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Tra di Noi Ristorante, Malibu

Malibu Family Wines



Ron and Lisa Semler are musing over whether to commission bronze statues of their grandchildren. The Semlers live on nearly 1,000 acres in Malibu surrounded by Saddle Rock, Turtle Rock, and Castle Rock natural rock formations. Their ranch, Saddlerock, is dotted with bronze statues of their children Tami, Tabitha, Devin, Shane, Ashley, Dakota, twins Madison and Micah, and little 10-year-old Ronit. Perhaps it's time to honor the grandchildren with another round of sculptures, they think. Anyone who has visited the working ranch and vineyard with its steep hills, exotic animals, and collection of vintage cars and trailers would urge them to add more bronzes. They're such a beautiful symbol of the family behind Malibu Family Wines.

As Ron points out antique car after antique car artfully placed around his property, he laughs, "I like old cars and new women." Lisa, his second wife, mother to six of his children, and 17 years his junior chimes in with, "And I like new cars and old men." The two make a successful team, having built a vineyard from scratch that recently won its own American Viticultural Area Designation: the Saddlerock-Malibu AVA. "You have to prove your borders are different in soil and climate," Lisa explains about the complicated process for getting a new designation. Eight varietals of grape are grown on Saddlerock Ranch: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah, Malbec, Grenache, Mourvedre, and Viognier. Wines produced from these grapes get the Semler label. "It's all estate-grown," says Ron. "We'll produce about 12,500 cases per year." (The Saddlerock

label produces Chardonnay, Rose, Blanc de Blanc, Orange Muscat, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Petite Syrah wines using grapes sourced from further north in California where the climate is cooler.)

Late in the harvest, some Viognier and Sauvignon Blanc grapes are used to make a type of ice wine. The grapes are picked early in the morning when the vines are still cool, and then rushed over to Oxnard to be flash frozen. The freezing concentrates the sugars in the grape. What results is a sweet, delicious dessert wine. Very few cases of the Semler Dessert Wine are produced, so only a handful of customers are given the privilege of buying it. Tra di Noi Ristorante in Malibu is one of the lucky few. Kevin Bening, the Western Regional Sales Manager for Malibu Family Wines, describes Tra di Noi as a special client because chef Francesco Velasco takes the time to sit down with him to taste the new vintages. Of the ice wine, Velasco says, "It is intense. Its sweetness is balanced by a bracing acidity that keeps the wine from becoming cloying."

Chef Velasco likes to serve it with his duck confit salad that contains dried nectarines, hazelnuts, and pickled cippolini onions. He also recommends it with his duck ravioli in a pecan and sage brown-butter sauce. And of course he suggests drinking the ice wine with dessert, maybe his Mascarpone Cremoso — a fluffy, gelato-like confection made with mascarpone cheese and served with pumpkin fudge. Beams Velasco, "I feel very proud to have a dessert wine that is from our own back yard."



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“It’s intense. Its sweetness is balanced by a bracing acidity that keeps the wine from becoming cloying.” - Chef Velasco



“If you don’t know your wine grapes, know your winemaker.” - *Tarcisio Moseconi*

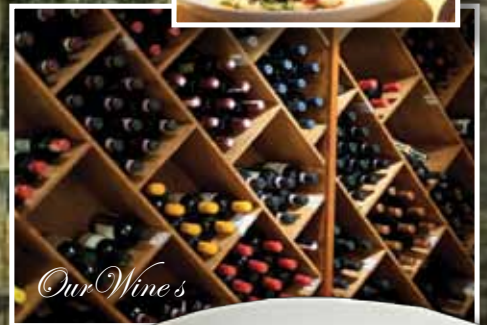
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GARY MOSS

Five Years of Giving Back

Is election season over? It's hard when it overlaps with Halloween and the start of holiday season. But even though we're all heading into the busiest time of the year, I think it's good that the holidays have arrived. After months of being divided and choosing sides (and an onslaught of campaign mail, campaign commercials, and campaign calls), we can all come back together to remember and celebrate that we are one community, one state, one country, and, yes, one world.

As we do each November, we are spotlighting many of the people and organizations working year-round to improve the lives of others in this community and beyond. And as it has been since we started our *Giving Back* issue theme five years ago, this one has been a true labor of love.

I think that of all our issues each year, this one best represents the 805 region—from the professional organizations to our readers who practice philanthropic principles in their daily lives. I'm fortunate enough to get to know many of these people, whether it's through the individual examples of giving back that readers have posted on our Facebook page, or at one of the many charity events taking place in the area, or just through the daily interaction with friends and neighbors all year long.

So before I dig into turkey and sides (see page 60 for delicious ideas from local chefs), I will be giving thanks to everyone who makes my hometown and my extended community a special place to live. I hope you will join me in giving thanks and giving back.

Happy Thanksgiving!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynne".

Lynne Andujar, Editor in Chief
and Associate Publisher
edit@805living.com

MYSTERY SOLVED

For anyone who is still in the dark about any of the clues from our August Photo Scavenger Hunt, please visit our website (805living.com) for the answers and to discover who won. Also, let us know if you'd like to do this again. We had fun. Did you?



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Behind the Scenes

GIVING BACK AND GETTING BACK

When you take the time to give back, even in small ways, you might just find yourself getting something back, too. Whether it's a new friendship, a new understanding, or finding yourself on the receiving end of someone else's kindness when you need it most, giving back has a way of providing its own rewards. This month, we asked a few of our contributors what they have gained from giving back.



Executive editor **ANTHONY HEAD** ("20 Questions," page 66; *Taste Wine*, page 78; *Armchair Oenophile*, page 81; *P.S.*, page 104) has recently benefited from others' good deeds. This sounds selfish, especially for an issue on giving, but I've received so much incredible assistance with a project that's been in the works for 15 years. Why so much help? Because I asked for it. And, I was told by some, because I'd

never hesitated to help them in the past. To see this dream come true, and find out who helped make it possible, go to lucidthenovel.com.

Contributing editor **MARK LANGTON** (*Insider*, page 36; *Hot Ticket*, page 38; *Good Deeds*, pages 48 and 52) enjoys the great feeling that comes with giving back. He donates his time and energy to the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency as a member of the Conejo Open Space Trails Advisory Committee and Conejo Open Space Foundation (cosf.org). Another way he gives back: I donate blood to the American Red Cross (redcross.org). It feels great knowing that something so simple can have such a positive effect. It takes only about an hour, you are literally saving lives, and you get free cookies!

Senior editor **LAURA SAMUEL MEYN** (*Pulse*, page 21; "Love Soup," page 74) has found that a favor to a friend is yielding unexpected benefits. When our sons started kindergarten together this year, I volunteered to drive my neighbor's child to school each morning so she can get to work on time. Our boys are very rowdy when



they get together, so I was nervous about dealing with that dynamic on a daily basis. But between their potty jokes and roughhousing, I've found myself feeling very privileged to listen in on their morning conversations about everything from the curriculum to playground antics. I just hope they keep talking.

Contributing columnist **FRANK NELSON** (*Pulse*, page 21; *Arts & Culture*, page 46) has noticed a similarity among people who volunteer. There's an old saying: "If you want something done, ask a busy person." I've been involved in lots of school, sports, and community groups over the years and have always noticed how a few dedicated people do most of the work. They're very busy people, but they still find time to help others. God bless 'em. 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* (allyouneedisluck.com).

Contributing editor **ANGELA PETTERA** keeps our *Dining Guide* and restaurant news up-to-the-minute each month, in addition to her other foodie contributions ("Thanksgiving Sides From Local Chefs," page 60), so it's fitting that her volunteer work is food-related, too. *Perspective*. Giving of myself gets me out of my own head and forces me to realize how fortunate I am. I'm sure that's why God stresses the importance of serving others. In the last couple of years I've been able to focus my giving through Les Dames d'Escoffier International (ldei.org), a philanthropic culinary group made up of amazing women. Two months ago, I was elected to the LA/OC Chapter board.

Gary's Outtake

By Gary Moss, Photo Editor



Sometimes when your subject is not looking—and you (as the photographer) see that moment—you can get a very interesting and visual shot; it's called shooting from the hip. As Teal Rowe (*Arts & Culture*, page 46) and I were walking to a location, I turned around and started taking pictures of her. Compare this outtake with the final chosen photo (page 46) and you can see differences in the subject as she relates to her surroundings. Same person, but the vibe can change from moment to moment. Are you prepared to capture it?

Gary Moss teaches Camera Whisperer Photographic Workshops on a variety of topics. Visit camerawhisperer.com. ■

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PULSE

TRACKING THE BEAT OF THE 805 | NOVEMBER 2010

THE GOOD COOKIE

As director of development for Casa Esperanza Homeless Center in Santa Barbara, Rob Grayson is responsible for raising money. And as a cooking school graduate and former baking teacher, Grayson couldn't help but notice that after the day's meals were served, >>



Rob Grayson turned an empty kitchen during off-hours at Casa Esperanza Homeless Center in Santa Barbara into a successful cookie business that provides on-the-job training for center members.

the center's big, beautiful commercial kitchen sat empty every night. He imagined starting a cookie company that could operate on baker's hours (late night through early morning) to benefit the center. He drew up a business plan, submitted a grant application, and with \$31,000 in funding from The Social Venture Partners, he launched The Good Cookie (thegoodcookie.org) in April.

While The Good Cookie just turned its first profit in October, it began paying off much earlier: Two professional bakers run the company, assisted by a team of six Homeless Center members, who learn baking, packaging, and shipping. With self-confidence and a job on their résumés, many Good Cookie employees are moving on to other jobs, using Grayson as a primary reference.

Chocolate Chip'n In; Oatmeal, Yes We Cran!; Peanut Butter Days Ahead; and Opportun"tea" cookies from The Good Cookie are sold at area locations of Whole Foods and Lazy Acres, among other markets.

—Laura Samuel Meyn



CLAUDIA CRAIG



Icons and words with meaning are the hallmarks of jewelry designs at Waxing Poetic in Los Olivos.



INSTINCT TOLD DESIGNER PATTI PAGLIEI SIMPSON that her hometown of Los Olivos would be the perfect spot to showcase her jewelry and gift collections. Customers have responded in droves since the opening of Waxing Poetic's flagship store earlier this year, snatching up insignia, iconic, and keepsake jewelry that Simpson describes as modern heirlooms (waxingpoetic.com). Her collections are crafted of sterling silver and mixed metals and revolve around charms created for relevance and meaning. "People recognize parts of themselves in the jewelry, which is designed to express who

they are, whether they're drawn to a cross, awareness charm, or crown," says the designer.

Dedicated to communal sustainability, Simpson employs Balinese craftspeople who are paid more than two times the minimum wage: "They're amazing people and do everything with love. They're part of our global family." Waxing Poetic also strives to use recycled silver in up to 50 percent of the materials it processes. "We believe in doing our part to help preserve the environment. Our philosophy is to be fair, to be good, and to be grateful," explains Simpson.

Next act? A line of candles will debut in January, each one wrapped in its own poem.

—Cynthia House Nooney

Giving Her All for Kids

IT'S NOT A MISPRINT:

Adriana Shuman donates 100 percent of profits from her Montecito store, Summer For Kids (summerforkids.com), to children's charities in Santa Barbara. As a pharmacist who's always had an interest in health and safety, especially when it comes to children, Shuman believes strongly in educating parents about safe, nontoxic products and raising awareness to talk openly about child abuse.

She even donates her salary; every penny possible goes toward supporting children's causes, such as C.A.L.M. (Child Abuse Listening and Mediation) and Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation. "I don't want a dime. I want to help one child at a time," says Shuman, who is a former child-abuse victim.

—C.H.N.

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The Family That Paints Together...

The Andersons use their art to support worthy causes here and around the world.

Creative talent and a strong social conscience characterize the Anderson Art Collective (andersonartcollective.com), a family enterprise launched last year in Carpinteria. Ron Anderson and his sons Benjamin and Sean create the artwork while Ron's wife, Susie, and Benjamin's wife, Leigh-Anne, look after the business of running the Palm Avenue gallery. The three artists have individual annual shows and team up with others for group exhibitions. Each time they donate five percent of the proceeds to organizations that protect the environment and support human rights.

The collective has embraced causes as far afield as the Rio Beni Health Foundation, which supplies medicines to remote areas of Bolivia; Talhado Children's Haven, a South African township school; and Nika Water, which sponsors clean water projects in poor countries. Closer to home, the Andersons have given to United Way and Santa Barbara's Unity Shoppe to support victims of last year's Jesusita wildfire, and to the Santa Barbara chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to safeguarding the ocean and beaches.

—Frank Nelson



ROYAL TREATMENT FOR PETS

When Stan Slaton heard about the groundbreaking success of a luxury pet hotel in Cleveland, Ohio, he picked up the phone to call the owner. Slaton was in the middle of developing plans with fellow veterinarians—his son Dr. Daniel Slaton and Dr. Steven Rosenstein—for a state-of-the-art veterinary care facility. The seasoned veterinarians were combining their practices, and had selected a location to house the all-new Westlake Village Animal Hospital (WVAH). Why not build a premier pet hotel under the same roof, suggested the senior Slaton. Luckily, Howard Perlmutter, creator of The Barkley Pet Hotel & Day Spa, was so intrigued with the prospect of a “complete pet care campus,” that he packed his bags and moved across the country to head up the hotel's new Westlake Village location as part of the grand WVAH undertaking (thebarkleypethotel.com; westlakevet.com).

“Every inch of The Barkley was customized for the safety and welfare of pet guests,” says Perlmutter, describing advanced systems designed to control climate, minimize noise and stress, and prevent the spread of germs and contaminants. The 24-hour facility, which offers boarding, grooming, obedience training, and pet day care, opened last month shortly after WVAH opened

its doors. All staff members are certified by Pet Care Services Association, and owners are welcome to drop off or pick up their pets (dogs, cats, birds, and exotic animals) any day of the year, including holidays, for short- or long-term stays (from \$45 a day) in pet beds or suites.

In the event that Barkley guests require veterinary care or support, services are available onsite and around-the-clock through WVAH. “It's an ideal combination for pets and owners,” says Perlmutter. “All resources are in one location.”

Special amenities at the Barkley include “pawdicures” for pets and webcam access for owners to view the activities of their little Fidos from a distance.

Perlmutter's golden retriever, Barkley, doubles as the hotel's mascot and can be followed on Facebook.

—C.H.N.



An architect's rendering of the newly opened Westlake Village Animal Hospital, where The Barkley luxury pet hotel and day spa also resides.

CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY

Books can make an impact. Just ask Debbie Charton, owner of Pearl's Knitting Parlor in Thousand Oaks (pearlsknittingparlor.com). After being inspired by *The Knitting Circle*, she set up shop in 2008. “The book deeply touched me,” says Charton. “I wanted to create a similar place, where women gather and develop meaningful relationships. Knitting is the common denominator, but it's secondary.”

Charton now hosts knitting groups in an inviting setting and offers classes for all skill levels. The parlor is named after Charton's grandmother, a life-long knitter. “I've found knitting to be a great form of therapy. Whatever's upsetting you goes away,” says Charton, who took up the hobby just six years ago.

Last January, Charton hand-delivered 200 blankets (made by local knitters) to HIV-positive orphans in Kenya: “It was amazing to provide something to children who don't have anything of their own,” she says. “I'm grateful that many community members supported the cause.”

Ongoing charitable efforts continue year-round. This month, Charton holds weekly classes devoted to making more orphan blankets. Her knitting circles also donate blankets for premature infants at Los Robles Hospital & Medical Center, and hand-knit teddy bears for children at local battered women's shelters.

—C. H. N. ■

SPITFIRE, OIL ON LINEN; BENJAMIN ANDERSON; ROGUE WAVE, MIXED-MEDIA SCULPTURE; BLAKENEY SANFORD. IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS AND ANDERSON ART COLLECTIVE.

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Finds

By Lynne Andujar

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Good Things Come in Small Packages

Natural soy mini votive candles (\$6 each) from Mixture are made with renewable and recycled goods; Pure Life and Home, Ventura, purlifeandhome.com.



Art With a Mission

Proceeds from the sales of Kiehl's limited-edition "Creme de Corps Holiday Collection" (\$27-\$70)—a collaboration with artist Jeff Koons—support The Koons Family Institute, an initiative of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children; Kiehl's Since 1851 at Westfield Topanga, Canoga Park, kiehls.com.

Second Life

The "tranSglass Lidded Carafe" (\$58) designed by Tord Boontje and Emma Woffenden and crafted in Guatemala from recycled wine bottles is part of Artecnic's "Design w/ Conscience" line. Artecnic partners with artisans to assist and invigorate commerce in underdeveloped countries; All Things Green, Woodland Hills, allthingsgreen.com.



Bright Light

Hand-blown Tade "Grape Light" (\$250) is crafted with respect to fair trade policies; Ojai Terrain, Ojai, ojaiterrain.com.



Wowie Owies

A portion of the sale of each tin of "Dress Up" Band-Aids (\$10) designed by Cynthia Rowley benefits Design Ignites Change, an organization that encourages students to use design to provide solutions to problems in their communities; cynthiarowley.com.

That's How We Roll

The Cynthia Rowley "Shop on Wheels" will be rolling into Santa Barbara's "Funk Zone" on Wednesday, November 10. The mobile boutique features the complete Cynthia Rowley collection including apparel, accessories, shoes, and the super-chic "Dress Up" Band-Aids shown above. Twenty percent of the proceeds from the day's sales will be donated to The Arts Fund (artsfundsb.org) to support artists and arts programming in Santa Barbara County. The "Shop on Wheels" is available for private parties as well. For more information, call 917-428-4430.





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Finds^{STYLE}

By Jemma Wildermuth Photographs by Gerard Bello



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

REGIMENTAL CHIC

The military jacket makes its mark on fall fashion.

1. Fate "Military" jacket (\$140); Twyla K, Westlake Village, shoptwylak.com.

James Pearse "Fume Pigment Henley" tank (\$76); Magnolia, Calabasas, 818-224-4771.

2. Smythe "Cadet" jacket (\$595); K. Frank, Santa Barbara, kfrankstyle.com.

3. We the Free "Rugged Trench" (\$168); M. Fredric at the Promenade at Westlake, Westlake Village, mfredric.com.

4. West Story Style "Jet Crystals" jacket (\$238); Blue Bee Jeans, Santa Barbara, bluebee.com.

5. Current/Elliott "Combat Jacket" (\$336); Wendy Foster, Montecito, wendyfoster.com.

6. Rebecca Taylor "Olive Bomber" jacket (\$495); Magnolia (see previous).

7. Literature Noir "Lt. Dan" jacket (\$281); Nordstrom at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, nordstrom.com.



6.



7.



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Talia Emery, M.D.



IT'S HIP TO GIVE

Fashion for a clear conscience.

1. Twenty dollars from the sale of the “Everlon Diamond Knot” bracelet designed by Rachel Bilson (\$199) is donated to the Diamond Empowerment Fund (DEF; diamondempowerment.org), a nonprofit organization that supports education in Africa; Macy’s, Thousand Oaks, macys.com.

2. Catstudio “Riviera” tote bag (\$65) comes from a collaboration with Sabala (sabalaindia.com), an organization in remote southern India that helps widowed and economically challenged women generate income by making traditional tribal crafts; Porch, Carpinteria, porchsb.com.

3. Escama “Puff” clutch (\$65) is made of crocheted pop-tops in artist cooperatives located outside of Brasilia, Brazil. Each piece comes with a hangtag signed by the person who made it; escamastudio.com.

4. One hundred percent of the profits from “Adesso for Dream Foundation” bracelets (\$185–\$225) bought online at adessoshop.com/store/dreamfoundation.html goes to the Dream Foundation (dreamfoundation.org), a national organization for adults facing life-threatening illnesses; also available at Lola, Carpinteria, lolastyle.com.

5. Fifty percent of the retail price of the “Help Haiti” T-shirt (\$36) will be donated to the William J. Clinton Foundation’s Haiti Fund (clintonfoundation.org/haitiearthquake) to help rebuilding efforts; revengeis.com.

6. Ten percent of the proceeds from the Shai Shanti gauze scarf (\$48) goes to the Tribal Trust Foundation (tribaltrustfoundation.org), supporting indigenous peoples and their ways of life; Lola (see previous).

7. Toms Shoes donates a new pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair purchased. Toms “Canvas Wedges” (\$69); Nordstrom at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, nordstrom.com; or toms.com.

In honor of one of its first customers, Jacque Elbling, JGirl Lingerie & Cosmetics in Westlake Village (jgirlingerie.com) will donate 20 percent of the purchase price of any pink item to Susan G. Komen for the Cure to help fight breast cancer (through December 2010); 805-499-9999.

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Swim With the Dolphins

Dolphin Quest (dolphinquest.com) is an international organization that funds research studies to help protect and conserve marine mammals and their environments. One of the ways they raise money for this work is through tourist experiences at vacation destinations in Bermuda, Hawaii, and Oahu. This summer, the **Hilton Waikoloa Village** (hiltonwaikoloavillage.com) on Hawaii's Big Island just welcomed a new female dolphin, which marked the 16th birth of a dolphin at the property. Guests can interact with the dolphins through several experiences, from the "Wee Tots" photo op with a parent, toddler, and dolphin (\$80) to the 30-minute "Encounter" (\$205; includes swimming, feeding, and touching) to the "Trainer for a Day" (\$650) or "Trainer for a Week" (\$3,250) programs, where participants work side by side with trainers and dolphins for health exams, training sessions, playtime, and dolphin programs for guests.



Gorgeous sunsets are included with a stay at the Hilton Waikoloa Village on Hawaii's Big Island.

The expansive resort offers golf, tennis, three pools, an ocean-fed snorkeling lagoon, nine restaurants, Camp Menehune day or night camps for kids ages 5 to 12, and views of Waiulua Bay. For even more water fun, take advantage of the "Ocean Explorer Family Escape" package (from \$179 per night through December 31), which includes a glass-bottom boat cruise for two adults and two children, daily breakfast, and an "Ocean Explorer" kids' backpack containing an under-

water camera, fish guide card, and other gifts and activities. Four-night minimum stay required.

College students or recent graduates interested in learning more about the work of Dolphin Quest can apply for spring and summer internships in Marine Mammal Training or Marine Conservation Education. Spots are available at all three locations (Bermuda, Hawaii, Oahu); visit the website to apply.

HELPING THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The **American Hiking Society** (americanhiking.org) organizes trail construction volunteer vacations around the country designed for families, retirees, college students, and outdoor enthusiasts. Volunteers bring their own camping equipment and a willingness to work for four- to 10-day vacations. In addition to hard work, trips offer downtime for hiking or chewing the fat around a roaring campfire with the other volunteers in the six- to 15-member crews. Vacations range from easy-moderate (car camping or cabins; day hikes to work site; general trail maintenance), moderate-difficult (longer hikes to base camp and work sites; more demanding physical work such as heavy lifting, lots of bending, shoveling, chopping, sawing), to strenuous-very strenuous (5- to 17-mile hikes to base camp; difficult terrain or elevation; heavy physical work). Volunteers also help out with meal prep and campground duties; no prior experience is necessary although previous backpacking experience and being in good physical condition are recommended for strenuous trips. The lineup for 2011 is still in progress, but expect trips to the Virgin Islands and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (trips start at \$175 not including transportation to the site).



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TAKING CARE OF YOU

Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort in Solvang (alisal.com) introduces a new “Golf & Spa” package (from \$650) that includes one round of golf or one spa treatment per person, per day, plus breakfast and dinner. Spa treatments incorporate contemporary Western themes, as in the popular Sundowner two-hour massage and facial (\$250) and the Trail Blazer peppermint salt full-body exfoliation plus massage (\$200). The relaxing resort—with no phones or TVs and limited cell phone reception—offers a rustic getaway not too far from home. Also available for corporate leadership retreats: the three-night “Cowboy Ethics Bootcamp” led by *Cowboy Ethics* author and motivational speaker Jim Owen. The program is designed to motivate executives looking for ethical inspiration and integrity in today’s business world. The package (from \$2,250) includes all meals, lodging, workshops, and free time to enjoy the property’s golf, horseback riding, tennis, and other activities.



Hot Tip:

Want to help but don't have time to take a trip? Buy a goat (\$75) through **Relief Riders International** (reliefridersinternational.com), an organization that takes medical and dental personnel to remote villages in India via horseback. Goats will be distributed on upcoming relief rides to provide milk and cheese to needy families.

The waiting room at Alisal's spa matches the resort's Western theme (above); expansive grounds and greens are designed for recreation and golf (top).



LEARNING HOW TO HELP

Natural disasters around the globe are spurring more and more volunteer-minded people to mobilize groups to travel and offer aid, whether it's for the earthquake in Haiti or the oil spill in the Gulf. And then there are a host of companies that organize volunteer vacations that purport to offer all kinds of assistance. But it can be confusing to sort through the organizations and difficult to research which are doing the most good—and tricky to determine what kind of trip (humanitarian, conservation, agricultural, construction, cultural) you're best suited for.

Lonely Planet's new guide *Volunteer: A Traveller's Guide to Making a Difference Around the World* (\$20; 2010) attempts to guide readers through the complexities of choosing a volunteer experience, including how to apply, what to expect on a trip, and how to extend the experience back at home. The book also provides contact information for a variety of trip organizers, and offers tips for DIY volunteer vacations and for starting a grassroots volunteer organization from scratch.

Lonely Planet's U.S. travel editor Robert Reid searched out volunteer opportunities in the Gulf this summer and says that non-locals are still needed, though not in a way you might expect: “The Gulf Coast states see 145 million visitors a year, and tourism is the second-biggest industry. Going gives moral support and helps the local economies.” Check volunteerfloridadisaster.org for ongoing relief activities related to the oil spill recovery. ■

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A New You is Just a Call Away!



By Mark Langton

11/17/10-2/13/11

Through December 5: FASHION AND FINANCE

Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art at Pepperdine University, Malibu. This exhibit chronologically explores the impact that fashion, finance, and socioeconomic forces have on contemporary art. (arts.pepperdine.edu)

Through January 2: REFRAMING AMERICA

Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Six unique exhibits address and illustrate the concept of "America." Showings include hundreds of works by some of the world's most noted artists. (sbma.net)

November 10-14: PADEREWSKI FESTIVAL

Various venues, Paso Robles. Polish-born piano virtuoso Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) was a resident and viticulturist in Paso Robles from 1914 to 1939. He's also credited with introducing zinfandel grapes to California. In celebration of his 150th birthday there will be solo piano and chamber music concerts, Paderewski memorabilia displays, and lectures. (paderewskifest.com)

November 13: SEAN HAYES

Downtown Brewing Co., San Luis Obispo. This critically acclaimed art-folk singer/songwriter brings his introspective songs to Downtown Brewing Co.'s intimate space. (dtbrew.com)

November 13: JUDE JOHNSTONE AND MARK GOLDBERG

Thousand Oaks Library (Bodie House Music series). Johnstone's songs have been covered by many top artists including Bonnie Raitt, Stevie Nicks, and Johnny Cash. Goldberg is an accomplished studio guitarist who has played with numerous top acts including Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt, and Chris Isaak. (bodiehouse.com)

November 14: JOHN MAYALL

Majestic Ventura Theater. Called the "godfather of British blues," legendary guitarist John Mayall brings his gritty and driving blues-rock to this iconic Ventura venue. Mayall's contributions to the genre are counted alongside such greats as Eric Clapton and John Lee Hooker. (venturatheater.net)

November 17-February 13, 2011: MAIRA KALMAN RETROSPECTIVE

Skirball Center, Los Angeles. Illustrator, author, and designer Maira Kalman's works will be on display. Included in the exhibit are her *New Yorker* covers and *New York Times* blog illustrations. Kalman will also give a lecture on November 16. (skirball.org)

December 3-5: FOLK & TRIBAL ARTS MARKETPLACE

Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Exotic items from more than 50 countries are on sale. There are also international dance and musical performances and ethnic cuisine. (sbnature.org)



Here's an idea:

SANTA BARBARA CHUMASH TOUR. Native American expert and guide Peter Olmos (also known by his Chumash name Xuxaw) has created a three-hour outing for participants to experience the region's origins from the native inhabitants' perspective. The tour includes a visit to a sacred shaman site, storytelling, and songs by Chumash descendants. Reservations required. (santabarbarachumashtour.com)



11/14

Family Fun

Through November 28: HISTORY UNEXPECTED: SURPRISES, INSIGHTS, AND REVELATIONS

The Museum of Ventura County Research Library. The exhibit features items never before shown to the public: See the true inspiration for the monks' faces that adorn Ventura City Hall, the document that created Ventura County, and a book from the 1830s that chronicles printing and politics in early California. (venturamuseum.org)

Through December 31: SUPERPOWERS!

Ty Warner Sea Center, Santa Barbara. This display features sea creatures with extraordinary adaptive powers as well as the humans who help protect them. (sbnature.org)

November 13-14: THE GALLANT CUSTER!

Tierra Rejada Ranch, Moorpark. The 10th anniversary of Civil War reenactments in Moorpark celebrates some of the famous battles in which Maj. Gen. George A. Custer participated. (civilwaralliance.com/CWA/Moorpark1.html)

November 14: GINGERBREAD HOUSE EVENT

The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura, Westlake Village. On display will be gingerbread houses created by leading local chefs. Children can make their own gingerbread creations. (twcvv.org)

November 18: DISCOVERY CENTER SCIENCE SPEAKER SERIES

Baxter Biosciences, Westlake Village. Learn the realities behind the scientific techniques of crime scene investigation. (sciencespeakerseries.org)

November 20: WALK IN THE ELFIN FOREST

El Moro Elfin Forest, Los Osos. Join members of Small Wilderness Area Preservation (SWAP) for a guided hike through this 90-acre nature preserve to see unique specimens of pygmy trees as well as endangered plants, butterflies, and birds. (elfin-forest.org)

November 20-21: OJAI HOLIDAY HOME LOOK IN

Ojai Valley. Some of Ojai's most interesting homes open their doors. On tour are the bold lines of contemporary architecture, green and sustainable-living solutions, and the charm of a Craftsman cottage. Proceeds benefit the Ojai Music Festival and its educational programs. (ojaifestival.org)

December 3: SANTA BARBARA HOLIDAY PARADE

State Street, Santa Barbara. Marching bands, holiday floats, performance groups, local personalities, and Santa Claus ring in the holiday season. The event kicks off with the lighting of the Christmas tree at State and Victoria streets. (santabarbaradowntown.com) ■



11/13-14

WOMAN WITH FACE NET, GOLAICHE ON PAPER, MAIRA KALMAN, GINGERBREAD. COPYRIGHT: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/DANA BURNS
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NOVEMBER

November 13: Comedian and political commentator (and Santa Barbara resident) **DENNIS MILLER** appears at The Canyon Club in Agoura Hills. From *Saturday Night Live* to a string of specials and talk shows on HBO and CNBC, not to mention a stint on *Monday Night Football*, Miller has cunning observations on everything from politicians to pop culture. (canyonclub.net)

November 19–28: The **LOS ANGELES AUTO SHOW** at the Los Angeles Convention Center promises more than 20 world debuts and almost as many North American debuts. Visitors will get to see the newest all-electric vehicles, which become available to the public in 2011. Changes in technology, safety, and fuel economy make this the most anticipated car show in recent history. The show also features everything associated with automotive accessories and high-performance equipment. (laautoshow.com)

November 21: An evening of classic comedy comes to the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. The **COMEDY CAVALCADE** includes legendary comic Norm Crosby, Tony Award-winning ventriloquist Jay Johnson, and Las Vegas comedian and juggler Jeff Civillico. Also appearing is KNBC's weather broadcaster Fritz Coleman, who got his start in Los Angeles as a stand-up comic. (toaks.org/cap)

November 23–January 2, 2011: **NEXT TO NORMAL**, the rock musical that won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for Drama as well as three 2009 Tony Awards, comes to the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles. *Rolling Stone* called the Broadway smash "An emotional powerhouse. The best musical of the season—by a mile." It features Alice Ripley in her Tony Award-winning role. (centertheatregroup.org)

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DECEMBER

December 3: Popular 1990s stand-up comic and actor **SINBAD** (who most recently found himself “fired” from last season’s *Celebrity Apprentice*) brings his one-man comedy routine to The Canyon Club in Agoura Hills. (canyonclub.net)

December 5, 19: Now in its 30th year, the Los Angeles Master Chorale presents the **MESSIAH SING-ALONG** at Disney Hall in Los Angeles. With an on-stage orchestra, the audience provides the chorus to become part of this majestic holiday classic. (lamc.org)

December 7: The Arlington Theatre in Santa Barbara hosts a special acoustic performance by **THE BLACK CROWES**. The 90-minute concert is a live re-creation of the recently released album *Croweology*, which contains acoustic versions of songs created over 10 years of recording, including the hits “Jealous Again,” “Remedy,” and “She Talks to Angels.” The band will also play a brief electric set following the acoustic show. (thearlingtontheatre.com)

December 9–12: The Radio City Rockettes take the audience through a magical holiday journey during **THE RADIO CITY CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR** at the Nokia Theatre LA Live. Amazing special effects include a huge LED screen that transforms the stage from a winter landscape to Times Square to Santa’s Workshop right before the audience’s eyes. Plus there’s the Rockettes’ precision dancing and musical numbers. (radiocitychristmas.com)

December 11–12: The musical version of **MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET** comes to The Granada in Santa Barbara. Endearing and enduring, this show rekindles the spirit of the season and entertains with renditions of traditional holiday songs. (granadasb.org)

December 14: Relive the days of original hardcore punk with **THE DEAD KENNEDYS** at the Majestic Ventura Theater. (venturatheater.net)

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December 16: **THE JUDDS**—mother and daughter duo Naomi and Wynonna Judd—are one of the most successful acts in country music history, winning five Grammy Awards and charting 14 number-one singles. They are touring for one last time in 2010 and will be at the Chumash Casino in Santa Ynez. (chumashcasino.com)

December 21–24: Join Cabrillo Music Theatre for an evening of family entertainment at the **CABRILLO HOLIDAY SPECTACULAR**. The performance at the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza features rousing holiday musical arrangements played by Cabrillo Music Theatre's orchestra, plus a chorus line of 14 high-kicking dancers. (toaks.org/cap)

JANUARY

January 14: Heralded as "the next *Riverdance*" by *The Sunday Times* of London, the international troupe Bellydance Superstars presents **BOMBAY BELLYWOOD** at the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. The performance features 16 top professional dancers in spectacular costumes who combine the art of belly dance with other styles (including Indian and ballet) backed by master percussionist Issam Houshan. (toaks.org/cap)

January 20: **THE PEKING ACROBATS** bring their 2,000-year-old feats of physical artistry to The Granada in Santa Barbara. These incredible athletes seemingly defy the laws of physics. (granadasb.org)

January 22: The Center for the Arts at Pepperdine University presents jazz, pop, and R&B singing legend **AL JARREAU**. With five Grammy Awards, Jarreau has a vocal style that is truly unique. (arts.pepperdine.edu)

January 22–23: The Santa Barbara Symphony presents its first collaboration with Santa Barbara's preeminent ballet company, State Street Ballet, to perform Aaron Copland's **APPALACHIAN SPRING**. The program also features Stravinsky's playful *Pulcinella* suite and Schubert's *Symphony No. 5*. (thesymphony.org)

January 27–February 6: As one of the more star-studded U.S. film festivals, the **SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL** returns for its 26th year. In addition to an array of screenings at The Arlington Theatre, there are celebrity seminars and panels open to the public. (sbfilmfestival.org)

February 28: **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT** comes to the Performing Arts Center San Luis Obispo. Based on the uproarious film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, this musical follows King Arthur and his knights of Camelot on their search for the Holy Grail. (calpolyarts.org)

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NOVEMBER

Through December 31: The Art Gallery at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village is the site of a new art exhibit, **CANVAS TO A CURE**. Showcasing female artists and sculptors, these works are available for sale. Proceeds benefit The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura. (fourseasons.com/westlakevillage)

November 14: Sunrise Assisted Living of Westlake Village hosts its annual **CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY** to remember and honor those affected with Alzheimer's disease and to recognize November as National Alzheimer's Awareness Month. Paintings by Sunrise Assisted Living residents will be available for silent auction at the event and through the end of November. Proceeds benefit scholarships for students entering Cal State University Channel Island's Alzheimer's Research Institute Program. (sunrisewlv.com)

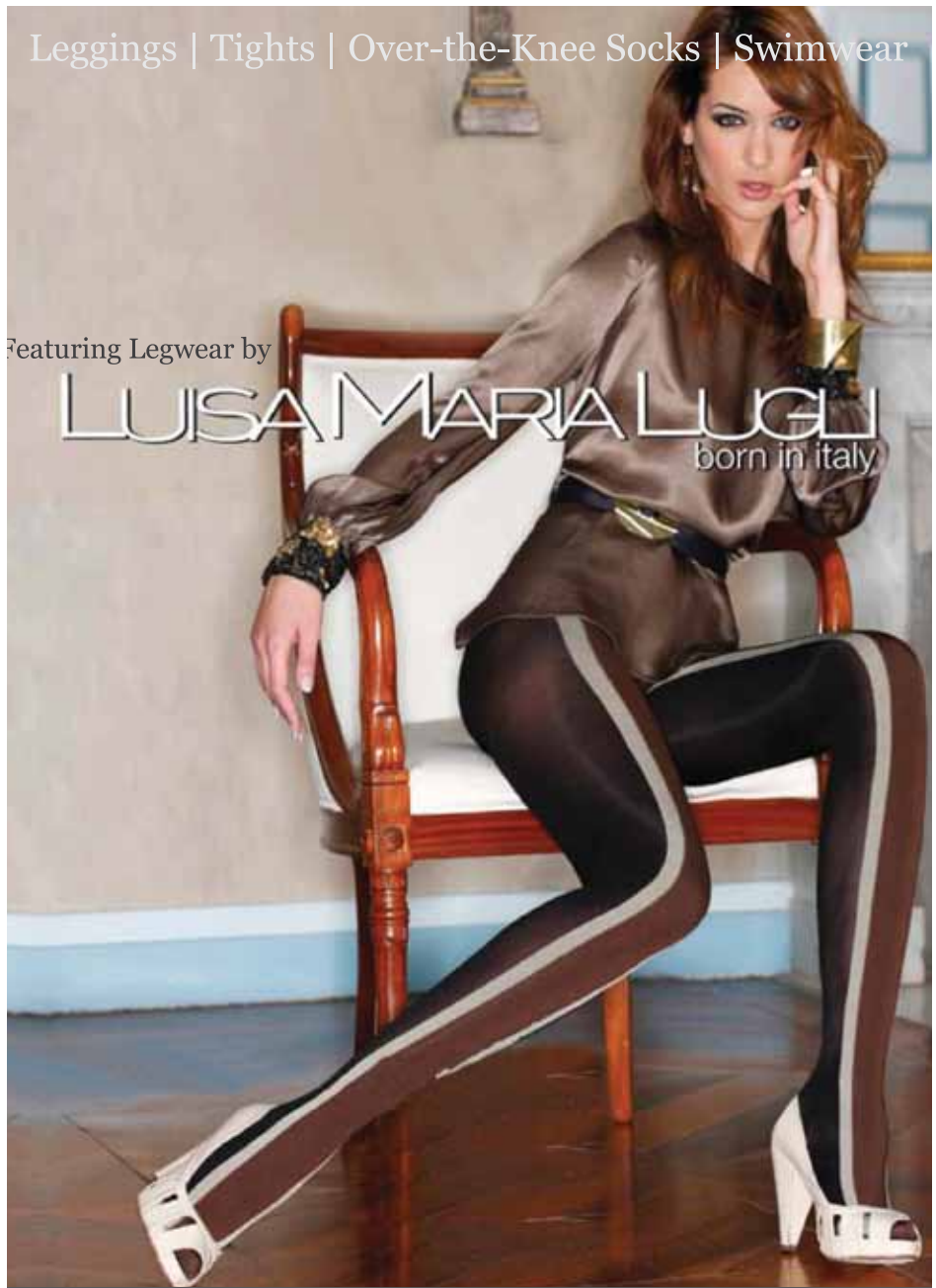
November 19: Veteran comedian **TOM DREESEN** performs at the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. As Frank Sinatra's opening act for 13 years, Dreesen's show revolves around his memories of Sinatra and his time on the road. Proceeds from this event benefit the Alliance for the Arts, the nonprofit foundation supporting the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. (allianceforthearts.org)



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DECEMBER

December 3: The Camarillo Ranch Foundation celebrates its **10TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY CANDLELIGHT GALA**. The Queen Anne Victorian Camarillo Ranch house was built in 1892 and is ornately decorated for the holiday season. There are historical exhibits, tours, and food. (camarilloranch.org)

December 4-5: The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura, which provides free support and education to cancer victims and their families, holds its annual **HOLIDAY HOMES TOUR**. Several homes along this self-guided tour in the Westlake Village area will be decorated for the holidays and will feature refreshments and music. There will also be a boutique at the North Ranch Center in Westlake Village selling gifts and decorations. (twcvv.org)

December 5: Meadowlark Service League presents **HOMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS**. Tour a variety of homes in Camarillo; proceeds benefit more than 30 charitable organizations and programs providing services to the needy in Camarillo and greater Ventura County. (meadowlarkserviceleague.com)

December 9: Senior Concerns hosts its **NUTCRACKER TEA** at University Village in Thousand Oaks and features a performance from the Pacific Festival Ballet. There will be themed tea tables and a wreath raffle; all proceeds benefit Senior Concerns' programs and services. (seniorconcerns.org)

December 19: The Miller Family YMCA, located in the Dos Vientos neighborhood of Newbury Park, hosts its **JINGLE BELL 5K RUN**. There will also be a 1K fun run/walk. Proceeds benefit the Miller Family YMCA 2010 Strong Kids Campaign. (sevmca.org)

JANUARY

January 19: The Los Angeles Art Show (laartshow.com) kicks off its five-day event with a **VERNISSAGE AND CHARITY BENEFIT** (pre-view showing) at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Proceeds benefit The Art of Elysium, a nonprofit group dedicated to bringing actors, artists, and musicians together with children who suffer from serious medical conditions. (theartofelysium.org)

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FEBRUARY

February 19: Community Conscience "Under One Roof" human services center holds its annual **MARDI GRAS BALL** at the Hyatt Westlake Plaza in Westlake Village. The event includes champagne and hors d'oeuvres, gourmet dinner with wine, silent and live auctions, live entertainment, and dancing. Community Conscience grants nonprofit groups in the greater Conejo Valley rent-free administrative offices. (communityconscience.org)

February 26: Casa Pacifica's **ANGELS BALL** takes place at Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks with cocktails, dinner, dancing, and a live auction. Proceeds benefit programs supporting neglected and emotionally disturbed children in the tri-counties area. (casapacifica.org)

MARCH

March 4-5: **FASHION WEEK VENTURA** brings together local artists, entertainers, designers, and merchants in support of AIDS Project Ventura. Held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the theme of the event is "Faerie Tales." (fashionweekventura.com)

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Mind/Body/Soul

By Maryann Hammers



OH, W.O.W.!

Local nonprofit offers holistic help to those who need it most.

LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER ANIA DUENSING heads up Women of Wellness (W.O.W.), a new nonprofit that helps local low-income women obtain wellness, self-care, fitness, and nutrition services. She discusses the organization's goals and achievements—and suggests how you can help—in this interview with *805 Living*.



805 Living: *Tell us a little about Women of Wellness—what your organization does and why.*

Ania Duensing: W.O.W. Inc. (womenofwellnessinc.org) is a registered nonprofit organization with the goal of empowering low-income, underserved women to live a balanced and joyful lifestyle. The government or agencies may provide aid that addresses the basic requirements for existence, such as food and shelter. But the women's other needs—for emotional support and social connection, for leisure and relaxation, for spirituality, self-care, and self-nurturing—go

unmet. There is no opportunity for them to learn, grow, and make a better, balanced life for themselves.

The women who most desperately need holistic health and wellness services are those who can least afford them. That is the obstacle that we are dedicated to overcoming.

So we pick up where other programs and agencies leave off. To our knowledge, we are the first nonprofit organization in the United States, or certainly in California, that specifically addresses the holistic health of women who are struggling.

Women of Wellness Supporters

From martial arts experts to doctors, local health and fitness experts have rallied to support Women of Wellness, offering an array of mind, body, and soul services to underserved, low-income women. Here are some recent donors:

Tae kwon do black belt instructor **Hope Zweig** (805-636-1596) offers classes for women to learn self-confidence, balance, and empowerment.

Teri Coffee McDuffie, owner and master instructor at Santa Barbara Women's Self-Defense (sbwselfdefense.com), donates women's self-defense classes and helps raise money to support W.O.W.

Doug Holt, owner of Conditioning Specialists (conditioningspecialists.com), a personal training studio in Santa Barbara, donates personal training sessions.

Amy Hazard, a licensed acupuncturist with the Santa Barbara Health & Healing Center (sbwellnessdirectory.com/hazard.htm), donates acupuncture sessions to help relieve stress and balance energy and emotions.

Dr. Allison Mayer-Oakes, a Santa Barbara internist who specializes in preventive and anti-aging medicine (805-682-9232), conducts mindfulness meditation workshops to help prevent depression.

How did Women of Wellness come about?

My heart goes out to women who have no place to turn and are in need of emotional support. I wanted to make this my life's work—supporting women who struggle and helping them on a spiritual level.

W.O.W. started coming together in March 2010. We formed our board of directors and became a legal nonprofit in August 2010. Our board consists of doctors, holistic practitioners, licensed service providers, community leaders, and people who have a passion for health and wellness. My own company, The Elite Concierge (eliteconcierge.biz), contributes money, donates office facilities, office supplies, and staff.

How do you reach the women you serve, and who qualifies for assistance from W.O.W.?

Women in Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties are referred to us by recovery homes, domestic abuse shelters, transitional housing programs, and community counseling centers. They also find us by word of mouth and through the Internet. Single mothers, women in recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction, victims of domestic violence, and other women trapped in the cycle of poverty qualify for our services. Women are also eligible if they likewise qualify for Medi-Cal or MIA [Medically Indigent Adult].

Why do you serve only women? Why not, say, call it People of Wellness/P.O.W.?

Women experience certain kinds of stress more commonly than men, such as the stress resulting from multiple and conflicting roles at home and at work, from working in low-paid and low-status occupations, and from being the primary caretaker of children, often as a single parent, and of caring for ill and aging family members.

What has been the reaction from the community?

We reached out by phone, email, Internet, Facebook, print advertising, and to personal and business connections that might have something to offer W.O.W. The immediate, positive response was astonishing. Though we are still in the early stages of development, we are proud of the many different people throughout our community who have offered services, support, and contributions.

How can 805 Living readers or local businesses get involved? What are your greatest needs?

Community members who work in the wellness field and are willing to provide a class for free or at discounted rates to our clients are encouraged to contact us. They can help by volunteering time, making a contribution however great or small, and by spreading the word about W.O.W. We need cash and non-cash assistance, in-kind contributions, or loan of facilities, personnel, products and services, or technical assistance. We are especially interested in offering one-on-one sessions, workshops, and seminars on exercise and relaxation, nutrition, cooking, self-care, and financial planning for women who otherwise could not afford these services. ■

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This page: A stint teaching art at juvenile hall in Oxnard gave Ojai artist Teal Rowe the idea to create a community arts program for at-risk youth. **Opposite page:** A sample of the artistry that springs from Rowe's program: *Names* by Angel Garcia; tempera on paper.

ART THAT GIVES BACK

Troubled teens learn to use their creative talents for pursuits other than graffiti.



MULTITALENTED OJAI ARTIST Teal Rowe—a painter, silversmith, and trained glassblower—has been giving back to the community in the way she knows best: through her art.

With the help of a \$3,769 grant from Ventura's "Artists in Community Partnerships" program, she teamed with Oxnard community activist Armando Lopez to provide art classes for at-risk young people.

On Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons at Oxnard's Downtown Center for the Arts, Rowe's classes reflect her belief that creativity and artistic expression can help turn a person's life around. In sessions averaging a dozen students, the youths are given paint, paper, and brushes—and free rein.

"We're not teaching them how to draw or paint," she explains. "We're giving them the time, space, and materials to express themselves. We like them to come up with their own ideas. It's painting from your heart. There's an element of passion when you don't have to be right or follow instructions."

Many of the results were exhibited at the Downtown Center for the Arts on September 11. Echoing the spirit of giving back, which brought them to this point, the young artists agreed that 10 percent of sales would go to the center and 10 percent to the Ventura County Arts Council.

Rowe hatched the idea more than a year ago when teaching art at juvenile hall in Oxnard. When the kids were released she was excited, thinking they were going to be free and fine, but a few months later they would be back in juvie. Her solution was to offer the same arts opportunities on the outside, working with kids on probation to



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help prevent them from getting into more serious trouble. She believes that meeting working artists and seeing their lifestyles, as well as having a show to work toward, helps students stay on track.

Many have been caught painting graffiti, which Rowe sees as a sign that some are already “incredibly artistic.” She hopes to make them realize they can still enjoy freedom of expression, just not on someone else’s property.

Rowe says it’s great that the youths committed to the classes and “had the guts to do this.” While she admits the outcomes and rewards from this program are very subtle, she believes art is a huge equalizing factor: “Who knows who’s being touched by this?”

She also wants to open young minds to wider possibilities, perhaps even a career in art. Rowe is one of eight professional artists, working across various disciplines (see sidebar), who was awarded “Artists in Community Partnerships” grants under a program launched by the Ventura County Arts Council two years ago as part of its ArtsLIVE initiative. Almost \$31,000 was distributed to help local artists partner with Ventura County agencies and organizations to address key community issues like homelessness and pet adoptions.

The initiative has had such an impact that it continues thanks to support from Oxnard City Council’s graffiti task force, the probation department, Downtown Center for the Arts, and El Consilio, which provides education, youth leadership, and immigration services to Oxnard’s Latino community.

Artists in Community Partnerships

The seven other successful artists and their projects.

Richard Amend partnered with Ojai Valley Community Hospital Foundation to curate and preserve its collection of local art, which the hospital buys to brighten and enrich its environment.

Michael Arndt partnered with the Military Order of the World Wars and the Military Order of the Purple Heart to create a theater piece based on interviews with veterans from World War II through the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dianne Bennett partnered with Ojai Land Conservancy and the Los Padres Sierra Club to create paintings of flora and fauna. Prints of the paintings raise money to maintain these naturally beautiful sites (beforeourveryeyes.com).

Joseph Casteñada partnered with El Centrito Family Learning Centers and Barbara Webster Preschool in Santa Paula to raise family literacy levels through storytelling and parenting workshops.

Toni Jannotta partnered with Project Understanding to produce a dynamic performance piece in which members of the homeless community recite their personal stories, songs, or poems accompanied by jazz improvisations.

Tesi Sanchez-Halpert partnered with Ventura County Animal Services and Animal Regulation Volunteer Auxiliary to add whimsical animal sculptures to the Camarillo animal shelter in an effort to encourage pet adoptions.

Andrea Vargas-Mendoza partnered with the Santa Paula Child Development Center to create a “Learning Wall” mural to help preschool children from low-income migrant families improve their literacy skills. ■

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UNITING TO BUILD STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Realtors Association celebrates merger and charity.

THE EVENT: Each year the Conejo Valley Association of Realtors holds its Sizzling Sunset Social, a mixer and fundraiser. This year's event took place on August 5 at the Westlake Yacht Club and was doubly special because it celebrated the merger with the Simi Valley-Moorpark Association. The Conejo Simi Moorpark Association of Realtors (CSMAOR; csmaor.com) welcomed guests to a catered dinner, silent auction, boat tours on the lake, raffle prizes, and dancing.

THE CAUSE: The new CSMAOR's Public Benefit Foundation supports local organizations through its Community Conscience program, and awards scholarships to college-bound students. Most recently the foundation donated \$5,500 plus \$400 worth of food to Care & Share Emergency Food Bank of Simi Valley. Other local charities that receive support include MANNA, Many Mansions, Military Family Support Fund, Moorpark Food Pantry, and The Wellness Community. ■



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Terri Arias, Terry Moerler



Kathryn Laub, Roberta Edwards



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Good Deeds

By Mark Langton Photographs by Judi Bumstead



Alison Kantor, Tracy Berkus, Megan McWilliams



Paula Rosencrantz, Georganne Youmans, Gail Boskovich



Donna Follima, Toni Curcio



Jill Kinder, Lindy Chrysiliou



Bernadette Geckle, Laura Goldberg

FALL FASHION GIVES BACK

Madison Westlake Village opens its doors to benefit Childrens Hospital Los Angeles.

THE EVENT: In conjunction with *805 Living*, Madison opened its boutique at the Promenade at Westlake for a special night of shopping with **CELEBRATE FALL FASHION**. The open house featured a designer trunk show and included the season's hottest fashion trends from White + Warren, Tkees, and Twelfth Street by Cynthia Vincent. Food and desserts were provided by Blue Table and Cupcakery Cupcake Bakery & Boutique; Malibu Family Wines poured several varieties.

THE CAUSE: Twenty percent of the evening's proceeds were donated to the Centennial Guild of Childrens Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA). The Centennial Guild was formed by volunteers from the west San Fernando and Conejo valleys to serve and perform charitable fundraising events to benefit the patients of CHLA. Thousands of children from the Conejo Valley and surrounding areas have been treated at CHLA. (centennialguildchla.webs.com) ■



Dana Bloom, Derek Baugh, Tamara Gold, Lily Rosenberg



Angela Jenkins



Tracy Kleinick, Judy Kerner



Gina Lisi



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REUSE, RECYCLE, REDECORATE

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Buying something new for the home inherently means that something else has to go—and often the only place for that wildly patterned sofa from the eighties is the landfill. It *is* possible to update a home while keeping the environment in mind, however, by using materials (gorgeous ones, natch) made of recycled or reclaimed elements and by supporting businesses that follow sustainable, ethical manufacturing practices.

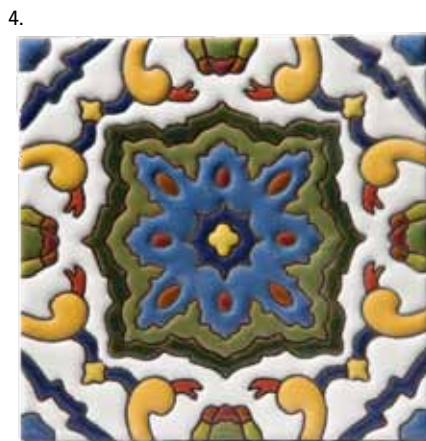
1. The **WINE BARREL 8-CANDLE CHANDELIER** (\$3,600) from BoBo Intriguing Objects uses reclaimed wood from French oak wine barrel staves; Upstairs at Pierre Lafond, Santa Barbara, upstairsatpierrelafond.com; or William Laman, Montecito, williamlaman.com.

2. The reclaimed wood of the **FAGAN FOLDING TABLE** (\$530) from Dovetail looks good up or down; Pure Life and Home, Ventura; or Vintage Villa, Westlake Village, vintagevillahomecollection.com.

3. Add more light without increasing energy bills with Solatube's **BRIGHTEN UP SERIES SKYLIGHT** (from \$300; installation extra). The innovative design funnels light from the roof; optional diffusers, lenses, trim, and dimmers make it look like a light instead of a window to the sky. Buy before December 31 to receive a federal tax credit of up to 30 percent; Agoura Sash and Door, Westlake Village, agourasashanddoor.com.

4. Fireclay Tile's **DEBRIS SERIES** tiles and glazes are available in 112 colors and are made from more than 62 percent locally sourced recycled materials: baghouse dust collected from local glass recyclers, granite dust from a nearby quarry, and used abrasives from the cleaning of San Francisco water pipes. In addition, the factory recycles most wastewater and glazes and uses natural daylight for illumination.

Shown: **4x4 SAN SEBASTIEN TILE** in "Mediterranean" (\$24 per piece); NS Ceramic, Santa Barbara, nsceramic.com; or Ecologic Life, Ventura, ecologiclife.com.



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5. Since it's handcrafted from reclaimed pine, there may be flaws and cracks in the **HAZEL CHEST** (\$1,699), but that just adds to its character; neimanmarcus.com.

6. The brightly colored seat of the **NICO STOOL** (\$400) from Made Goods is woven from vintage saris; William Laman, Montecito, williamlaman.com.

7. Stone Forest makes all its kitchen, bath, and garden products by hand using all-natural materials. The company minimizes the use of machines and chemicals in the manufacturing process to ensure no harmful emissions are released into the atmosphere. The **MADERA PEDESTAL** (\$590; \$1,740 as shown with granite countertop and **NATURAL VESSEL SINK**) uses pine or fir salvaged from forest fires in the Southwest; Vic's Plumbing Supply, Ventura, vicssupply.com; or stoneforest.com.

8. Oly's **AMBER SCONCE** (\$350) uses reclaimed mirrors and an antiqued gold finish to brighten up a room with glowing candlelight; Cabana Home, Santa Barbara, cabanahome.com; or Maison K, Montecito, maisonkinc.com.



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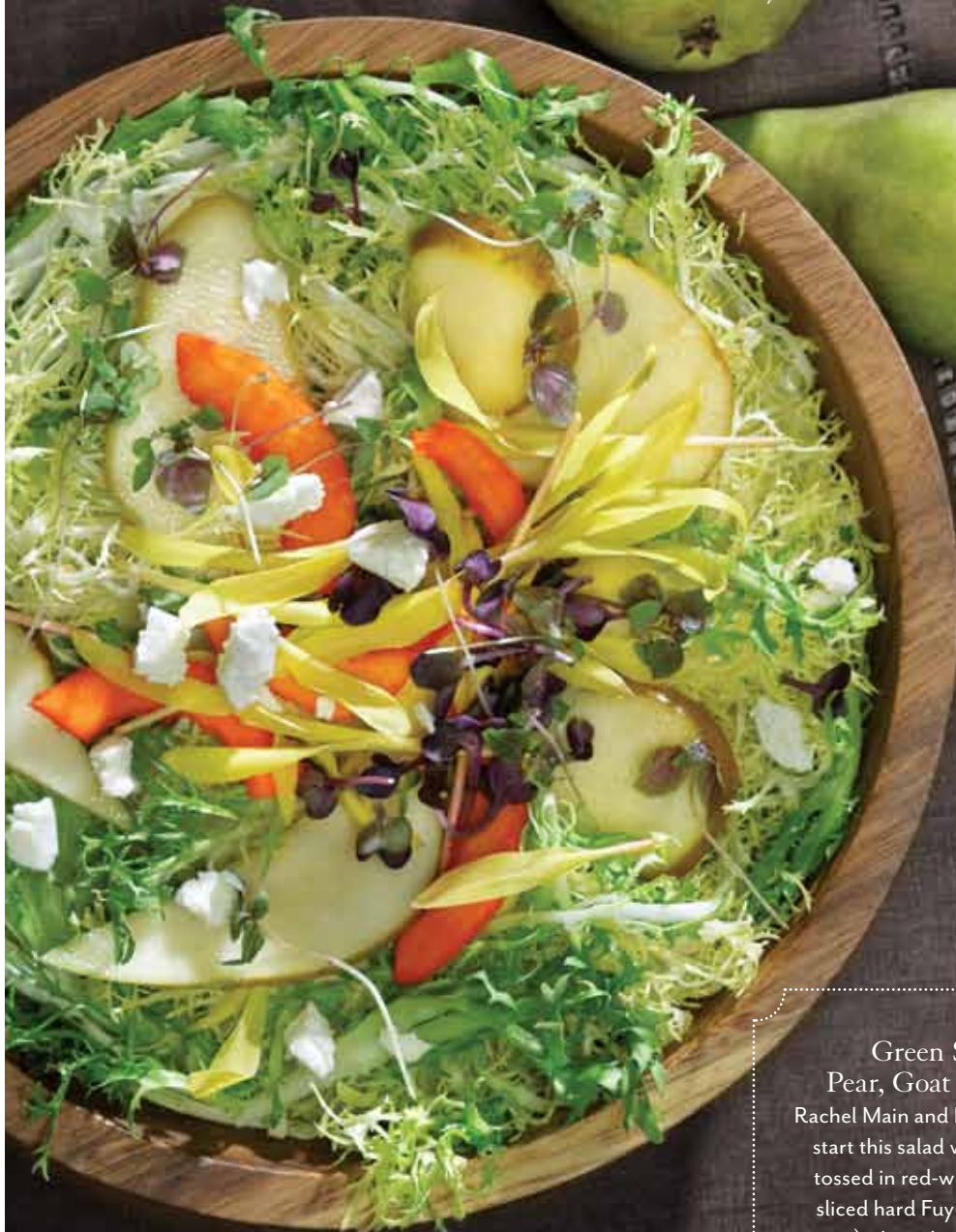
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By ANGELA PETTERA *Photographs By* GARY MOSS



Green Salad with Persimmon, Pear, Goat Cheese, and Candied Nuts
Rachel Main and Nadia Licea of Main Course California start this salad with a bed of frisée and micro greens tossed in red-wine vinaigrette. Then they add thinly sliced hard Fuyu persimmons (not the soft Hachiya variety), shaved pears macerated in a bit of orange juice, crumbled goat cheese, and candied nuts (not shown).



Kumquat-Cranberry Sauce

The addition of kumquats to this chunky, cooked cranberry relish by Alberto Vazquez of Mediterraneo brings a new twist to an old favorite.

American tradition is a funny thing. We love to honor occasions and mark annual holidays, usually with a meal, but we also love to mix things up every year. And so it goes with Thanksgiving dinner. We wouldn't dream of leaving out the turkey, even though it's often prepared the same way each year. But the side dishes are fair game for fun and experimentation. For creative versions of the turkey's supporting cast, we looked to local chefs for ideas.

Rachel Main and Nadia Licea of Ventura's **Main Course California** bistro and catering company (maincourseca.com) prepare an elegant salad (shown opposite) as part of its holiday catering menu (the small serves 10 to 12 for \$40, large serves 20 to 25 for \$65). Orders require a three-day notice.



Alberto Vazquez, the chef of **Mediterraneo** at the Westlake Village Inn (westlakevillageinn.com), jazzes up his cranberry relish recipe with kumquats (see previous page). He'll be serving it on the Westlake Village Inn Thanksgiving buffet from noon to 4 p.m. in the hotel's Provence Room. The price is \$48 for adults, \$18 for children 10 and under, free for children under 2.

Andy Brooks, chef and owner of **Brooks** in Ventura (restaurantbrooks.com), offers a garnet yam puree with caramelized onions and applewood-smoked bacon each year. It's hugely popular on his take-out Thanksgiving menu; items can be picked up on Wednesday, November 24. The puree comes in small (serves 6 to 8, \$17) or large (serves 10 to 12, \$21) and must be ordered by November 12.

James Sly of **Sly's** in Carpinteria (slyonline.com) disclosed the secret to his intense turkey gravy: brown roux. His Thanksgiving dinner to go includes this gravy, a free-range Diestel Farms turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, brussels sprouts, and apple crisp for \$200. The restaurant and bar are open for cocktails and pickup only on Thanksgiving Day from 1 to 5 p.m.

Alessandro Cartumini at **Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara** (fourseasons.com/santabarbara/dining.html) serves a Thanksgiving buffet and plated four-course meal with a wide range of choices from traditional to unusual. His recipe for *cipolini agrodolce*, an Italian version of sweet-and-sour onions, goes wonderfully with the nontraditional almond-rosemary-crust halibut and grilled gem lettuce for turkey-phobic folks.

Tierra Sur in Oxnard's Herzog Wine Cellars (tierrasurherzog.com) serves Thanksgiving dinner from noon to 5 p.m. Executive chef Todd Aarons' recipes* for Corn Custard Bread Pudding, which is a new take on stuffing, and Garlic-Roasted Chinese Long Beans are featured.

*Full recipes are available online at 805living.com.

Garnet Yam Puree with Caramelized Onions and Applewood-Smoked Bacon

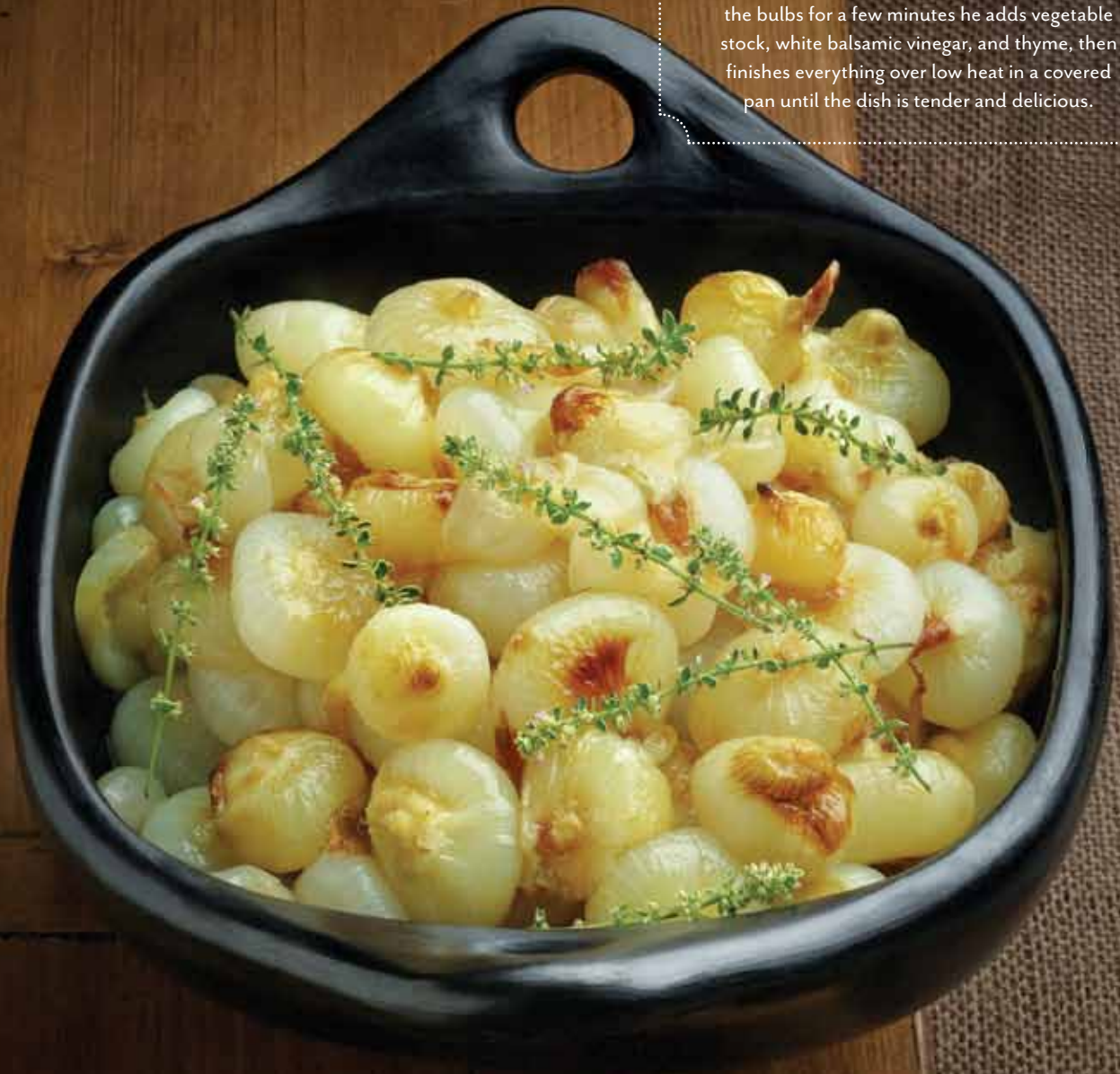
Baked, mashed yams are prepared with onions (caramelized for 8 to 10 minutes) and crisped applewood-smoked bacon in this side dish from Andy Brooks of Brooks in Ventura.

Brown Roux Turkey Gravy

James Sly uses a ton of turkey stock along with giblets, white wine, and shallots in his rich, intense turkey gravy. He browns the roux for added complexity and lets the whole thing simmer overnight.

Cipollini Agrodolce

Cipollini aren't technically onions (they're grape hyacinth bulbs), but they act like mellow versions of them. Chef Alessandro Cartumini of Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara first cooks butter with brown sugar before adding the cipollini, either whole or cut into thirds. After braising the bulbs for a few minutes he adds vegetable stock, white balsamic vinegar, and thyme, then finishes everything over low heat in a covered pan until the dish is tender and delicious.



Corn Custard Bread Pudding

Todd Aarons of Tierra Sur uses toasted challah as a base for savory bread pudding. He purees some of the corn kernels and roasts others for a two-corn punch. A custard base binds the bread and corn with leeks and fresh herbs including sage. The bread pudding can be baked in one large dish or in individual ramekins.





Garlic-Roasted Chinese Long Beans

Chinese long beans are easily found in Asian markets, but this recipe works just as well with French green beans or Blue Lake beans. Todd Aarons blanches the beans and then grills or sautés them with a combination of regular white garlic cloves and black garlic (a fermented food that tastes almost like dried fruit) to achieve more depth of flavor. Roasted garlic and a bit of vinegar can stand in for the black garlic. ■

For more great Thanksgiving dinners from restaurants, check our dining blog at blog.805living.com.



805
LIVING
Presents

QUESTIONS
FOR LOCAL

PHILANTHROPISTS

20 Questions is a virtual roundtable discussion connecting the people who make our various communities one big special place. The premise is simple: A few times a year, 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 **Lynne Andujar and Anthony Head**
Photographs by **Gary Moss**

THE PHILANTHROPISTS:
(clockwise from right) Janeen Holmes, Thomas
Rollerson, Lois Mitchell, Javier LaFianza.



This month, we continue the conversation with four men and women who are making a philanthropic impact on the lives of others. Read on for their 20 questions and their 20 answers.

Lois Mitchell
President, Orfalea Foundations
Santa Barbara
orfaleafoundations.org

Orfalea Foundations invests in sustainable solutions through collaborative initiatives and entrepreneurial partnerships. As president, Lois Mitchell directs the overall planning, management, and marketing strategies of the various initiatives. Her questions were asked by **Javier LaFianza**.



1. How did you select the initiatives to support?

The idea for each initiative originates from our founders Natalie and Paul Orfalea's core values and observations of societal needs and opportunities. Our current initiatives include: s'Cool Food, Outdoor Classroom, CA Explore (HS Youth), Aware & Prepare—Strengthening Emergency & Disaster Readiness for Santa Barbara County.

2. What are the most effective strategies for bringing together diverse community stakeholders for a common goal or project, and how are those efforts sustained?

We use different strategies depending on the program components, but in general it requires getting all the stakeholders together and identifying how to collectively work toward an agreed objective. In the case of our s'Cool Food Initiative, we show schools how to better use commodity dollars to cook from-scratch meals using fresh local produce. Ultimately, the students, parents, and educators embrace these practices, which flourish and endure within each unique campus culture.

3. How has entrepreneurship impacted the social and nonprofit sector?

Taking an entrepreneurial approach to solving community problems differs greatly from the traditional gifting to beloved charities. We approach societal issues that government and nongovernmental organizations are striving to figure out by investing our funds, time, and talent.

4. How do you apply your marketing experience to the Foundations' work?

Many times, the lens I view through is public perception. Will proposed outcomes resonate with those in need? How will an educational message be heard and received? Could an action strengthen and empower leadership?

5. What decision led you to working in philanthropy, and how do you balance your professional and personal lives?

Although my path into this sector was unintentional, I feel all my diverse business experience contributes immensely. My professional and personal lives crisscross because I am so passionate about my family, as well as this work. My husband Mark's calmness balances my intensity!

Javier LaFianza

President/CEO, Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership
Westlake Village
hoby.org

As president and CEO of Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY), Javier LaFianza helps develop leadership-training, service-learning, and motivation-building programs for high school students. His questions were asked by **Janeen Holmes**.

6. Who or what first sparked in you a call to service and leadership?

As a child, I was fascinated by American history and was especially interested in Washington and Jefferson, Civil War leaders such as Lincoln, Grant, and Lee, as well as Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. These stories of selflessness, courage, and sacrifice inspired me to want to be involved in something bigger than myself.

7. You've helped to inspire leadership in many students. How have they inspired you in return?

I have met so many HOBY ambassadors who are literally changing the world one day at a time, one project at a time. These are young people who believe in the power of their dreams and who understand their potential to make an impact right now. Their spark of enthusiasm, belief in themselves, and determination to do something positive in the world is truly amazing, inspiring, and quite contagious.

8. What one overarching message do you want to impart to all HOBY participants?

Our society often dismisses youth as being too inexperienced, too irresponsible, or whatever. HOBY teaches that through community service, innovative ideas, and the unbridled enthusiasm that is inherent in youth, they can be powerful and effective leaders with the opportunity and responsibility to make a difference in the lives of others right away.



9. How have you dealt with the challenge of fundraising during the economic downturn?

Fundraising remains a challenge for HOBY, as it does for most nonprofits. Fortunately, several years ago HOBY began a deliberate strategy to reduce expenses and operate as lean and efficiently as we possibly could. As a result of our efforts and focus, HOBY has reduced expenses by nearly 20 percent over the last few years. At the same time, student participation in our programs has remained steady or even grown.

10. Given the long hours worked by most nonprofit directors, what's your favorite way to unwind and recharge?

I love spending time with my wife, Anne; daughter, Mariana; and son, Joshua. We especially enjoy going to the beach, watching *The Amazing Race*, playing board games, and even just sitting and reading together. We love this community and try to be an active part in making it such a great place to live and work.

Janeen Holmes
President/CEO, My Stuff Bags Foundation
Westlake Village
mystuffbags.org

Janeen Holmes helped start My Stuff Bags to assist the more than 300,000 abused, abandoned, and neglected children in this country who enter crisis and foster care each year without personal belongings. The foundation gives kids cuddly, lovable keepsakes—in addition to clothing, school supplies, and toiletries—to ease their transition and assure them that they are cared for. Her questions were asked by **Thomas Rollerson.**



11. Looking back to your youth, is there a personal item of yours that gave you a special sense of security?

I was the big sister in a family of seven children and spent a lot of my youth taking care of little ones and helping with housework. I treasured the moments I could spend alone, lost in a book, often hiding under my bed covers! Books gave me a sense of security because they showed me all the people I could be, all the places I could live, all the love I could experience.

12. When you face the tough obstacles inherent in running a successful nonprofit, who or what inspires you to push through?

I draw my inspiration from the many wonderful people who contribute to the My Stuff Bags Foundation. We have thousands of people across the United States making blankets [and] collecting coloring books and crayons, new stuffed animals, toys, and other essential items and sending them to us for the children.

13. If you were not working for your existing organization, where would you be working?

One of the hard parts of my job is having to ask for funding. It would be exciting to be on the other side of that process. Rather than being the one who asks for a grant, I could be the one who works for a grant-maker and recommends worthy organizations for funding.

14. What has been a particularly poignant moment in your career?

Just this year, I was introduced to a young man, Erroll, who spent several years in foster care and is now in college. He received a My Stuff Bag when he was 14 and he's held onto it all these years because, he said, it gave him encouragement and hope at a time when he thought nobody cared. We asked Erroll to stuff our 400,000th My Stuff Bag. He was grinning proudly all the way; my heart was full.

15. What is your dream?

Many people feel pretty helpless about the problem of child abuse and neglect. I think this is a solvable problem for a bountiful country like ours. My dream is to get enough people involved so that we can give each of the more than 300,000 children entering foster care each year the new belongings—and new hope—they so desperately need and deserve.

Thomas Rollerson
Founder/President, Dream Foundation
dreamfoundation.org

As the first and largest wish organization for adults, the Dream Foundation enhances the quality of life for adults (and their families) who are battling life-threatening illness. As the founder and president, Thomas Rollerson has helped the foundation fulfill 10,000 dream requests nationwide. His questions were asked by **Lois Mitchell.**

16. Can you recount one of the most poignant dreams fulfilled by your foundation?

It's my most frequently asked question, and 16 years later I don't have an answer because every one is poignant. Each dream is as different as the individual's heart that holds it. When you see that glint in someone's eye, when someone's joy has shined through and—for that moment—they are their true joyful self again, it's beyond poignant. I always think, "This is the most incredible moment I've lived," and then it happens again with another dreamer.

17. What is the proudest moment of your career?

I'm proud when a dreamer thanks us. I'm proud when people meet our staff. I think my proudest moment *will* be if we ever achieve consistent funding for our organization, so we can focus solely on the families we serve and not have to worry about raising money. I'll be proud if we can build our endowment to ensure that no dying adult will have to be denied a final heart's wish.

18. It must be constantly humbling to experience the strength of families anticipating a loved one's death, so how do you maintain a daily balanced attitude?

My partner and my two beautiful dogs, my nephews and nieces, friends and family all help me find balance. On some of my "days off" (not sure there is such a thing in the nonprofit world) I find "balance" by delivering flowers to Cottage Hospital as part of our Flower Empower program. There, I'm not the "founder" or "president," I'm just a member of the community that cares.

19. What's the impression you most want the public to have of your organization?

That *every* gift counts. Sometimes I hear, "You've become so big that my gift won't help," but our reality and our pride is that our budget is small while our programs and services are big. We need those gifts. The small donations are what sustain our families' dreams when the bigger funding doesn't come through. Besides, it's where the gift comes from that's big to me. It's the *intention*.

20. Which celebrity has left you starstruck and why?

I've witnessed many "meet and greets," but there are some that stand out because of the generosity of time and the generosity of love and authenticity that a celebrity gave. When someone discloses [his/her] own vulnerabilities to comfort the vulnerability of our dream recipient, that rocks. That's when I get starstruck, when I see two souls connecting. Truthfully, I'm starstruck by our dreamers. The smiles and courage they share amidst such profound adversity—they are our true celebrities. ■



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Maureen Alphonso



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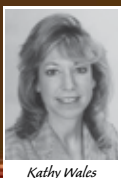
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Homes for the Holidays
Sunday, Dec. 5th 1-5pm

Rosemary Allison is one of the sponsors of this event and her home is one of the decorated homes on the tour. In addition to her home, the league has an amazing selection of homes.

Approximately 80% of all event proceeds and 100% of all sponsorship funds go directly to charity. Live instrumental and vocal entertainment adds to the overall fun-filled atmosphere. The Homes are beautifully decorated and showcase architecture and design elements. At one of the locations there is a Holiday Boutique including art, home and personal items, and more.

Tickets are available at the following stores, please feel free to stop in and thank them for their participation this year:

- Bank of America - 5800 Santa Rosa Rd., Camarillo • Citron Garden - 2245 Ventura Blvd., Camarillo
- Decor Store - 3900 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., T. O. Home Furniture - 2590 Las Posas Rd., Camarillo
- Rabo Bank - 470 Arncill Rd., Camarillo • TLC Housewares - 369 East Main street, Ventura
- Decor Store - 41 Moreland Rd., Simi Valley • Las Posas Emporium - 528 Las Posas Rd., Camarillo

The Meadowlark Service League ("MSL") is a non-profit organization of women dedicated to raising funds for a variety of local charitable organizations and programs that provide services to meet the needs of Camarillo and the greater Ventura County.



CA DRE # 00545184

LOVE SOUP

A warm new cookbook from Ojai author Anna Thomas shares the love.



ANNA THOMAS wrote *The Vegetarian Epicure* as a student at UCLA in the 1970s, elevating vegetarian food to gourmet status and enchanting home cooks with her chatty, personal approach to making fantastic fare that just happens to be meatless. Three decades later, with her sons away at college, the Ojai resident found herself downsizing out of the big family home—and its expansive kitchen. Awaiting the completion of some renovations to her new house, Thomas set up camp in an adjoining one-room artist's studio, and installed a modest 81-inch-wide Ikea kitchen intended to get her through what she thought would be a few months. When construction stretched out for years instead of months, Thomas found her style of cooking adapting to the “wee kitchen,” as she calls it, forcing her to think about what was essential.

“I didn’t want to stop cooking, stop eating well, stop having my friends over,” she says. “I found more and more that I was cooking soup: I was living the soup life, leaning on it as the central thing that would keep me going, making it possible to live in that space.”

The result of her three years spent entertaining with one-pot meals—in her one-room studio—is an inviting collection of

soup recipes, including some breads, salads, and sweets to round out the meal. Thomas’ *Love Soup* (Norton, 2009; www.norton.com) went on to win a coveted James Beard Award earlier this year in the “Healthy Focus” category—although the fact that her recipes are healthful wasn’t ever her focus.

“The way I cook now is inherently healthy,” says Thomas. “I use a lot of produce, and not nearly as much dairy as I used to.” In fact, when she took the time to analyze her own recipes before publishing, she realized that many of her soups weren’t only vegetarian but vegan as well. “It’s a good thing in terms of sustainability and health, and it’s a really good thing in terms of flavor. It made me realize how my cooking has shifted over the years,” she says.

While plenty of friends helped taste her soups along the way, the final retesting of Thomas’ recipes had her preparing massive amounts of soup—beyond what her inner circle could consume. That’s when a friend started taking pots of Thomas’ soup to Project Understanding, a nonprofit organization that serves the needy in Ventura (projectunderstanding.org). “I would call her and say, ‘I’ve got soup for you,’” says Thomas. “I got such beautiful notes from the people who ate it; it was very touching.”

So does the fact that a big pot of soup is so adept at spreading the love account for her *Love Soup* title? “It can be understood in different ways,” says Thomas. “We put a lot of love into our food when we cook at home; no matter how good restaurant cooking is, it never has that quality of personal communication the way home cooking does.” Or, as she writes in her book, “There is an old Spanish saying, much repeated: ‘Of love and soup, the second is better.’ But I say, why choose? Be in love. Eat soup. Love soup!”

ORGANIC SOUP KITCHEN

in Santa Barbara is preparing to serve 1,000 needy people Thanksgiving dinner later this month (complete with live music and gifts). And they’ll do it all over again next month for Christmas dinner. In addition to special holiday meals, the organization works hard year-round, serving the area’s homeless every Sunday: As many as 300 people show up each week for organic soup, as well as to enjoy access to health care through Doctors Without Walls (santabarbarastreetmedicine.org).

Organic Soup Kitchen was founded by executive director Anthony Carroccio just over a year ago. “These people are very fragile. Most of them have diabetes,” he says. “Nourishing food is a very medicinal thing for them. We like to feed people low-glycemic, anti-inflammatory food—and, of course, organic.”

As young as it is, the organization is already growing quickly to meet demand. It’s looking for a permanent home with a bigger kitchen (it currently operates out of the Veterans Memorial Building), and it’s debuting a culinary program for the unemployed, teaching food safety and other skills that build a good foundation for being a kitchen worker.

Organic Soup Kitchen needs volunteers as well as financial donations; visit organicsoupkitchen.org to learn more.



Ojai cookbook author Anna Thomas fell in love with soup after adjusting her cooking to fit in a tiny kitchen during house renovations; the delicious results are published in *Love Soup*.



IN THE KITCHEN

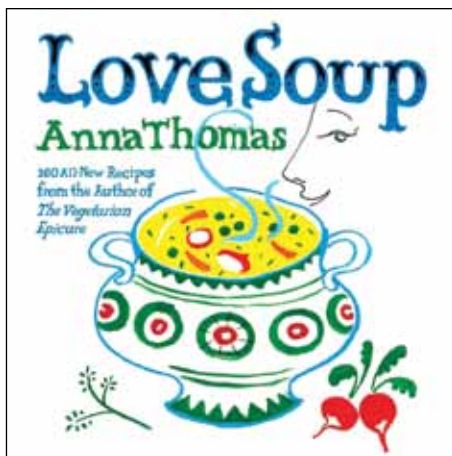
THE GREAT PUMPKIN SOUP

This recipe comes courtesy of Anna Thomas from her newest cookbook, Love Soup (Norton, 2009; wwnorton.com). On selecting the perfect pumpkin, Thomas writes, "I've had good luck with some smaller varieties; Sweet Mamas, sugar pumpkins, and baby Hubbards come to mind." She also points out that other winter squash, such as kabocha, buttercup, delicata, and butternut, will work, too. If possible, use homemade vegetable stock; otherwise, a purchased vegetable broth will do.

- ¾ cup dried cannellini or other white beans (5 ounces)
- 1½ teaspoons sea salt, plus more to taste
- 1 medium pumpkin, about 4 pounds untrimmed (2½ pounds trimmed)
- 2½ tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- 8 ounces leeks, white and light-green parts
- 12 ounces Yukon Gold potatoes
- 4–5 cups any basic vegetable broth
- 12 ounces green chard
- ¾ cup packed cilantro or fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 2–3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, plus more if needed
- 1–3 tablespoons brown sugar (dark or light)
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Nutmeg

Garnishes:

- Fruity green olive oil
- Crumbled feta or other fresh white cheese



Put the dried beans in a large soup pot or stockpot with 8 cups water, bring the water to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer the beans, covered, for at least an hour, or until they are tender. This may take up to 2 hours, depending on the age of the beans. Add more water if you need to in order to keep the beans covered. When the beans are soft, add a teaspoon of salt.

While the beans are cooking, prepare the pumpkin: split it in half, scrape out all the seeds and strings, and then cut the pumpkin into wide strips and peel off the hard skin. Do this last part carefully, using a sharp knife and pushing the blade away from you. Cut the trimmed pumpkin into 1½-inch cubes. You should have about 8 cups of cubed pumpkin.

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Toss the pumpkin cubes with a tablespoon of olive oil and a generous sprinkle of salt and spread them on a baking sheet. Roast the pumpkin pieces for about 45 minutes, turning them once or twice, until they are tender and browned in spots.

Heat the remaining 1½ tablespoons olive oil in a nonstick skillet and gently sauté the chopped onion in it with a sprinkle of salt, over medium heat, until it softens and begins to color, about 10 minutes. Wash and thinly slice or chop the leeks, add them to the onion, and keep cooking until the leeks are also tender and browning, about another 15 minutes.

Scrub and trim the potatoes and cut them into ½-inch dice. Put the potatoes in a large soup pot with 2 cups water, 4 cups vegetable broth, and a pinch of salt. Bring the water to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer the potatoes for 6 or 7 minutes. Wash the chard, trim off the stems and coarsely chop the leaves, and add the chard to the potatoes.

Add the cooked onion and leeks, the roasted pumpkin, and the cilantro or parsley leaves to the pot and simmer the soup for 15 minutes. The pumpkin will become very soft, and some of it will fall apart, thickening the broth and imparting its lovely orangey-gold color.

Add the cooked cannellini with all their broth and taste the soup. Season it with lemon juice, a little brown sugar if the pumpkin is not very sweet, and a bit more sea salt to bring it all together. There should be a subtle sweet-tart balance, and the amount of lemon juice or sugar you need will vary with the type of pumpkin. Grind in a little black pepper and add a pinch of nutmeg.

Serve the soup hot, in deep bowls, with a last-minute drizzle of fruity, green olive oil and a sprinkle of crumbled cheese on top of each serving.

Serves 10 generously. ■



At the Market

Love Soup author Anna Thomas goes through a lot of fresh produce in creating her soups. Her favorite local place to shop is the **OJAI CERTIFIED FARMERS' MARKET** (ojacertifiedfarmersmarket.com). "It's gotten so good in the last few years," she says. "It has everything you need."

Thomas also draws ingredients and inspiration from a weekly basket of produce she gets from an **OJAI CSA** (Community Supported Agriculture, in which members purchase a share in a local farm, and then receive a share of its produce; to find one near you visit csafarming.com). "It's such good, fresh, lovely produce," she says, adding that never knowing what will be in the weekly basket inspires creativity. "It spurs you to do some experimenting, it's really fun."





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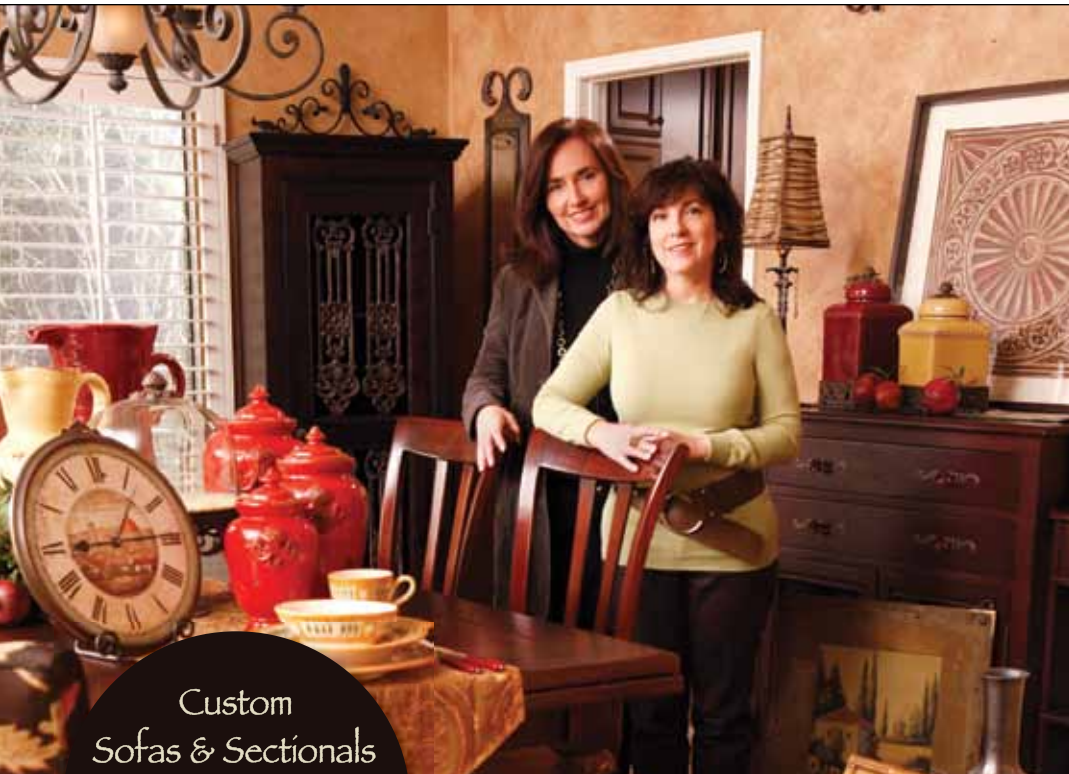
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Ancient Peaks 2008 Syrah

Paso Robles (\$16)

ancientpeaks.com

Medium-bodied, mature for its vintage, and handsome. But enough about me, this syrah is great with turkey and chicken.



Robert Hall 2007 Syrah (\$18)

roberthallwinery.com

Syrah's traditional blackberry and earthy flavors are blended with grenache and a soupçon of mourvèdre. The result pairs nicely with red meats that feature a kick of spice.



Calcareous 2007 Main Squeeze

Central Coast (\$20)

calcareous.com

Rich, but not weighty. Firm, but not untoward. So if the occasion calls for some elegance (and possibly rib eye or roast) this cab-syrah-zinfandel cuvée ought to be called as well.



Graveyard Vineyards 2008 Estate Syrah (\$21)

graveyardvineyards.com

Although it's a lush syrah, it's also a quaffer because of terrific balance; good with sausage, barbecue, and rich, hearty stews.



Cambria 2008 Pinot Noir

Julia's Vineyard, Santa Barbara County (\$25)

cambriawine.com

I typically enjoy the lingering finish from Cambria's pinots; this one is no exception. Supple and mouth-filling, it should complement fatty fish (like tuna and salmon) as well as it does poultry.



Bianchi 2007 Zinfandel Heritage Selection

Paso Robles (\$26)

bianchiwine.com

After 29 months of aging in French and American oak, this zin emerged wonderfully smooth and with great depth. Its high alcohol (15.4 percent) is matched with jammy flavor. When thinking of food pairings, think zesty.



Tercero Wines 2007 Syrah

Thompson Vineyard, Santa Barbara County (\$28)

tercerowines.com

I believe that Tercero's decision to leave one-quarter of the grapes de-stemmed during fermentation is responsible for the enhanced backbone of flavor. The winemaker suggests a decant before serving, and I concur; then enjoy with pepper steak and barbecue.

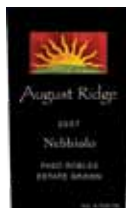


Cru 2008 Pinot Noir

Santa Lucia Highlands (\$29)

cruwinecompany.com

Cool-climate pinots, like this one, demonstrate outstanding fragrance and complex aromas. The soft flavors here could go with rabbit, mushrooms, seafood in pink sauce, and game meats.



August Ridge 2007 Nebbiolo

Paso Robles (\$32)

augustridge.com

At some point over the next two months you know you'll be dining on Italian cuisine. Nebbiolo can be forceful, but August Ridge has softened the tannins in this beautiful Italian varietal. The rustic spice on the finish is inviting for pork dishes, game meats, chicken cacciatore, and big, aged cheeses.



Cerro Prieto Vineyard 2007 Merlot

Paso Robles (\$35)

cerroprietovineyard.com

Clearly a labor of love, this merlot (with dashes of syrah and cabernet sauvignon) is among the best I've tasted this year. I hesitate to suggest food pairings because it would go with so many dishes. So go wild in the kitchen.

Hitching Post 2007 Pinot Noir

Julia's Vineyard, Santa Barbara County (\$42)

hitchingpost2.com

Another true artisan pinot from the famed Julia's Vineyard. Juicy cranberry and cherry throughout with warm spice on the end. Goes best with good friends and good conversation. The rest will take care of itself.



Justin 2008 Justification 750

Paso Robles (\$45)

justinwine.com

A powerfully structured blend of cabernet franc and merlot that can handle the gravy and just about anything else you might be planning for the holidays. This medium-weight stunner develops in the glass on a near-constant basis, so it becomes a different wine each time a guest goes back for more. ■



Head's Up:

J. Lohr's ongoing funding of mammograms

With every sale of its 2005 Carol's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$40) and Carol's Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (\$24), J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines (jlohr.com) donates \$2 to the Touching 500 Lives partnership with the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Hospice du Rhône ticket sales start November 9

Taking place next year from April 28–30 in Paso Robles, Hospice du Rhône (hospicedurhone.org) is the world's largest celebration of Rhône variety wines, and it usually sells out early. Get to the website at noon (PST) on November 9 for tickets.

A reggae break on November 11

Before the stress creeps in, mellow out with some reggae at Gather Wine Bar in Arroyo Grande (gatherwinebar.com) to hear Vance Fahie. (I make no claims on whether or not Red Stripe will be served.)



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By Anthony Head

Port is not for everyone. It's not for someone who's just finished a Thanksgiving feast of "nuggets" (of any variety) will do. And it's not a good choice for those about to initiate the interfamily holiday tournament of yard darts. And it's definitely not for the person who is about to drive home, dejected, after losing at such a worthy game of skill.

But after you've gotten rid of that guy and decided who is port-worthy at your party,

pour something good like Rotta 2007 Estate Zinfandel Port. Paso grapes are at the heart of this Templeton-based winery and tasting room; and zinfandel is Paso's oenophilic™ sweet spot. Lusciously flavorful and a warming 19-percent alcohol, this is for whoever would be up for some good

gossip and the rest of the pie and the nuts if anyone remembered to bring them from the dining-room table. It's also a good pairing for whoever is in hiding in the den, waiting for the start of the fourth quarter.

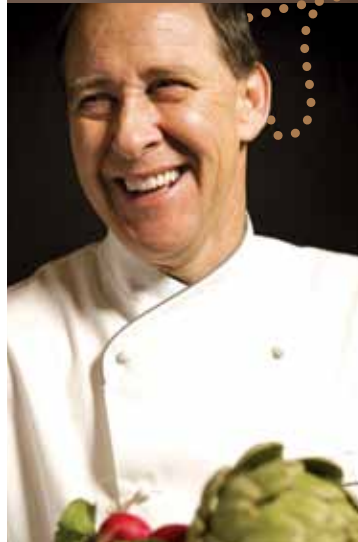
Please remember, port is not for everyone. ■

Rotta 2007 Estate Zinfandel Port
Paso Robles (\$25)
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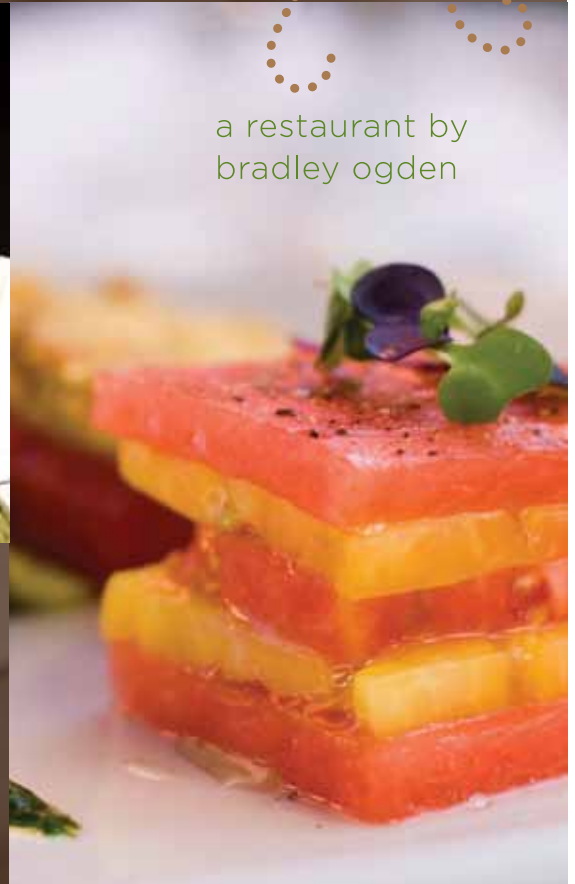


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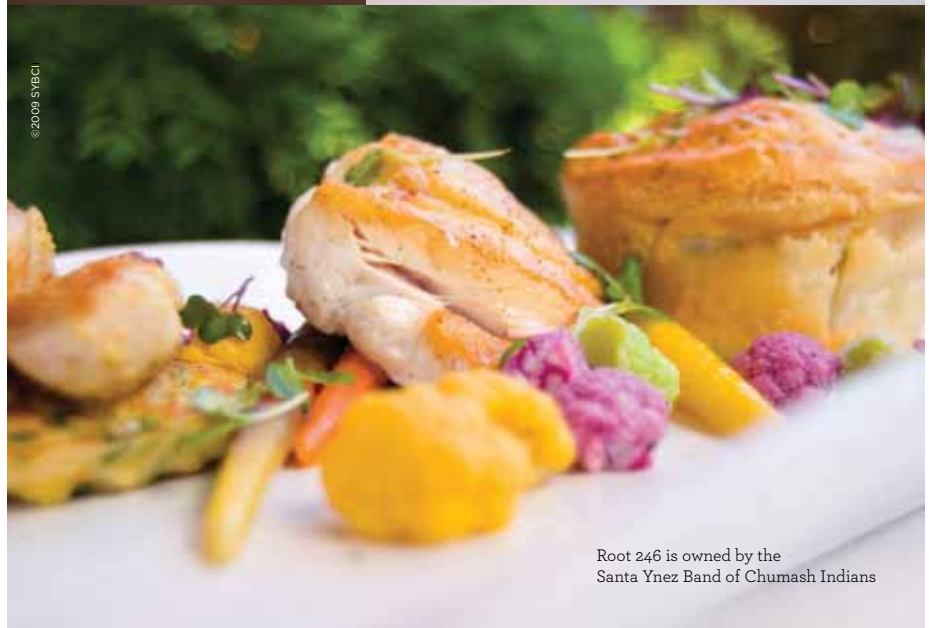


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Taste of the Town

By Angela Pettera



GIVING BACK BY EATING OUT

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RESTAURANT OWNERS ARE GIVERS BY NATURE, THE "AUNT BEES" OF SOCIETY. They live to feed others by fattening and comforting us. They are not strangers to charity, giving quietly and often, much like George Clooney does (Clooney won the Bob Hope Humanitarian Award at this year's Emmys). Restaurateurs sniff out manifold ways to provide for those less fortunate in their communities, often donating meals, money, time, energy, and enthusiasm. I feel happy about patronizing restaurants with such generous owners—it's as if I'm giving back just by eating out.

Many fine restaurants like The Grill on the Alley in Westlake Village, Enoteca Toscana Wine Bistro in Camarillo, Brooks and Anacapa Brewing Co. in Ventura, Root 246 in Solvang, and Los Olivos Wine Merchant & Café consistently send gift certificates to charities for silent auctions. As Deborah Scarborough, chef and owner of the wonderful Black Cat Bistro in Cambria (blackcatbistro.com) puts it, "Oh my God, we are always giving." In

addition to donating tons of gift certificates, Scarborough cooks, provides food, and even ponies up a Christmas tree every year for a variety of charities.

The owners of Panera Bread (panerabread.com), home of scrumptious salads, sandwiches, and baked goods, created Operation Dough-Nation to formalize their caring impulses, including the delivery of unsold bread at day's end to food banks and other hunger-relief organizations. Similarly, Bandits' Grill & Bar (banditsbbq.com)—a delish barbecue spot—brings extra bread and rolls to MANNA, the Conejo Valley Food Bank (mannaconejo.org), proving that manna doesn't come exclusively from heaven.

Twelve years ago, Danyel Dean, the founder of the Empty Bowl fundraiser benefiting the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County (foodbanksbc.org), asked Brigitte Guehr, then of Brigitte's, now of the elegant and fabulous Mirabelle Inn & Restaurant in Solvang (mirabelleinn.com), to donate gourmet soup. Guehr hasn't stopped giving to the November soup and bowl extravaganza since. She also helps organize and chair Empty Plate dinners and Share Our Strength events, all for the Foodbank.

Didier and Nanci Poirier, owners of the charming 71 Palm French & American Brasserie in Ventura (71palm.com), volunteer—along with their children—for Shop Ahoy (shopahoy.org). The Poiriers pick out groceries and deliver them to elderly folks in Ventura County who can't get out to do their own shopping. Says Nanci, "Didier and I both have experienced the importance of this service firsthand, having parents that are elderly and in need of assistance."

Back in October, the Ventura County locations of Wood Ranch BBQ & Grill (woodranch.com) held Tip-a-Cop nights. Law enforcement officers worked alongside



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>> Taste of the Town

servers to ferry the eatery's excellent grilled meats, salads, and other food to patrons for tips. Those no-doubt generous tips (who's gonna stiff a cop?) were sent along to the Special Olympics of Southern California (sosc.org).

Managers at the posh Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara (fourseasons.com/santabarbara) will bring a full Thanksgiving dinner over to the Montecito Fire Department to feed firemen and their families on November 25. The talented hotel chefs have been cooking turkey and trimmings, fish, salads, pies, and cobbler for the firemen for the last 11 years.

Feeding firemen seems to be a popular pastime for chefs. Take Adam Horton of Saddle Peak Lodge (saddlepeaklodge.com): He serves amazing game dinners to benefit Los Angeles Fire Department Station No. 67, which is next door to the Calabasas restaurant. And pastry chefs at Ojai Valley Inn & Spa (ojairesort.com) will prepare and deliver their beautiful Christmas cakes to Ojai fire departments and police stations next month, as well as to sick and needy groups.

Restaurants like Fiamme in Thousand Oaks (fiammerestaurant.com) and Watermark (watermarkonmain.com) and Wine Lovers wine bar (wineloversbar.com), both in Ventura, have designed a way to host small-scale fundraiser dinners, brunches, and wine

"We want to be a part of the community, and we feel as though **GIVING BACK**—in whatever way we can—makes us all the more **RICH IN SPIRIT**."

—Jim Sobell, The Vineyard House Restaurant, Santa Ynez

tastings. Charitable organizations pick a date and tell supporters to go out for a meal or drinks, and a portion of the tabs go right back into the charities' pockets. As Wine Lovers' new owner Chris Reyes says, "This not only offers an alternative to costly fundraising events but also provides a fun way to get out on the town with friends."

Frank Ostini of the legendary Hitching Post II in Buellton (hitchingpost2.com) favors funneling funds to Direct Relief International (directrelief.org) through the Santa Barbara County Vintners' Foundation. Ostini and his fellow kindhearted vintners throw dinners where they auction off wines to help raise money for victims of disasters like the earthquake in Pakistan and Hurricane Katrina. By keeping the wine flowing (the more guests drink, the higher they bid—wink, wink), the Santa Barbara County Vintners' Foundation has raised plenty of funds for Direct Relief International over the years.

Jim Sobell, owner of The Vineyard House Restaurant in Santa Ynez (thevineyardhouse.com), participates in the Santa Ynez Valley Empty Bowl fundraiser benefiting People Helping People (syvphp.org). He also throws lunches and dinners to raise money for Lance Armstrong's LIVESTRONG Foundation (livestrong.org). Sobell sums up the feelings of all the aforementioned restaurateurs by saying, "We want to be a part of the community, and we feel as though giving back—in whatever way we can—makes us all the more rich in spirit." ■

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Must-have meals around the 805.

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

Brunch at **Watermark** restaurant in Ventura (watermarkonmain.com) is a pleasant, classy affair. Chef Peter Edwards makes it even more civilized with his **Crab Benedict** (\$15). English muffins are topped with tender crab cakes and poached eggs; the hollandaise is bright, tangy, and fresh. It's a great start to any Sunday.

The usually crowded **Wine Merchant Café** in Los Olivos (losolivoscfe.com) has a cozy indoor fireplace by which to sip a glass of wine. The delicious **ravioli** (\$15 at lunch or dinner) is stuffed with a blend of ricotta and fresh spinach. A roasted-shallot-cream sauce douses the chewy pillows in goodness. Then crispy onions and chives are scattered over all. A bottle of the Caymus 2008 Conundrum, a blend of California whites, supports the pasta flavors quite nicely.

Anacapa Brewing Company in Ventura (anacapabrewing.com) brews its own beer and creates some fun pub food like the **Pretzel Fried Chicken** (\$16). Available at lunch or dinner, it's a hearty meal with three pieces of pounded chicken breast dredged in pretzel breading and fried golden. Stick pretzels are crushed up to make the salty, crunchy coating; chunky pieces of pretzel are still visible after cooking. The chicken pieces are set over a mushroom ragout with either mashed potatoes or polenta. This dish pairs well with a light-bodied ale and a sense of adventure.

Even late on a weeknight night, **Olio Pizzeria** (oliopizzeria.com) bustles. Chef Alberto Morello and his wife and co-owner, Elaine, recently opened this wine bar (with a wood-burning pizza oven) behind their top-notch Italian restaurant Olio e Limone in Santa Barbara. The small-plates menu delivers the same eating enjoyment that the Morellos have long been known for. Their delicious and proprietary olive oil gets drizzled on many salads and starters, like the stylishly presented **burrata antipasti** (\$16). Burrata (a sort of creamy pre-mozzarella), thinly sliced salty prosciutto, and hearty pieces of grilled bread are set on a wooden pizza paddle. A small dish of à la carte cured olives adds the requisite bite of vinegar to bring together all of the components.

The Friday night **Seafood Sensation** buffet (\$62 for adults) laid out at **Hampton's** in the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village (fourseasons.com/westlakevillage/dining.html) is a splendid sight. Chef Mario Alcocer takes pride in delighting guests with an impressive array of very fresh shrimp, oysters, crab legs, sushi, pan-seared fish, and mussels in broth. As if that's not enough for the price, the waiter brings out lobster tails split, broiled, and plated with drawn butter to each guest. The gorgeous desserts on the sweets table are small enough that I'm able to sample more than one. That's a good thing.

Chef Robert Grenner is clearly having fun cooking at the newly revamped dining space called **The Hideaway @ Lindero** in Agoura Hills (hideawayrestaurant.net). His accessible menu seems casual at first glance—wood-fired pizzas, sandwiches, steaks, and a banana split—but a closer look reveals the Grenner touch. The **Colossal Banana Splitini** (\$11), for instance: Served in a giant martini glass, the dessert will serve at least two, if not four. Scoops of vanilla bean gelato and Valrhona chocolate gelato are covered in what the chef calls "sweet and gooey stuff," which is chocolate-hazelnut cream from Switzerland, caramel sauce, fudge sauce, and whipped cream. Add to that three pirouette cookies, two bananas, one chocolate-chip cookie, some crumbled biscotti, and fresh berries, and you have a Grenner masterpiece. ■

Have a tip for our restaurant news pages? Email our dining editor at angela@805living.com.

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. The "Lunch Bunch" listings are casual spots ideally suited for lunch hour. 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.

71 PALM FRENCH & AMERICAN BRASSERIE

71 N. Palm St.
Ventura, 805-653-7222
71palm.com
French-American
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.

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, shitake 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.

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
elementsrestaurantandbar.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.



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805 DINING GUIDE

ENOTECA TOSCANA WINE BISTRO

2088 E. Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-445-1433
enotecatocanawinebistro.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 lunch-time, panini sandwiches are available. Enoteca Toscana is open for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday.

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-crusting 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.

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL WESTLAKE VILLAGE

2 Dole Drive
Westlake Village, 818-575-3000
fourseasons.com/westlakevillage/dining.html
Californian & Asian
Entrées \$10–\$50; Buffet Meals \$39–\$62
Romantic, Great View, Sunday Brunch

Executive chef Mario Alcocer oversees the food for Hampton's and the Lobby Lounge at this Four Seasons while chef Masa Shimakawa tackles the menus for Onyx. Hampton's serves a seafood buffet on Friday nights, a Mediterranean à la carte menu on Saturday nights, and Sunday brunch in a posh room with views of the waterfall. Onyx serves beautiful sushi and Japanese dishes for dinner Monday through Saturday nights. The more casual Lobby Lounge offers breakfast and lunch daily, with dinner Sunday through Thursday nights. Afternoon high tea service is available every Saturday, but reservations are required.

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.

HOLDRENS 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 Castrovilla 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.

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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 oversized. 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

A marble bar, wrought-iron potes 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

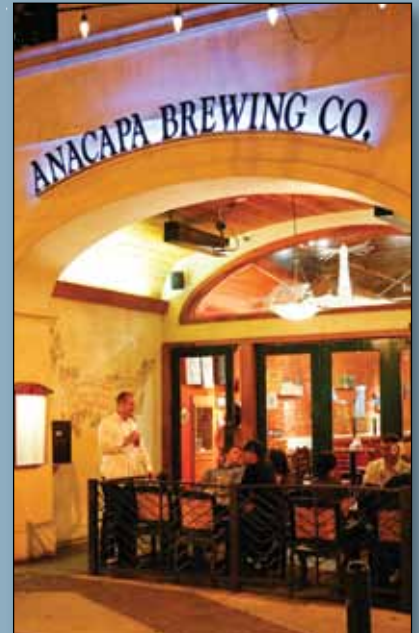
Asian-Fusion

Entrées \$8-\$32 or Omakase menu \$80-\$120

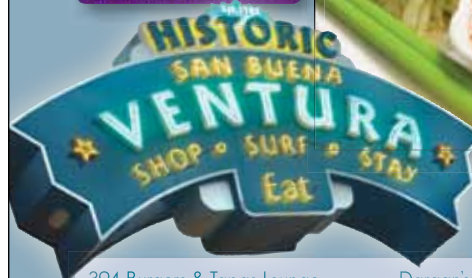
The stars love to come to Nobu Matsuhisa's small sushi bar and Asian fusion restaurant for the *omakase* (chef's choice) menus, the yellowtail with jalapeño, the lobster salad with lemon dressing, and the black cod. The rest of us like to go to see the culinary stars, for the rock shrimp tempura, and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



Chef Didier Poirier of 71 Palm
71 N. Palm St.
805.653.7222
71Palm.com



Anacapa Brewing Co.
472 E. Main St.
805.643.2337
AnacapaBrewing.com



Rice Thai Cuisine
387 E. Main St.
805.641.3573

394 Burgers & Tapas Lounge
71 Palm Restaurant
Aloha Steakhouse
Anacapa Brewing Company
Aqua Lounge
Bariloche Restaurant
Ben & Jerry's Of Ventura
Bernadette's On Main
Blenders In The Grass
Brooks
C-Streef Restaurant
Cafe Fiore
Caffe Bella
Cajun Kitchen Café
Candlelight Kitchen & Bar
Capriccio
Chicago Ribs
Chill Coffee and Fro-Yo

Dorgan's Irish Pub & Restaurant
El Rey Cantina
Eric Ericssons on the Pier
Fuji Sushi Ventura
Sicily by Gino
The Habit
Hong Kong Inn
It's All Good
Jersey Mike's Subs
Jimmy's Slice
Jonathan's At Peirano's
Main Street Café
Maria Bonita
Mary's Secret Garden
My Florist Winecafe & Bakery
Nature's Grill
Nona's Courtyard Cafe
Palermo
Paradise Pantry
Rice Thai Cuisine

Rookees Sports Bar
Rusty's Pizza Parlor
Sans Souci Cocktails
Savory Cafe & Bakery
Sportsman Restaurant
Star Lounge
Starbucks Coffee
Subway
Sugar Bear's Cupcake Shack
Sushi Marina
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Winchesters Grill & Saloon
Zoeys Cafe

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PADRI RESTAURANT & MARTINI BAR

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

The Martini Bar adjoining the restaurant has its own upbeat scene but the dining room and patio stay tranquil and relaxing all night. Before settling into a comfy cushioned booth, check the specials on the blackboard because they're usually wonderful and unusual. The bruschetta appetizer is quite hearty with three different toppings per order. A prosciutto and *burrata* plate comes with grilled veggies. The spaghetti with tiny veal meatballs (*polpettine*) is a classic. There are plenty of wines by the glass, beers, and (of course) martinis to drink.

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 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-crust 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.

Montecito resident Kenny Loggins drops in to play downstairs at Watermark (Ventura; watermarkonmain.com) from time to time with his eight-piece band.

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.

VIVOLI CAFÉ & TRATTORIA

3825 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-373-6060
vivolicafe.com
Italian
Entrées \$11–\$29
Romantic

The lighting is flattering and the booths are cozy at this romantic little trattoria. The bread and olive tapenade set on the table are delicious, so is the shaved artichoke salad with Parmesan. The long list of pastas won't disappoint. Fish and seafood dishes tend to be light and flavorful. Meats include beautifully breaded chicken and veal, rack of lamb, pork tenderloin, and steaks. On Mondays, look for a three-course prix-fixe menu special for around \$15.

LOOK WATERMARK

598 Main St.
Ventura, 805-643-6800
watermarkonmain.com
New American
Entrées \$15–\$44
Romantic

Downstairs is posh and formal with stylish vintage decor and a large deco-style bar serving classic drinks. The menu at brunch and dinner is hearty sit-down fare from chef Peter

Edwards. Top-notch musical acts play Tuesday through Saturday nights. Upstairs on the roof, accessed by elevator, the mood is lighter and the dress more casual. The ocean motif includes fish tanks and wavy glass; the menu is more about small plates and new drink concoctions. Wherever you sit, you won't be disappointed with the views.

ZIN BISTRO AMERICANA

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

American

Entrées \$15–\$35

Great View, Romantic

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.

NEW ARTISAN

1401 Park St.
Paso Robles, 805-237-8084
artisanpasorobles.com

New American

Entrées \$21–\$28

Romantic, Sunday Brunch

Vegetables farmed on demand, sustainably raised meats, and an award-winning chef combine to form a temple of gastronomy in the heart of 805 wine country. Chris Kobayashi creates unforgettable, seasonal food, his brother Mike Kobayashi makes sure the service is impeccable, and Chris's wife Shandi Kobayashi matches excellent wines to her husband's cuisine. No visit to Paso is complete without a stop here.

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

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>> 805 DINING GUIDE

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.

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.

MARAVILLA

905 Country Club Road
Ojai, 805-646-1111
ojairesort.com
Mediterranean
Entrées \$19–\$39

Romantic & Great View

After being closed to the public for a year, the formal dining room of the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa is again serving dinner nightly. The views of the surrounding hillsides and mountains are stunning, especially at sunset. The Mediterranean menu from chef Jamie West is casual, with signature

In Calabasas, Saddle Peak Lodge (saddlepeaklodge.com) has a new happy hour (Wednesday through Friday from 4 to 6 p.m.). It features high-end bar food such as corn dogs made from wild game (yes, really), buffalo carpaccio (like beef only better), and fried mac-and-cheese spheres for \$7 to \$10 per not-so-small plate.

items like a half-chicken under a brick and a salmon dish with arugula pesto and fingerling potatoes. The wine list features bottles from Spain, Portugal, France, and Italy.

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.

NEW PETROS

2860 Grand Ave.
Los Olivos, 805-686-5455
petroslosolivos.com
Greek
Entrées \$23–\$32

Romantic

Inside the Fess Parker Wine Country Inn & Spa, Petros basks in lovely simplicity. The decor celebrates textures in warm wood and white sculpture. Owner Petros Benekos' food pays homage to modern Greek cooking as opposed to old-school Americanized dishes. In the *Horiatiki* (or "peasant") Salad, he meticulously stacks cucumber spears, tomato wedges, Greek olives, avocado slices, and a square of perfect feta cheese. A dainty dip combo delivers plenty of flavor on pita triangles, especially the *kafteri* cheese blended with hot peppers. The Nikos Saganaki contains molten *kefalotiri* cheese wrapped in a skin of sesame seeds, and drizzled with honey to splendid effect. The daily fresh fish is either grilled or pan-seared, and dressed in olive oil, lemon juice, and Greek oregano. *Keftethes*, or meatballs, resemble tiny, tasty, very tender meat loaves doused in tomato sauce. For an unusual finish, try the *loukouma* (or *loukemathes*)—crispy, light, almost-hollow fried doughnuts sauced in cinnamon-walnut honey.

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 \$16–\$54

Romantic, Sunday Brunch

An homage to game animals and the fine wines that pair well with them, this rustic suite of rooms never disappoints. Chef Adam Horton hits all the right notes with his accompaniments and never overcomplicates the meat preparations. Once-a-month wine dinners feature local vintners. Mixologist Chris Barragan makes a mean Mint Julep. Sunday brunch on the patio is splendid.

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 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 from 4 to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday offers 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-wall 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 chophouses, 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 THOMAS HILL ORGANICS MARKET BISTRO & WINE BAR

1305 Park St.
Paso Robles, 805-226-5888
thomashillorganics.com
New American
Entrées \$24-\$30
Sunday Brunch

A cute brick building houses this restaurant with a wine bar up front and a patio behind. Farmers Joe and Debbie Thomas opened this bistro to help showcase the wonderful ingredients sprouting up on their hillside farm and orchard. Chef Julie Simon even makes planting requests of farmer Joe, so the highly seasonal menu can change weekly. Items include grass-fed beef and free-range chicken; salads are unusual and flavorful, chock-full of grains like quinoa. There's always a grilled cheese panini and hamburger offered at lunchtime. At dinner a wood-burning oven on the patio crisps up small pizzas. Vegetarians will always find an entrée to call their own, as will steak lovers and fans of braised duck.

LOOK WINE CASK

813 Anacapa St.
Santa Barbara, 805-966-9463
winecask.com
American Riviera
Entrées \$17-\$29
Romantic

The Wine Cask is a virtual shrine to wine-country eating and drinking. Co-owner Mitchell Sjerven (of Bouchon and Seagrass restaurants) oversees the wine-friendly menu in the beautiful and historic main dining room. Plenty of fresh, local produce gets dressed in salads or roasted or sautéed and plated next to steak, pan-seared fish, and roasted chicken. A cheese plate with honeycomb and dried fruit is a nice way to end dinner with yet another glass of wine from the well-chosen collection. The staff is always happy to suggest appropriate pairings.

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.

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

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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.

Santa Barbara's new **Olio Pizzeria** (oliopizzeria.com) is from the same team that created **Olio e Limone trattoria**. (And this stylish wine bar is right behind that landmark Italian restaurant.)

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.

LOOK CAFÉ FIRENZE

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

Italian

Entrées \$13–\$40

Romantic

Pastas are handmade daily at this beautiful, sprawling Italian restaurant with bar stools along the open kitchen counter in the back. A full bar dominates the front room with a long list of specialty martinis. Chef and owner Fabio Viviani turns out classic Italian dishes like ravioli, osso buco, and chicken scaloppine. The cannoli, rolled in pistachios and chocolate chips, are sublime.

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 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.

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.

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.

LOOK ERIC'S RESTAURANT & BAR

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

Mexican and American

Entrées \$8–\$17

Live Music

Casual food like burgers, pasta, New York steak, salmon, fajitas, and tacos anchor the menu at this dining venue of the Palm Garden Hotel. Televisions throughout the dining room and bar stay tuned to sports. A large patio offers plenty of shaded seating. The daily three-hour happy hour (from 4 to 7 p.m.) makes the already low prices even more appealing. Live music is featured on Friday nights.

EXOTIC THAI CAFÉ

29045 W. Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-991-8147
and at 1145 Lindero Canyon Road
Westlake Village, 818-575-3248

and at 2705 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-373-9231

and at 1930 Newbury Road
Newbury Park, 805-375-0272

and at 1145 S. Victoria Ave.
Ventura, 805-658-4861

and at 22776 Ventura Blvd.
Woodland Hills, 818-225-0789

and at 1555 Simi Town Center Way
Simi Valley, 805-306-1255

and at 849 E. Ojai Ave.
Ojai, 805-646-6618

Thai

Entrées \$10–\$16

Curries are the standout dishes at this small, casual Thai chain. You can't go wrong with Thai basil and coconut milk, so the curries are all fragrant and full of flavor. They can each be spiced to diners' heat tolerance. The "exotic" in the name can apply to the wide range of seafood items available all over the menu (scallops, squid, mussels) or even to the dishes made with duck. The shrimp rolls on the appetizer list are a fun way to start a culinary journey.

FEAST BISTRO

254 E. Ojai Ave.
Ojai, 805-640-9260
feastofjai.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 DeFelice 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.

MANDARIN EXPRESS

5015 Kanan Road
Agoura Hills, 818-991-9831
mandarinexpressagourahills.com

Chinese Fusion

Entrées \$10-\$27

It's not much to look at (think Formica tables and mirrored walls) but the owners of this tiny storefront are dedicated to keeping Chinese food interesting, fresh, and as organic as possible. Chef Dan Chang creates fusion dishes like filet mignon in a bourbon, basil, and black bean sauce and shrimp with nuts and balsamic vinegar over rice. The food



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isn't cheap by any stretch, but you've never had Chinese takeout like this before. The choices are almost endless considering the chef will pair just about any sauce you like with any meat, fish, vegetable, or mock meat (made of tofu or seitan) you want. He'll also adjust the heat (as in spice) level to your liking. When you want something different and delicious and delivered, this is definitely the place to get it.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

The newly opened **Go Fish Sushi** in Simi Valley's Town Center (search facebook.com) has a killer happy hour (3 to 6 p.m. daily). Sushi is \$1 off; subtract \$2 on sushi rolls, beer, and sake.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

JOHNNY ROCKETS

322 W. Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, 805-778-0780
and 5015 Cornell Road
Agoura Hills, 818-879-9933
and at The Commons at Calabasas
4799 Commons Way
Calabasas, 818-222-3460
and at The Promenade at Camarillo
640 E. Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-383-1888
johnnyrockets.com

American

Entrées \$7–\$10

Kid-Friendly

The ultimate 1950s diner with tiny jukeboxes on the tables, lots of chrome, and darling uniforms on the servers. There are 10 different hamburgers on the menu in addition to a great Nathan's hot dog, killer milkshakes, and flavored sodas. We don't know who will love it more, the kids or Grandpa.

LOOK P.F. CHANG'S CHINA BISTRO

2250 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-277-5915
and 21821 Oxnard St.
Woodland Hills, 818-340-0491
pfchangs.com

Chinese

Entrées \$8–\$24

Kid-Friendly

A chain like this is always great for bringing large groups of people together. Dishes are served family-style for easy sharing. The pan-Asian menu has influences from China (half duck in plum sauce), Thailand (lemongrass prawns with garlic noodles), and Japan (green tea noodles), not to mention Americanized desserts (cheesecake, banana spring rolls). Dishes are spicy, salty, and never dull.

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805 DINING GUIDE

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 lily 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.

NEW BOGART'S BAR & GRILL

166 W. Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, 805-494-4702
muvico.com/bogartsmenuoaks.asp
American
Small plates \$8-\$13; Entrées \$10-\$22
Kid-Friendly

Ordering at the walk-up counter at Bogart's and then taking your meal into the Muvico theaters is great fun. Obviously, finger foods work best while enjoying a meal in the dark, but fork-friendly dishes like chopped salad or the spicy mac and cheese are good, too. Bacon-wrapped dates are a

Headliners Comedy Club delivers professional comedians to the intimate stage in Fiamme's dining room (Thousand Oaks, fiammerestaurant.com) every weekend. Dinner and show packages are usually less than \$50 for two hours of comedy plus a two-course meal; add a dessert for \$5 more.

refreshing upgrade from nachos. Marinated steak skewers are accompanied by a *chimichurri* sauce. The sliders come in three different varieties: steak, battered cod, and ground chuck. Instead of candy, there are desserts like a bag of cookies for sweet movie-snacking.

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. 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.

NEW CAFÉ HABANA

3939 Cross Creek Road
Malibu, 310-317-0300
cafehabana.com
Pan-Latin
Entrées \$9–\$25
Sunday Brunch

Café Habana isn't limited to Cuban food or cocktails. Dishes represent all of Latin culture, from South American ceviches to Mexican grilled corn and huevos rancheros to Cuban pulled-pork sandwiches. Owner Sean Meenan is an

eco-warrior while partner Rande Gerber brings in the celebs and keeps the nightlife hopping. The food is good, the cocktails are great, and the coconut flan is out of this world.

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-crust 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.

EL REY CANTINA

2302 Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-484-4433
and 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.

LOOK! FIAMME

3731 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-497-9444
fiammerestaurant.com
Italian/American
Entrées \$13–\$29
Live Entertainment

Weekends are always interesting at this upscale restaurant serving Italian specialties alongside classic American dishes. The large menu includes an Italian chopped salad, chicken marsala, and rack of lamb with apple reduction sauce. The small stage set in the midst of the dining room hosts top-drawer comedians and musicians regularly. Check the website for event listings. The full bar pours cocktails, wine, and draft beer, which makes the entertainment even better.

FOX SPORTS GRILL

30970 Russell Ranch Road
Westlake Village, 818-338-7080
foxsportsgrill.com/westlake
American
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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.

GALLETTO BAR & GRILL

982 S. Westlake Blvd.
Westlake Village, 805-449-4300
gallettobarandgrill.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.

NEW THE HIDEAWAY@LINDERO

5719 Lake Lindero Drive
Agoura Hills, 818-735-3530
hideawayrestaurant.net
American
Entrées \$11–\$24

You'll find The Hideaway tucked away on the grounds of Lindero Country Club. This restaurant has plenty of dining areas including a bar area, main dining room, back patio and front patio paved with flagstone and sporting an ivy-covered pergola. String lights above a fountain add to the festive mood out front where Chef Robert Grenner pulls crispy, thin-crust individual pizzas out of the wood-burning pizza oven. He also creates lovely salads, hearty steaks, and nice seafood including crispy crab cakes with a pickled green tomato relish. Desserts are fun and worth the calories.

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.

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*.

Chef Todd Aarons of Tierra Sur in Oxnard has teamed up with Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village (fourseasons.com/westlakevillage/dining.html) for all of the hotel's *glatt* kosher catering celebrations—*l'chaim!*

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.

NEW LOS OLIVOS WINE MERCHANT CAFÉ

2879 Grand Ave.
Los Olivos, 805-688-7265
losolivoscafe.com
Cal-Med
Entrées \$12–\$29

This retail wine shop adjoins an all-day café with seating indoors by the stone fireplace and outside on the wisteria-covered patio. Cheese plates and olives are small bites perfect for pairing with wines at the bar. Salads, sandwiches, burgers, pasta, and pizza comprise the lunch menu. At night choices get a little fancier with pot roast, lamb shank, pasta, chicken, steak, and fresh fish. The wine selection from the shop (available to diners) has more than 400 labels and specialties in picks from California's Central Coast. Now that's fun.

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.

OLD PLACE RESTAURANT

29983 Mulholland Hwy.
Agoura Hills, 818-706-9001
oldplac Cornell.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 generous (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
sheilaswinebar.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 fun 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.

LUNCH BUNCH

Perfect for a midday meal, these listings are casual spots and fabulous cafés (which might not be open for dinner) that are ideal for meet-ups.

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.

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.

NEW BLUE TABLE

28912 Roadside Drive
Agoura Hills, 818-597-2583
bluetable.net
Italian
Entrées \$8–\$11

A few blue tables provide seating for those dining inside this charming little deli with high-quality Italian eats. Different salads rotate through the deli case and the list of sandwiches is written on a blackboard. The prosciutto and burrata panini is not to be missed. Pizzas, soups, cookies, and everything else are made fresh daily. A small freezer carries pastas and sauces for home use, but anything on the menu can be packed and taken to go.

CHAMPAGNE FRENCH BAKERY CAFÉ

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

A quaint bakery that harks 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.

NEW CHIPOTLE

5754 Lindero Canyon Road
Westlake Village, 818-597-1603
chipotle.com
Mexican
Entrées \$6–\$7
Kid-Friendly

Building your own burrito is fun and satisfying at this chain devoted to environmental health (it uses local and organic produce and naturally raised meat when possible). The food is prepared quickly, the quality is high, and the flavors are good. The lime-and-cilantro-laced rice is addictive. I'm partial to the fajita burrito, which has sautéed peppers and onions in place of beans. I load it up with steak, sour cream, and the Roasted Chili-Corn Salsa.

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.

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.

NEW FIVE GUYS BURGERS AND FRIES

487 N. Moorpark Road
Thousand Oaks, 805-496-0173
fiveguys.com
American
Entrées \$3–\$7
Kid-Friendly

Bulk peanuts in the shell are man-pleasers at this burger joint with self-serve fountain drinks. Little burgers have one patty while the regular burgers sport two—all are cooked

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well done. All toppings—including grilled onions, jalapeños, tomatoes, pickles, and grilled mushrooms—are free. Fries, dunked in peanut oil, are thick-cut with skins on; the Cajun-style are dusted with heat.

NEW FRESH & FABULOUS BAKERY

401 S. A St.
Oxnard, 805-486-4547
myfreshandfabulous.com

American
Entrées \$5–\$11
Kid-Friendly

The sandwiches here are served on house-made bread. Four different quiches are baked daily. Owner Magda Weydt is a registered dietitian so the salads and sandwich fillings have a healthful bent. There are also coffee drinks, cookies, and pastries to be enjoyed in this retro coffee shop in downtown Oxnard.

ITALIA DELI & BAKERY

5657 Kanan Road
Agoura Hills, 818-991-4838
italiadelicom

Italian

Entrées \$7–\$11

An Italian market and deli that makes its bread fresh every day is a good concept. Add to that a menu of fresh sub sandwiches, salads, and baked pastas and it becomes irresistible. A few tables are scattered outside for dining, but frozen pasta dinners (like eggplant Parmesan and vegetable lasagna) are crazy good when taken home and warmed in the oven. They come with fresh, house-made garlic bread—what a concept!

MAIN COURSE CALIFORNIA

1363 Donlon St.
Ventura, 805-658-8900
maincourseca.com

American
Entrées \$8–\$13

When a caterer first opens a retail dining space, it's bound to be modest. But the few seats in this industrial space are comfortable and the food is fresh and delicious. Sandwiches, salads, soups, and desserts are made with local ingredients, so they change with the seasons. There's a refrigerated cabinet for take-home quiches.

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.

LOOK MY FLORIST CAFÉ & BAKERY

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

American
Entrées \$7–\$18

Live Music

My favorite part of this restaurant is the bakery in the back with its own separate entrance; I drop in to pick up pastries and breads fresh from the oven. A table in the café is the perfect spot to enjoy a sandwich made with that freshly baked bread. Tall windows lend a nice, bright ambience during the day. A large lunch menu offers plenty

P.F. Chang's (Thousand Oaks; pfchangs.com) offers a \$40 lunch or dinner (dine-in only) daily for two people. This deal includes soup, appetizer, entrée, and mini dessert.

of salads, sandwiches, wraps, bruschetta, and a couple of hot dishes. Breakfast is served until 2 p.m. on weekends. The dinner menu looks a lot like the lunch menu with the addition of cheese selections and desserts. Wednesday through Saturday nights, there are live performances on the baby grand piano in the dining room.

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.

NEW THE NEON CARROT

3536 S. Higuera St.
San Luis Obispo, 805-545-0000
theneoncarrot.com

American
Entrées \$6–\$9

Kid-Friendly

With nothing on the menu over \$10, this is the best lunch for the price within 100 miles. Caterer and co-owner Maegen Loring dishes up fresh, delicious, and interesting salads, sandwiches, and baked goods Monday through Friday in a communal space with counter service. The restaurant shuns corn syrup (even making its own ketchup and lemonade) in everything except the pecan pie. It seems like the entire neighborhood shows up regularly for lunch.

NM CAFÉ INSIDE NEIMAN MARCUS

6550 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Canoga Park, 818-316-7040

American
Entrées \$13–\$27

A quiet oasis in the midst of the Westfield Topanga Mall, this pretty café has stone floors and walls, and lively seats covered in a green-and-brown-print fabric with orange dots. The service is polished, the complimentary popovers are delish, and the salads are huge. Sandwiches include a BLT and a lobster club.

NEW PANERA BREAD

205 N. Moorpark Road
Thousand Oaks, 805-496-2253
and 740 E. Ventura Blvd.
Camarillo, 805-484-1414
panerabread.com

American

Entrées \$6–\$9

Kid-Friendly

Freshly baked pastries and coffee are perfect in the a.m. At lunchtime a delicious sandwich on house-made bread is a must, whether it's a hot tomato-mozzarella panini or a cool Napa almond chicken salad on sesame semolina. Salads, soups, and seasonal items keep the menu fresh and interesting.

PIZZA NOSH

30313 Canwood St.
Agoura Hills, 818-991-3000
pizzanosh.com

Pizza
Entrées \$5–\$11

Kid-Friendly

This certified-kosher restaurant eschews meat to keep things simple. Different cheeses provide the main protein in the pasta dishes; sandwiches are stuffed with eggplant, falafel, tuna, or veggie chicken; and for the pizza toppings, there's a long list of veggies like tomatoes, spinach, zucchini, and capers. The veggie pepperoni is dense—a good replacement for its meaty cousin. Check the specials board for fresh fish dishes like salmon or fish-and-chips.

PIZZASALAD

1655 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-371-7878
pizzasalad.com

Pizza
Entrées \$6–\$12

Kid-Friendly

USDA Certified Organic is the name of the game at this unusual pizza place, which follows strict organic regulations. Vegetarians, vegans, and the gluten-intolerant will find something delicious to eat here. The tasty pies can be topped with spicy tomato sauce, arugula, crimini mushrooms, kalamata olives, feta cheese, and Italian sausage (along with many more traditional ingredients). Salads can be custom designed with veggies, meats, cheeses, and flavorful dressings (all organic). For value dining, check out the lunch specials.

LOOK THE RANCH CATERING

30843 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, 818-575-9033
theranchwestlake.com

American
Entrées \$4–\$10

Kid-Friendly

Getting in and out quickly is easy at this small, counter-service lunch and dinner spot. The house-made brioche-style buns for the sandwiches and burgers are light and fluffy. The Philly cheesesteak sandwich is cheesy goodness. The burgers, like the Duimo with two kinds of cheese and The Ranch's special sauce, have a cult following. Salads are substantial and sweets are made daily. Service from the owners is always friendly and helpful.

SILVERGREENS

791 Chapala St.
Santa Barbara, 805-962-8500
silvergreens.com

Californian
Entrées \$5–\$9

This health-focused spot offers tons of nutritional information (like calorie counts printed on each receipt) so diners can make informed decisions. There are plenty of healthy options, like salads, pastas, and smoothies, but there are also indulgent choices like burgers and shakes. Bamboo-topped tables and aluminum chairs are tucked into different sections of the modern green-hued space and on the patio out front. ■

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Interview by Anthony Head

MEET JANE SEYMOUR

She's an Officer of the British Empire and an American citizen. She's a mother of six. She's a painter and an author who also designs jewelry and furniture. Her philanthropic endeavors range from working with the American Red Cross, Childhelp, and City Hearts to starting her own Open Hearts Foundation (openheartfoundation.org). While all that would be enough to fill several lifetimes, this Malibu resident is also an Emmy- and Golden Globe-winning actress whose career has spanned more than four decades.

I'm grateful for the people around me, including my husband, who are good at business. It's just not my forte. I'm a creative person. Whether it's acting or writing or painting, all my arts intertwine. I don't see them as too different—except maybe my paintings. They're so personal. They're like my babies. I like to keep track of where their homes are.

Every time I painted a heart, it ended up open. I realized that was the philosophy that my mother and father raised me with: If your heart is open you can give and receive love.

Open Hearts Foundation is about empowering people. Our message is that everyone can do something. It's not always about writing a check. It may be about a kind word or a smile, or helping someone across the road, or sharing a casserole with your neighbors.

Everyone gets overwhelmed. The best way to get over it is to help someone else. My mother taught me that.

For Thanksgiving every year we invite everybody we know who doesn't have a family or a place to go. We have our kids and family, and they have friends who aren't going home. Sometimes we end up with 30 or 40 people. It's a wonderful mixture of people of all ages, and that's what we love about it. Life is supposed to be inclusive. ■

For more information visit janeseymour.com.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLES BUSH

Wine & Waves


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