu Garlic Roll with sea eel tempura and cucumber with garlic chips on top. Most of the rolls and cooked dishes are more traditional. There's tempura, teriyaki, ramen, and miso-marinated black cod. The hot appetizers are fun to explore and share, especially the ginger shrimp on crispy rice, the fried soft-shell crab with ponzu, and the garlicky but mild grilled *shisito* peppers. Non-alcoholic drinks—like the green-tea smoothie and the "Karate Punch" with cranberry, peach nectar, and cherry syrup—should satisfy any designated driver. Open for lunch and dinner daily; happy hour 3 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

NEW LADYFACE ALEHOUSE & BRASSERIE

29281 Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-477-4566
ladyfaceale.com
French-American
Entrées \$9–\$15

With the feel of a French Brasserie, this alehouse provides a one-of-a-kind dining experience. The communal table allows camaraderie to develop, while the proprietary wheat beers and ale lend local flavor to the upscale pub. The food is better than it has to be, given the fun atmosphere and the top-notch pours from brewer David Griffiths. Chef Ray Luna knows his way around Belgian fries, artisanal sausages, and salad niçoise. But he can also turn out some serious fish-and-chips and *moules frites*.

LAZY DOG CAFÉ

172 W. Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, 805-449-5206
lazydogcafe.com
American
Entrées \$8–\$24

Saturday & Sunday Brunch

Who loves puppies? Everyone, right? So a café decorated with fire hydrants, puppy photos, paw-print fabrics, and bone-shaped door handles has to be fun. The inexpensive

eats represent what Americans love, from pizza and pasta to burgers and grilled cheese. Salads are topped with items like roasted veggies, the fish of the day, or even chicken tenders. Bigger meals include meatloaf, flatiron steak, chicken potpie with a cap of puff pastry, and Idaho trout baked in a cast-iron skillet. For dessert, a hot fudge sundae comes to the table in a porcelain dog bowl. Lazy Dog Cafe, located at The Oaks mall, is open for lunch and dinner daily.

LIMÓN LATIN GRILL

1555 Simi Town Center Way
Simi Valley, 805-955-9277
limongrill.com
Pan-Latin
Entrées \$8–\$20 (some steaks up to \$40)
Live Music

The flat-screen TVs above the bar make this a great spot to catch a sporting event, while the area around the fireplace on the patio near the cabanas is great for listening to live music. Chef Ron Tavakoli features flavors from all over Central and South America as well as Cuba and Puerto Rico. His preparation of yucca (sliced, fried, and drizzled with a garlicky mojo sauce) makes you actually yearn for this normally bland root vegetable. The chicken *alcaparado* with olives and capers is sensational. At lunchtime there are American-style sandwiches like a California wrap and a hamburger. If you see the pulled-pork special, go for it. The servers are knowledgeable about the cuisine and can help you deconstruct the long menu, which also offers salads, pastas, seafood, and steaks. Limón Latin Grill is open for lunch and dinner daily. Musicians play on Sundays from 2 to 9 p.m. and at different times during the rest of the week (except Mondays). Call for the schedule of artists. There's also a DJ spinning tunes late in the evening on Friday and Saturday nights.

THE MELTING POT

3685 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-370-8802
meltingpot.com
Fondue
Entrées \$18–\$23 individually or \$59 for two
Kid-Friendly

Swirl, swish, and dip your way through cheese fondue, hot broth fondue, and chocolate fondue for an interactive meal that will keep even your kids interested. For the adults, a full bar and a large wine list make the night fun. The sauces, salads, and sides round out the meal nicely.

MOONSHADOWS

20356 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-456-3010
moonshadowsmalibu.com
Cal-Asian
Entrées \$19–\$30
Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

The owners got serious about this former surfer hangout a couple of years ago when they remodeled a bit and hired chef Joachim Weritz to create a menu worthy of destination dining. He files in sweet quahog hard-shell clams for his chowder and buys American Kobe beef for his braised short ribs. His menu changes four times a year to follow the seasons, but you can always count on really fresh seafood with Asian touches, a pasta or risotto, homemade fruit cobbler, and a cheese plate. Views of the Pacific are great from every table, indoors or on the party deck outside. Brunch is always crowded.

OLD PLACE RESTAURANT

29983 Mulholland Hwy.
Agoura Hills, 818-706-9001
oldplacecornell.com
American
Entrées \$11–\$34

Typically, the gals get the one fish dish on the menu (whatever it happens to be that night) and dudes get the sirloin grilled over oak at this Old-West-style saloon that serves a few microbrews on tap and local wines by the glass or bottle. Swing open the spring-loaded wooden door and squeeze through the crowd to the bench at the bar. Or rustle up a group of four or six or eight and call ahead to reserve a narrow wooden booth. It's a one-of-a-kind experience. Cornell Winery & Tasting Room sits right next door.

The Old Place is open for dinner Thursday through Sunday nights and for breakfast on the weekends.

SCHECK & SHAY'S ROCKIN' DINER

3907 Cochran St.
Simi Valley, 805-306-9566
simidiner.com
American
Entrées \$7–\$12
Kid-Friendly

Styled like a 1950s diner with plenty of chrome, formica, and vinyl, this homage to car-hop culture offers vintage foods with updated flare. Don't miss the Rednecks and Rings appetizer (fried pickles and onion rings) on a cute cast-iron stand with three good dipping sauces. Burgers go from big (Just a Burger with a half-pound of meat) to enormous (Da Bomb piled with avocado, bacon, onion rings, and double the cheese). The chicken-fried steak gets homemade country gravy. The premium sides include fire-roasted creamed corn, or pasta salad loaded with artichoke hearts and kalamata olives. Shakes, malts, and floats ensure you won't leave hungry.

SHEILA'S PLACE WINE BAR & RESTAURANT

330 N. Lantana St.
Camarillo, 805-987-9800
sheilawinebar.com
Californian
Entrées \$10–\$24
Live Music

It's a long wine bar with quite a few cozy tables available next to the wine racks lining the walls. The lighting is low and romantic, the music is mostly acoustic and jazzy. Plenty of small plates are on offer, the better to snack on with a bottle or two of wine. The Boursin cheese ravioli comes with a scattering of sweet-vermouth-soaked mushrooms. The combination is delightful. The Mediterranean olive pizza utilizes both green and black olives to nice effect. The angel hair pasta with tomatoes and basil could be a primer on how to make this ubiquitous Italian dish.

TAVERNA TONY

23410 Civic Center Way
Malibu, 310-317-9667
tavernatony.com
Greek
Entrées \$11–\$29
Live Music

Owner Tony Koursaris is a solicitous host, overseeing your good time either inside by the fireplace or outside on the patio. Weekends bring live Greek music, dancing waiters, and belly dancers. Eat your flaming cheese, moussaka, and grilled lamb family-style if in a big party (which is the best way to experience the rich here). If you can't save room for the baklava (and you probably can't due to the huge portions), take it home.

TUPELO JUNCTION CAFE

1218 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-899-3100
tupelojunction.com
Southern
Entrées \$14–\$33
Kid-Friendly, Live Music

It's always crowded at this friendly brick-walled café where the cute waitresses don white T-shirts and jeans and the drinks arrive in mason jars. Chef Amy Scott lets loose with bacon in her Southern-inflected dishes. It's in the spinach and Gouda scramble on the breakfast menu (served until 2 p.m. every day); cooked in with the collard greens accompanying the rich mac and cheese; and scattered on top of the slightly sweet coleslaw that sits next to two pan-fried crab cakes made from fresh Dungeness. The fried green tomatoes will remind any Southerner of home, although they're elevated by a dill-and-lemon dipping sauce that mom (probably) never made (at lunch) or stacked between rounds of goat cheese (at dinner). Even the seafood sticks to your ribs here. The shrimp and scallops come with cheddar jalapeño grits and Creole lobster butter. On Thursday nights, stop in for live music and happy hour specials from 5 to 7 p.m. ■

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Interview by Anthony Head Photograph by Gary Moss

MEET JESSICA MENDOZA

For those keeping score at home, Moorpark resident Jessica Mendoza plays for the USA Softball National Team and the USSSA Pride (fast-pitch softball team in Florida). She has gold and silver medals from two Olympic Games and the Pan American Games. She still holds records at Stanford University in hits, stolen bases, and career home runs. She's the president of the Women's Sports Foundation (womenssportsfoundation.org). She's a color commentator for college softball with ESPN. So is it any wonder that, for her, summer has always been associated with the smells of grass and dirt, and the sounds of bats on balls?

My dad has been coaching baseball and football at Moorpark College for over forty years. I grew up on the baseball and football fields. When I was three and four I was playing catch with college athletes.

When I was six, I was the only girl on a boy's baseball team and no one wanted to play catch with me. It was very confusing. My father explained that I should just go out and play, just do what I know how to do. Sure enough, after a week they didn't think of me as a girl. I was just another player.

It has to be left field for me. Right field feels like everything's backward.

I get a lot of emails from men who tell me that they initially watched women's softball to make fun of it, but ended up being blown away by the action. You just have to watch one game of fast-pitch softball to be hooked.

I love being able to make a difference in girls' lives with the Women's Sports Foundation. We're not emphasizing sports so they'll become Olympians or famous athletes, but so they'll be healthier, more confident women off the field as much as on. The last decade of research has clearly shown the positive effects of sports with girls. Not only can it lead to healthier, active lifestyles, but also the rates of teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school go down, and they're less likely to use drugs and alcohol at an early age.

When I talk to girls, I always emphasize *student* before *athlete*. I've got a master's degree from Stanford in social sciences and education. I just haven't used it yet.

I can't believe I'm twenty-nine and still playing softball. I love this game so much. When I finally leave the game, I want to know that I left it all on the field. ■

For more information on Jessica Mendoza go to jmendoza.com.





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