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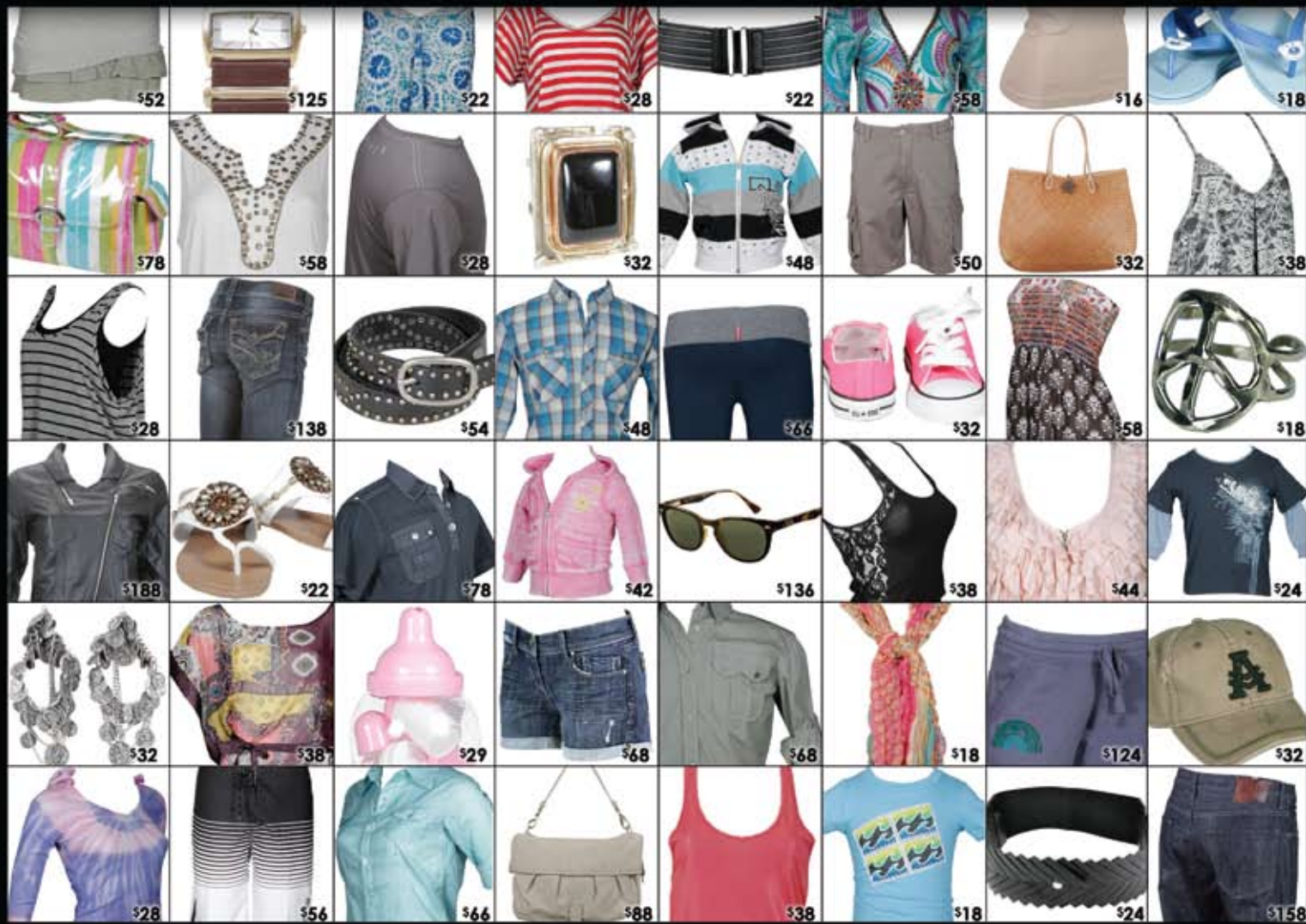
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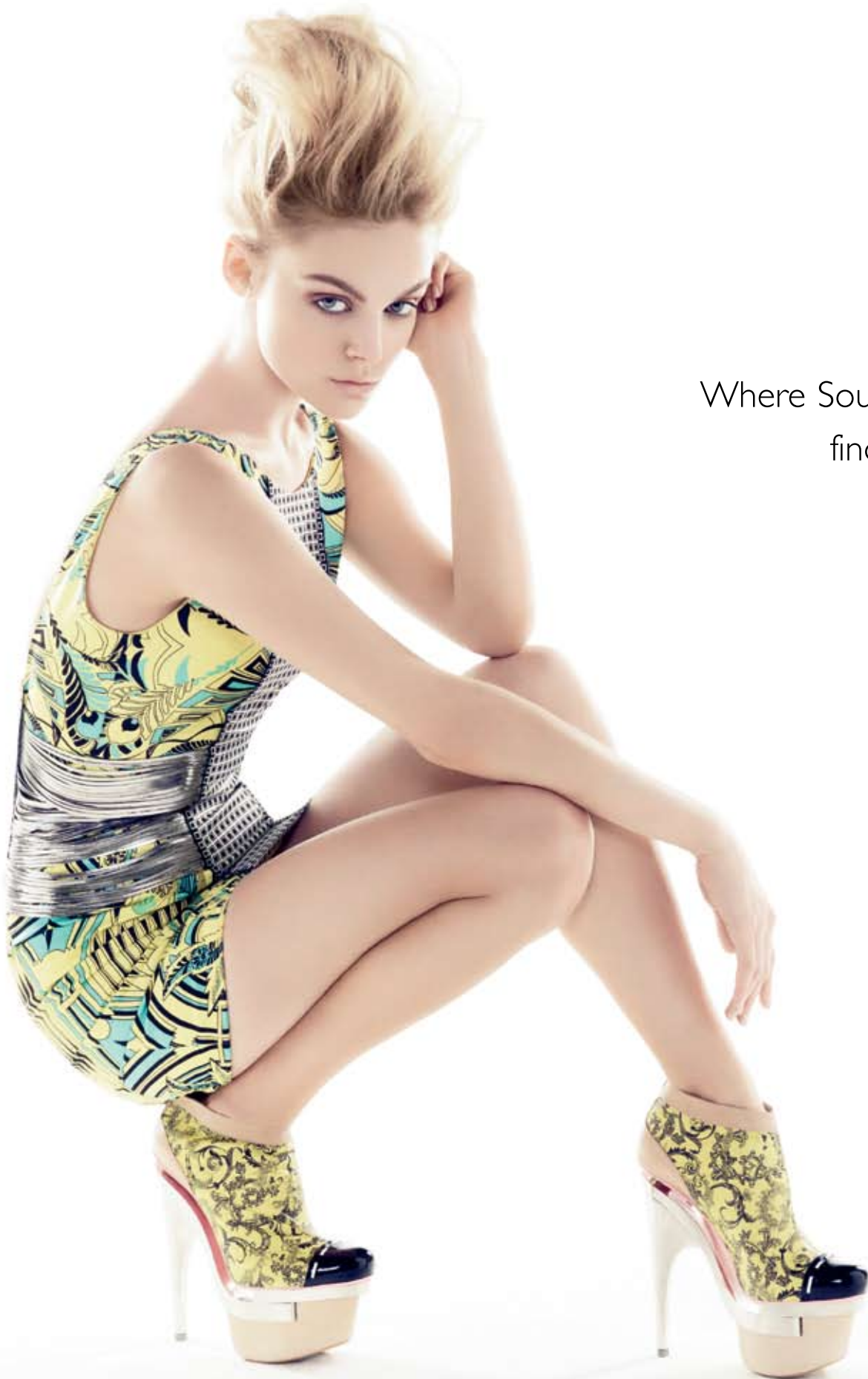
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Editor's Note



GARY MOSS

Our Water and Our World

Water is evocative in its beauty. It has always been an inspiring muse for verse and canvas. It's envied for its purity. It's soft, yet it can wear away stone over time. It's so simple and it's at the very core of our existence. In short, water is to be celebrated. That's just what we've tried to do on nearly every page of this month's issue.

While going to press, we were also reminded just how unpredictable and dangerous water can be: A French fishing vessel had to rescue Abby Sunderland, the Thousand Oaks teen who was attempting to sail around the world solo, because the rough sea took too much of a toll on her boat. Needless to say, it was a noble effort and we're all still proud of Abby, as well as being grateful for the way things turned out.

This month we introduce a new column up front, *Pulse*, a spotlight on unique personalities and a look at what's trending in local businesses. It's another opportunity for readers to stay connected with the people, the events, and the places that make up our California communities.

Finally, I hope you all are having a wonderful summer and are taking advantage of the many pleasures and diversions available where we live. I consider *805 Living* to be one of those pleasures, so please enjoy the issue.

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

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

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805 LIVING®

EDITOR IN CHIEF & ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Lynne Andujar
edit@805living.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Nicola Augustson

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Anthony Head

PHOTO EDITOR

Gary Moss
photo@805living.com

SENIOR EDITORS

Mallory McCreary, Laura Samuel Meyn

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

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

CONTRIBUTING COLUMNISTS

Billy Goodnick, Maryann Hammers, Frank Nelson

COPY EDITOR

Heidi Dvorak

RESEARCH EDITOR

Tajinder Rehal

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Gerard Bello, Judi Bumstead, Dan Holmes, Amy Lundstrom, Gary Moss

ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR IN CHIEF AND PUBLISHER

Carmen Leiva

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PUBLISHER

Carla J. Blanco
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ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVES

Ingrid C'deBaca
Real estate, home builders, and vacation properties
ingrid@805living.com
818-597-9220

Amra Chudleigh
Travel, dining, and education
amra@805living.com
310-924-2631

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

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

ADVERTISING DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Sophie Patenaude
sophie@805living.com

ACCOUNTING

Lori Kantor
lori@805living.com

DISTRIBUTION

Ed Savage

805 LIVING OFFICES

3717 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
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ADVERTISING QUERIES

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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Behind the Scenes

TAKING THE PLUNGE

In this issue, we take a look at the many roles water plays in our lives, from the seemingly endless Pacific Ocean to the dawning awareness that our water use isn't as sustainable as we'd like to think. This month, we asked a few of our contributors to let us in on their favorite summertime activities involving water. Whether watering gardens or watching the waves roll in, here's what they'll be up to in July.

BILLY GOODNICK (*In the Garden*, page 42) wrote about water conservation through lawn alternatives this month—and saving water is a subject he's serious about. **This will brand me as a weirdo, but summer is when I obsess about using as little as I can. Mine is a death-defying tightrope walk, keeping my garden thriving on as little water as possible. Don't be surprised if you see me wringing a moist dish towel over my succulents.** Goodnick is a landscape architect, educator, and writer based in Santa Barbara.



MARYANN HAMMERS (*Mind/Body/Soul*, page 38) says she misses her former favorite summertime activity of sipping a margarita and watching the waves at the recently closed PierView in Malibu, but she's found a new beachside pastime. **I look forward to riding my beat-up, 24-year-old bike along the beach bike path in Ventura. I pedal along towering sand dunes, under the pier, along the boardwalk, and past the fairgrounds and river estuary, which is great for bird-watching. After stopping to watch kite surfers, I resume my ride, searching the horizon for dolphins, pelicans, and hunky surfers. Life is good. The only thing that would make it better is a newer bike.**

Executive editor **ANTHONY HEAD** wrote a feature this month about California's looming water crisis, and what can be done to ease the situation (page 58). **After researching how dire things may become, my favorite activity is to constantly survey the house's sinks, toilets, showerheads, and outdoor spigots to ensure that nary a drop escapes me.** Head also interviewed Jean-Michel Cousteau this month: See *P.S.* (page 88) and more online at 805living.com.

Events editor **MARK LANGTON** (*Insider*, page 30; *Good Deeds*, page 44) likes his water out on the trails. **As a mountain biker, I'm more partial to dirt than water. But during the summer, water is crucial to a mountain biker's safety (drink 12 ounces every hour, more if it's really hot). And water is also a big part of relaxation for a mountain biker—without water, there would be no après-ride beer.** In addition to his editorial work, Langton is also a mountain bike coach; visit mountainbikeskills.com.



Every month, dining editor **ANGELA PETTERA** keeps us up on the latest restaurant news (*Dialed In*, page 74) and maintains our *Dining Guide* (page 75). For the July issue, she also wrote about waterfront restaurants (*Taste of the Town*, page 72) with pristine locations. They proved to be great vantage points for one of her favorite experiences. **I love watching waves roll into shore, whether ocean waves or river waves, here or back home in Florida. I love hearing them crash, too. There's nothing more soothing than nature's rhythmic pulse—except maybe the sound of a bath being drawn.**

Gary's Outtake

By Gary Moss, Photo Editor

When planning for a shoot, professional photographers go location scouting beforehand. A location can look different at various times of the day, so visit more than once to check the light—usually early morning and late afternoon. Bring a digital camera to take some scouting shots, and make notes about the time of day, which direction you're facing, and when sunset occurs. (Here at Lake Casitas, I opted for late afternoon.) All this pre-production planning, including checking the weather forecast, will make for the best photography because you'll already know what to expect when it's time to shoot.



Gary Moss teaches Camera Whisperer Photographic Workshops on a variety of topics. This month he'll lead botanical workshops on Saturday, July 10, and Saturday, July 17, at Seaside Gardens in Carpinteria. Visit camerawhisperer.com/register. ■



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TRACKING THE BEAT OF THE 805 | JULY 2010



A PENCHANT FOR PEARLS

When Melissa Swinney was 11, her grandmother bought her a strand of pearls. “As soon as I put them on, I never wanted to take them off,” says the Westlake Village-based jewelry designer. She’s been crazy about pearls ever since and recently debuted her collection of handcrafted necklaces called Melli (melliinc.com).

By combining materials not typically paired, such as freshwater pearls with pendants made out of real roses and yellow opals, or cultured pearls with Swarovski crystals, >>

Melissa Swinney is passionate about using pearls in her jewelry designs. Shown here, cultured saltwater Akoya pearls from Japan.

>>A PENCHANT FOR PEARLS

Swinney creates one-of-a-kind pieces for all budgets. “Jewelry should make women feel good,” she says. “I want to give customers exactly what they want.”

Her inspirations are as varied as her designs: A Fleetwood Mac reunion concert spawned long, funky necklaces made with moonstone; Swinney selected aquamarine and rose quartz for short, dainty pieces after viewing a ballet performance.

Her ultimate dream: designing the “little black dress” version of pearls, which women will adopt as a wardrobe must-have for all occasions, whether they’re attending formal events, walking on the beach, or shopping for groceries.

Pearls are similar to blue jeans, adds Swinney. “They can be worn every day. They’re never out of style.” A portion of Melli proceeds is donated to Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. —*Cynthia House Nooney*

BE PREPARED FOR A LITTLE SENSORY OVERLOAD (IN A GOOD WAY)

if you’re heading to Central Coast Lavender (centralcoastlavender.com) within the next two or three weeks. With plants in full bloom and harvesting under way, the Paso Robles farm promises a feast for the eyes, nose, skin, and even the taste buds.

That’s right, says owner Lila Avery-Fuson: The versatile purple plant can add delicate flavor to almost everything including salad dressings, dips, sauces, cookies, and ice cream. The 7-acre farm also produces lavender honey. This certified-organic, family farm is run by Lila, her husband Kevin, and daughter Abigail. They grow more than 20,000 lavender plants, distill their own essential oils, and make soaps, lotions, and a range of other bath and beauty products.

The farm is currently open Fridays and Saturdays (noon to 6 p.m.), though people can call ahead to visit on other days. Lila and her team are happy to show visitors around or let them take self-guided tours. Note: The farm will be closed July 10 for the annual Lavender Festival, which is expected to attract about 6,000 people to downtown

Paso Robles for free tastings plus seminars on distilling lavender oil and the plant’s health benefits.

—*Frank Nelson*



A triple-strand Melli piece uses “London” blue topaz, pink freshwater pearls, and Swarovski crystals for a striking effect.



DIVE RIGHT IN Award-winning clam chowder.

One of Sheri Arnold’s very favorite spots is Splash Café & Artisan Bakery (splashbakery.com) in San Luis Obispo. For this Westlake Village resident, the cozy restaurant that opened in 2005 and serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner has a unique charm. She also enjoys “the creative menu, including great comfort food like their famously wonderful clam chowder, and breakfast sandwiches served on croissants.” Other enticements include freshly made artisan breads, delectable pastries like melt-in-your-mouth cinnamon rolls, and a selection of handcrafted chocolates made with 100-percent-organic fair-trade chocolate.

This sister location of the original Pismo Beach Splash Café (winner of numerous clam chowder awards) produces more than 1,000 sourdough bread bowls a day to keep up with customer demand, and all seafood is prepped fresh daily. Local residents can take advantage of takeout and delivery services, and the crowd-pleasing chowder is now available at Costco in San Luis Obispo.

Perhaps best of all: The chowder can be shipped anywhere in the continental United States. —*C.H.N.* ■



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Finds

By Lynne Andujar

SUN SPLASHED

Bright summer finds shining with style.



Can't Touch This

Keep digits dry with Gloveables "Orange Lace" cleaning gloves (\$16); Sur la Table at The Promenade at Westlake, Westlake Village, or Santa Barbara; surlatable.com.



Skin Quenching

Kai "Body Glow" dry-oil body spray hydrates skin with a fine mist (\$30); Pure Life & Home, Ventura, purelifeandhome.com.

Life Aquatic
"Life-at-Sea" tumbler (\$14), perfect for an ocean-inspired table scape; Anthropologie at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, or Westfield Topanga, Canoga Park; anthropologie.com.



Whimsical Washing

Linkasink metal "Starfish" drain cover (\$150); Ferguson, Ventura, ferguson.com; or linkasink.com.



The Big Chill

Offer a choice of libations with the "Trio Beverage Dispenser" (\$70); Z Gallerie, Woodland Hills, zgallerie.com.

Poolside Panache
Dry off in style with the "Valencia Medallion" towel in gold (\$39); Restoration Hardware at The Promenade at Westlake, Westlake Village, or Santa Barbara; restorationhardware.com.



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Into the Deep: Then and Now

Then: In 1969, Swiss watchmaker DOXA released the "SUB 300T Conquistador." Underwater explorer Jacques Cousteau and members of the *Calypso* team helped develop and test the DOXA SUB; its signature orange face is designed for easy readability in the deep blue sea. **Now:** Three generations later, Cousteau's grandson Philippe Cousteau Jr. continues his family's quest to conserve our oceans as CEO and co-founder of the nonprofit EarthEcho International (earthecho.org). Philippe Jr. inherited a DOXA from his father—it's one of his most prized possessions. The new vintage series "SUB 1200T Professional" limited-edition stainless steel watch with integrated automatic helium release valve and no-decompression dive table bezel (\$2,490; doxawatches.com) pays tribute to the classic model.

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THOSE SUMMER NIGHTS

Shimmer is the key for style after dark.

Parker sequin top (\$245), and Buddha charm lariat (\$120); Ilene's Boutique, Westlake Village, 805-373-6633.

Genetic Denim skinny jeans (\$178); Anne Michelle, Agoura Hills, 818-889-8992.

Sea horse necklace (\$4,560); Maxfield at The Malibu Lumber Yard, Malibu, 310-270-9009.

OPI "Bling Dynasty" nail lacquer (\$9); Thousand Oaks Beauty Collection, Thousand Oaks, thousandoaksbeautycollection.com.

Scott Barnes "Body Bling" lotion (\$38); scottbarnes.com or Kitson, Los Angeles, shopkitson.com.

Paisley bangle (\$10), studded bangle set (\$10), and "Sari" clutch (\$17); Cost Plus World Market at The Promenade at Westlake, Westlake Village, worldmarket.com.

"Salazar" metallic braided wedge (\$120); Banana Republic at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, bananarepublic.com.

Nehita coral earrings (\$900); nehita.com.





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Isabel Marant washed-silk jumpsuit (\$520); Maxfield at The Malibu Lumber Yard, Malibu, 310-270-9009.

Soul Ornaments clay charm necklaces (\$38 each); soulornaments.com.

"Gravitational Pull" sun hat (\$38); Anthropologie at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, anthropologie.com.

Moroccanoil "Glimmer Shine Spray" hair treatment (\$24); Agoura Beauty Supply, Agoura Hills, 818-889-5700.

Vix "Joplin" swimsuit (\$155); Canyon Beachwear at The Malibu Lumber Yard, Malibu, canyonbeachwear.com; or at Twyla K, Westlake Village, twylak.com.

"Sedona" tote (\$195); Tommy Bahama at The Lakes, Thousand Oaks, tommybahama.com.

iJewels by Isabel one-of-a-kind crocheted necklace (\$128); Anne Michelle, Agoura Hills, 818-889-8992.

FitFlop "Walkstar III" flip-flops (\$60); Nordstrom at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks, nordstrom.com.

SUMMER NIGHTS MUSIC SERIES



THURSDAYS 6:00-8:00PM
IN THE OAKS OUTDOOR SHOPS

- 6/24 Unkle Monkey (Tropical Rock)
- 7/1 Rick Jarrett with Hot Sauce (Country)
- 7/8 Tasty Thieves (Alternative Rock)
- 7/15 Urban Dread (Reggae)
- 7/22 Raymond Michael (Elvis Tribute)
- 7/29 The Coveralls (Classic Rock)
- 8/5 Dennis Jones Band (Blues)

- 8/12 Joan Jones (Acoustic Rock)
- 8/19 The Sofa Kings (Classic Rock/Oldies)
- 8/26 Rick Jarrett Jazz Group (Jazz)

plus a musical presentation by Cabrillo Music Theater

- 9/2 Magical Mystery Tour (Beatles Tribute Band)

*Plus **The Coveralls** will play on **July 4** from 6:00-9:00pm.

Other fun family activities happening throughout the day.

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By Mallory McCreary

Get your cool on at these water-inspired getaways.



HOLLA HUNTINGTON BEACH

It's no secret that Huntington Beach boasts world-class surfing—visit August 2 to 8 to watch athletes compete in the U.S. Open of Surfing. Stay at the year-old **Shorebreak Hotel** (shorebreakhotel.com), right across PCH from the beach. The property prides itself on personal touches of casual style (photos of locals framed in acrylic boxes of sand adorn each guest room door, surf- and beach-inspired artwork is clever without being campy) without a cavalier attitude toward service. Partial, full, and panoramic ocean-view rooms with balconies are available. Shorebreak's location in The Strand, Huntington Beach's downtown promenade, means walking to shops and restaurants is easy. The hotel's beach butler can arrange beach- and water-related activities including bicycles, kite flying, and surf camp. The hotel is also pet-friendly, and Dog Beach (no leashes required) is just a mile away. The "Road Perks" package (from \$375) includes accommodations, two summer drinks, Continental breakfast for two, a waterproof book for the beach, complimentary parking, and a souvenir postcard, plus a 20-percent-off coupon for Koocy Swimwear.

King suites at Huntington Beach's Shorebreak Hotel are a retro take on surfer-chic, with old-school Hawaiian fabrics, platform beds with neoprene-covered (i.e. wetsuit material) corners, and tiki-inspired modern floor lamps (left). Views from the rooms and the hotel's loungey restaurant Zimzala include the lively Huntington Beach and pier (right).

Hot Tip:

National Wildlife Refuges

(fws.gov/refuges) offer more than 1,000 miles of marked water trails for canoeing and kayaking, and provide a great way to see wildlife and interact with nature. Some refuges offer guided tours and boat rentals; others are self-guided and/or require you to bring a boat. Visit the website for information about these Western refuges: Stone Lakes (Sacramento area, guided); Ruby Lake (Nevada, self-guided); Siletz Bay (Oregon coast, guided); Upper Klamath Lake (southwest Oregon, self-guided).



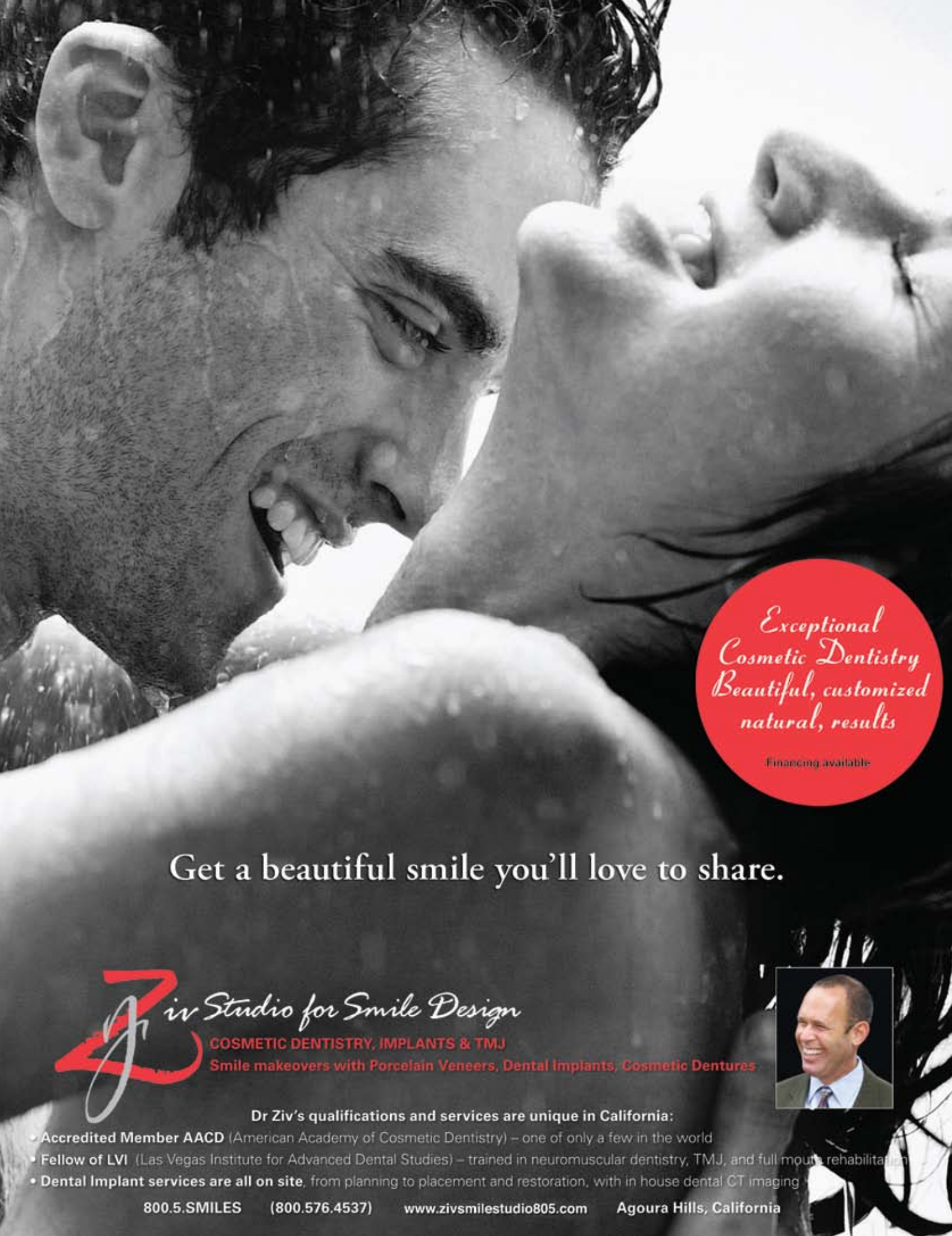
California's natural oceanic wonders (and their conservation and protection) are part of Jean-Michel Cousteau's "Ambassadors of the Environment" program at The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel.

Livin' Laguna

It's hard to downplay the pleasure of an ocean-front room at **The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel** (ritzcarlton.com), where the sound of crashing waves lulls guests to sleep. Feel good about your luxurious stay by participating in the Ambassadors of the Environment program, a joint venture between Ritz-Carlton and Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society. An environmental and cultural education center offers three-hour excursions (\$80-\$120) led by expert naturalists; programs are designed for guests of all ages. Each day focuses on different aspects of Southern California's natural wonders, such as kelp beds, the intertidal zone, the sandy beach, terrestrial ecology, native culture, sustainable living, and becoming an "Ambassador of the Environment." Also new at the property: Raya, a restaurant featuring pan-Latin coastal cuisine using sustainable seafood and local produce. Book a stay with the "Biggest Show on Earth" package (from \$470; through December 31) that includes accommodations as well as two tickets for whale watching from Dana Point, the "whale capital of the West."

For more about Jean-Michel Cousteau see page 88.





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Agoura Hills, California



SPLASH TIME FOR THE KIDDIES

The first-ever 5.5-acre **Legoland Water Park** (legoland.com) opened in May in Carlsbad, California, and is designed for families with children ages 2 to 12. The park has water slides, giant Lego characters who spray water on guests, and two sandy beach wading areas. Highlights include Orange Rush, a 312-foot-long family tube slide (up to four people can ride together); Twin Chasers, side-by-side enclosed tube slides; Joker Soaker, where a Lego jester tells jokes and pours 350 gallons of water on kids as they battle each other with water cannons; and Build-a-Raft River, where guests customize a soft-Lego-brick raft before floating down an 850-foot-long lazy river (while being sprayed and splashed by jumbo Lego characters). For younger children, there's Kid Creek (a mini lazy river) and Duplo Splash Safari (for toddlers) with three small water slides and interactive Duplo animal characters. In between the water fun, there are cabanas available for rent (\$130 half day; \$180 full day) that include seating for four, complimentary drinks, a family locker, and Duplo bricks for entertainment.

Legoland's new water park opened in May and offers splashing, soaking, and slides for kids 2 to 12.

Vegas, Poolside

Not one, not two, not even six pools are enough for **Caesars Palace Las Vegas** (caesarspalace.com), which debuted five new pools (for a total of eight) in March in the Garden of the Gods pool oasis. Each pool is named after a Roman god (Venus, Bacchus, Neptune) and offers unique features such as an 18-foot waterfall, shallow pools with sun chaises, individual whirlpools, fountains for kids to play in, and swim-up blackjack tables. Each pool has a different atmosphere, from solitude to party to family to VIP. Private cabanas with stocked fridge, flat-screen TV and DVD player, iPod docking station, and Wi-Fi (some with butler service) are available for rent; canopied daybeds and lounge chairs also flank the pools. The "Garden of the Gods Pool & Hotel Package" (from \$110 per night; promotion code PKGCGOG) includes a three-day, two-night stay, \$25 pool credit, and a pool bag with a towel and other items. ■

Caesars Palace in Las Vegas now has eight pools for summer fun. The Apollo, shown here, is situated for maximum sun worshipping (though five cabanas and six canopied daybeds for rent offer shade).



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Opolo
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By Mark Langton

8/4-8/8

July 1–August 8: KINGSMEN SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks. Scheduled performances are *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Winter's Tale*. Pre-show picnicking is encouraged, and visitors may encounter roving performers prior to showtime. (kingsmenshakespeare.org)

July 2–30: PASSION FOR PASTELS

Thousand Oaks Community Gallery. Soft pastel works from 25 artists of the Pastel Society of the Gold Coast are on exhibit. The Society is dedicated to bringing attention to the environment through public exhibitions. Demonstrations and classes will be given during the show. (pastelsocietyofthegoldcoast.org)

July 3–September 19: CHAOTIC HARMONY: CONTEMPORARY KOREAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Forty Republic of Korea (South Korea) artists contribute to this exhibit, which includes large-scale images of contemporary issues arranged by themes of land and sea; urbanization and globalization; family, friends, and memory; identity: cultural and personal; and anxiety. (sbma.net)

July 15–17: CALIFORNIA WINE FESTIVAL

Various locations, Santa Barbara. Three separate events feature wine and food from the region and state. The Beachside Wine Festival takes place on the final day at Chase Palm Park with unlimited sampling of more than 200 California wines, appetizers from local chefs, and other artisanal treats. Live music throughout the day. (californiawinefestival.com)

July 16–August 25: YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!

Hall of Administration, Ventura County Government Center, Ventura. Whimsical, humorous, and quirky art using different types of media is on exhibit. Sponsored by the Ventura County Arts Council. (venturacountyartscouncil.org)

July 17–18: SANTA BARBARA FRENCH FESTIVAL

Oak Park, Santa Barbara. Dozens of chefs will prepare French cuisine served with French beer, wine, and Champagne. Continuous entertainment on three stages includes cancan, Moroccan belly dancers, grand opera, Cajun and classical groups, folk dancing, jazz, and cabaret. Wandering mimes, jugglers, and accordion players also perform. (frenchfestival.com)

July 24–25: TROPICAL DAZE SUMMER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Thousand Oaks Community Park. Caribbean, reggae, surf, and island music are part of this island-themed event, along with a children's area featuring hands-on science exhibits, arts, and crafts. Admission is free. A portion of the proceeds benefits Conejo Valley Neighborhood for Learning. (tropicaldaze.org)

August 4–8: OLD SPANISH DAYS FIESTA

Citywide, Santa Barbara. The city celebrates the area's traditions handed down from Spain, Mexico, and the California Rancho period. Festivities include music and dance performances, traditional foods, riding and roping competitions, arts and crafts, and more. (oldspanishdays-fiesta.org)



7/3-9/19



Here's an idea:

GARDENS OF THE WORLD JAZZ SERIES: Pack a picnic and head to the gardens in Thousand Oaks for a month of music. **August 1:** contemporary Brazilian music with Katia Moraes and Sambaguru; **August 8:** the Fatum Brothers' Jazz Orchestra, featuring some of the country's most talented young college musicians; **August 15:** vocalist Spanky Wilson returns from Paris to perform her French jazz interpretations; **August 22:** some of Hollywood's finest players make up the big band Influence Jazz Orchestra. (gardensoftheworld.info)

Family Events

Through August 29: DRAWN FROM THE SEA

Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Sea creatures are depicted from noted natural history book artists of the 18th and 19th centuries. Works include images from expedition reports and scientific journals. (sbnature.org)

July 1–November 28: MUMMIES OF THE WORLD

California Science Center, Los Angeles. The largest traveling exhibition of mummies and burial artifacts from around the world makes its debut. Items from South America, Asia, Oceania, Egypt, and Europe include both the oldest mummy infant and the first mummified family discovered. (californiasciencecenter.org)

July 11: GYPSIES IN A TRUNK

Channel Islands Harbor, Oxnard. The all-volunteer troupe performs the fairy tale *The Stepsister's Tale of Cinderella*. They will also perform *The Three Little Pigs* on August 1. Suggested for ages 3 to 10 (the young at heart are welcome). Admission is free. (channelislandsharbor.org, fairytalesinthepark.com)

July 16–18: CHILDREN OF MANY COLORS NATIVE AMERICAN POWWOW

Moorpark College Athletic Field. Everyone is welcome to attend this Native American festival of music, singing, dancing, storytelling, arts, crafts, and food. (redbirdsvision.org)

July 17: VENTURA BOOK FESTIVAL

Crown Plaza Hotel, Ventura. This celebration of the written word is produced by the California Literary Arts Society. It includes exhibitors, speakers, seminars, readings, and author signings. (literaryarts-ca.org)

July 17–18: PIRATE DAYS

Ventura Harbor, Ventura. Professional actors portray pirates in live-action shows. Other activities include treasure hunts, costume contests, and animals such as snakes and parrots. Admission is free. (venturaharbor.com)

July 24–25: OXNARD SALSA FESTIVAL

Plaza Park, Oxnard. A celebration of everything salsa with food, music, and dance. Salsa tasting, Latin jazz, salsa music, dance performances, celebrity performances, and an international vendor marketplace create a festive atmosphere. (oxnardsalsafestival.com)

July 26–30: FARM CAMP

Underwood Family Farms, Moorpark. Youngsters get an introduction to life on the farm, including growing fruits and vegetables and maintaining livestock. Campers also participate in craft projects, farm games, and a live animal show. (underwoodfamilyfarms.com) ■



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JULY

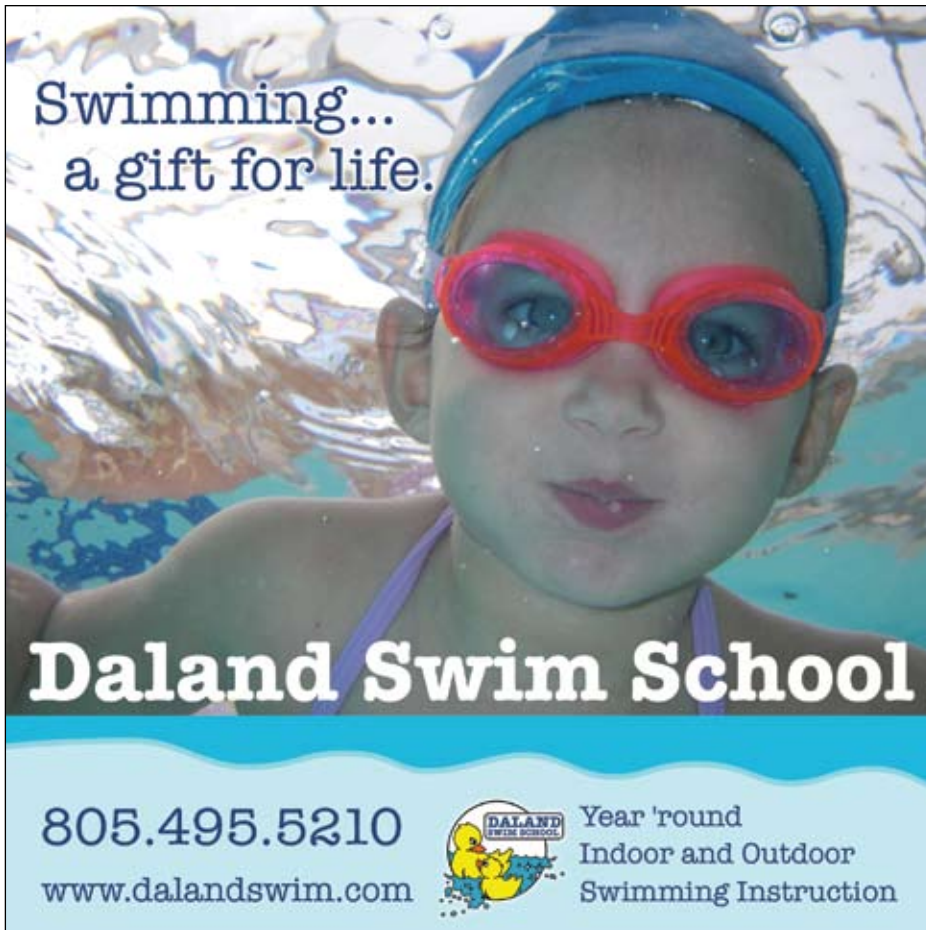
July 23–August 1: See mice turn into horses, a pumpkin into a carriage, and a young woman into a princess when the Cabrillo Music Theatre presents the magical **CINDERELLA** at the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. Along with elaborate costumes and sets, the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

AUGUST

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

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


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



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

SEPTEMBER

September 19: **CONCERT TANGO** is a lively tribute to legendary Argentinean tango composer Astor Piazzolla, who revolutionized traditional tango by incorporating jazz and classical music. The performance takes place at the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza and is a vivid representation of the history and traditions of Buenos Aires. (toaks.org/cap)

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

September 24–26: The **WEST BEACH MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL** will turn West Beach in Santa Barbara into a three-day rock, reggae, and electro party. Concerts on four stages will feature national and local artists, while DJs create cool grooves under a special bamboo shaded "oasis." (westbeachfestival.com)

September 28–October 3: Based on Alice White's Pulitzer Prize-winning book and the Golden Globe Award-winning movie **THE COLOR PURPLE**, this musical at the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza is an inspiring tribute to the power of hope over adversity. The show, which ran on Broadway from 2005 to 2008, received 11 Tony Award nominations in 2006. (toaks.org/cap)

September 30–October 3: Food and wine creations from Ventura to Paso Robles are celebrated at *Sunset's* **SAVOR THE CENTRAL COAST**, held at various locations

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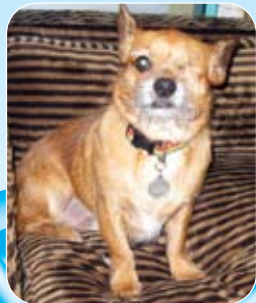
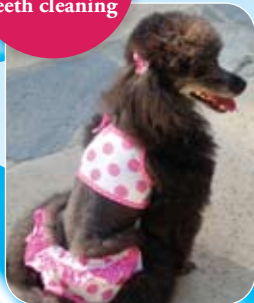
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OCTOBER

October 13–14: Environmental advocate **JACK JOHNSON** concludes his world tour at the Santa Barbara Bowl. During his tour, Johnson will collaborate with more than 150 community groups around the world as part of his All at Once Community (allatonce.org), which focuses on supporting nonprofit groups and educating his fans about plastic waste reduction and sustainable local food systems. Johnson will donate 100 percent of his tour profits to charity. (sbbowl.com)

October 16: The Environmental Defense Center (EDC) introduces its first **RIDE ON THE WILD SIDE** bicycle ride in Santa Barbara. Take a self-guided tour or ride with a knowledgeable guide while visiting some of the local natural areas that the EDC has helped to protect. Families and casual cyclists are welcome (there's a choice of two rides of differing distances) and afterward there will be food and live music at the EDC courtyard. (active.com)

October 30: Known as the star of two of the most family-friendly TV shows of all time—*Full House* and *America's Funniest Home Videos*—**BOB SAGET** comes to the Ventura Theater with his (believe it or not) R-rated stand-up comedy routine. (venturatheater.net)

Save ^{the} Date

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JULY

July 19: Casa Pacifica's **CARE FOR KIDS GOLF CLASSIC** will be held at Spanish Hills Golf and Country Club in Camarillo. Proceeds benefit Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families, which are crisis-care and residential treatment facilities for

abused, neglected, and at-risk children in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Funds will also support community-based programs designed to strengthen families. (casapacifica.org)

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

July 25: Organized by Cupcakes for Cancer, **CUPCAKE CAMP SANTA BARBARA** benefits the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation of Santa Barbara (teddybearcancerfoundation.org). Fess Parker's Doubletree Resort in Santa Barbara hosts this delicious day filled with cupcake creations and competitions. (cupcakecampsantabarbara.com)

AUGUST

August 1: The American Cancer Society of Ventura will once again host a gala fundraiser at a Santa Rosa Valley villa. **JOIE DE VIVRE, EVENING OF HOPE** will have a French-countryside theme. The evening begins with a farmers' market featuring champagne and local produce, followed by a meal of signature dishes prepared by local chefs, a silent auction, and dancing under the stars. Organizers welcome donations from the community for the auctions. (joyoflifegala.org)

August 1: St. Mark's in the Valley Episcopal Church in Los Olivos presents its first **CELLAR CLASSIC: AN AUCTION OF RARE & FINE WINES**. The event features a live auction of fine collectible wines including a 1947 Château Cheval Blanc, 1990 Château Lafite Rothschild, 1996 Trapet Chapelle-Chambertin, and 1992 Taylor Vintage Port (among many others). There



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Insider

will also be hors d'oeuvres, wine, and live entertainment. All proceeds go directly to St. Mark's programs and services. (smitv.org)

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

August 7: Millesime Cellars in the Santa Ynez Valley launches its wine club with a release party called **WINE FOR WELLNESS**, featuring tastings of Brittany Rice's current vintages. Along with live music and food, the evening includes a silent auction to benefit the Rona Barrett Foundation's assistance to low-income seniors in memory of Rice's mother, Linda, the winery's former owner. (millesimecellars.com)

August 28-29: The **RELAY FOR LIFE OF THE CONEJO VALLEY** at Conejo Creek South Park in Thousand Oaks celebrates cancer survivors and remembers those who lost their battle with the disease. The event raises funds for the American Cancer Society's programs of research, education, and patient care. Teams of participants commit to walking the track for a full 24 hours; participants and volunteers are still needed. (cvrfl.org)

August 29: Ventura Harbor hosts the **CHIEFS ALONG THE CHANNEL** car show. Vintage, classic, and later models of Buicks, Oldsmobiles, Pontiacs, and GMC pickups will be on display. In addition to the juried show there will be live music by John Marx and The Blues Patrol, a raffle, and a 50/50 drawing where half of the proceeds goes to the winner and half to a charity. A portion of the proceeds goes to Food Share of Ventura County. Visitors are asked to donate canned and nonperishable items. (venturaharborvillage.com)

SEPTEMBER

September 5: **DAVID GRAY AND RAY LAMONTAGNE** co-headline at the Santa Barbara Bowl with rock music reminiscent of The Band and Van Morrison. *Entertainment Weekly* wrote of Gray's most recent album, *Draw the Line*: "Gray's sincerity and robust voice have been missed, and his new music sounds well-produced and confident." LaMontagne's last American tour elicited this from the *Boston Herald*: "LaMontagne



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delivered with the confidence and enthusiasm of an artist who knows he's reached a creative high point." (sbbowl.com)

September 11: Hospice of the Conejo's annual fundraiser **LAS VEGAS COOL CASINO NIGHT** takes place at Los Robles Greens in Thousand Oaks. Enjoy Las Vegas-style poker, roulette, and craps; winners will receive valuable prizes. Guests can look forward to food, cocktails, a DJ, and dancing. (lasvegascool.org)

September 25: The My Stuff Bags Foundation provides duffel bags with new belongings to children in America who have been rescued from abuse and neglect and who often enter shelters with nothing of their own. The **BEST STUFF OF WESTLAKE VILLAGE** fundraiser takes place at the My Stuff Bags corporate headquarters in Westlake Village. Local restaurants and wineries will be on-hand for tastings; guests can also participate in table games and other fun sports. (mystuffbags.org)

September 25: Join other animal lovers at the **MALIBU PET COMPANIONS ELEGANT CLUTTER TWO** annual garage sale. The goal is to raise funds for the medical needs of homeless pets at the Agoura Animal Shelter so they can be adopted and given a second chance. Gently used donations of all kinds are welcome. The event takes place at the corner of Thousand Oaks Boulevard and Ironwood Drive in Agoura Hills. (malibupetcompanions.org)

GIVEback

WHATEVER YOUR INTERESTS, THERE'S A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY JUST RIGHT FOR YOU.

KINGSMEN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY: If you've ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes of a live theatrical production, here's your chance to find out. The Kingsmen Shakespeare Company at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks is looking for volunteers to help with several facets of its popular summer performances. Volunteers are needed for the ticket and reservation desk, concession stands, beer and wine sales, gift shop, and ushering, and can enjoy the performances for free. (kingsmenshakespeare.org) ■

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

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Mind/Body/Soul

By Maryann Hammers



LIQUID SERENITY

Spas get back to basics with water-based treatments.

SINCE ANCIENT ROMANS DALLIED IN BATHHOUSES, water has been an integral part of spa treatments. The word “spa” derives from the phrase *sanitas per aquas*. Translation: “health through waters.” Over the years, the term spa began to refer to natural mineral pools and hot springs. In fact, one of the world’s most famous healing hot springs is in Belgium, in a town named Spa.

Because few things are as relaxing and stress-reducing as the sound, sight, and feel of water, this column highlights spas that offer healing soaks, scrubs, and other H₂O-based treatments.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE At the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village (fourseasons.com/westlakevillage), chaise lounges are angled along a trickling wall fountain; a bright red bridge spans a serene indoor stream; while outside, a pagoda overlooks a peaceful pond, and boulders from the River Kwai line serene paths. A bubbling whirlpool looks out to a private patio, and the cabana-ringed lap pool provides an inviting space to sip a Perrier.

The spa’s wet rooms deserve special mention just because they are so darn pretty—drenched in natural light, opening out to an enclosed tropical garden blooming with orchids and birds of paradise. A Vichy shower, with a delicious cascade of warm water, feels like a tropical rainfall, and seaweed-based hydrotherapy treatments, such as the thalassotherapy jetted bath or sea-kelp scrub, are lovely add-ons. For the ultimate indulgence, guests can reserve a spa suite (rates by the day or half-day) with plunge pool in a private courtyard, huge deep-soaking tub, and Swiss shower with overhead rainfall.

The spa has just revamped its treatment menu and now offers super-hydrating Ling products. The ginseng herbal facial is the ultimate skin quencher, with warm steam, replenishing toner, oxygen-infused anti-aging moisturizer, and a moisture mask. The result is a fresh-as-spring-rain complexion.

A BATH WITH A VIEW With its primo location on Montecito’s Butterfly Beach, the Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara (fourseasons.com/santabarbara) is a natural for those seeking liquid serenity. The private beach club with poolside spa treatments is indulgent, but the spa itself raises the bar on baths with a menu of soaking rituals in a private suite with oceanfront terrace. Choose from jasmine, rose, and red-wine baths (served with a glass of vino); “Aromapothecary” baths with a customized blend of fragrant essential oils; vitamin C- and E-infused baths; and therapeutic soaks with jade and ginseng.

Baths are followed by a wrap, scalp massage, and moisturizing lotion, while French doors open to allow refreshing

ocean breezes and the sound of crashing waves to waft through. Then it's time to cuddle up in a plush robe and sip some cucumber water while enjoying the view.

FEET FIRST The Aqua Detox Foot Spa at Bellezza Vita (bellezzavita.com), a Summerland day spa, is an ionic footbath that supposedly stimulates the lymphatic system to purge toxins out of the body through pores in the feet. Feet are soaked in a tub to which an electrode array has been added; the water turns black, brown, or greenish, sometimes with foam or floating flecks.

Skeptics say that the science surrounding the treatment is dubious, and that the water changes colors due to saltwater's effect on electrodes. Despite the doubters, many who've tried the treatment swear the soaks have reduced swelling and helped them feel healthier, lighter, and sprightlier.

Whether one believes the health claims or not, there's no disputing that a warm saltwater foot soak, perhaps combined with an ocean-view pedicure, hydrating mineral wrap, or moisturizing rose-and-olive-oil scrub, followed by a Swiss shower, is bound to make a person feel pretty darn good.

WATER AND WINE With its picturesque vineyards framed by rolling oak-studded hills, Paso Robles is best known for its fast-growing wine country. But the town was first famous for its hot springs, dating back to the Franciscan friars and Mission period. One of the town's early developers, Drury James (uncle to outlaw Jesse James), envisioned Paso Robles as a health resort, with underground hot sulfur springs, a fine hotel, and a luxurious bathhouse as the main attractions.

That vision continues at River Oaks Hot Springs Spa, where \$12 mineral-rich soaks are still the best bargain around. Surrounded by the serene landscape, guests lounge in hillside cedar tubs under the stars in bubbling 117-degree springwater.

For those who are so busy tasting wine that they forget to make it to River Oaks, spa rooms in the Jesse James Building at Paso Robles Inn offer jetted tubs with mineral water pumped directly from the town's famous hot springs.

OH, OJAI After its latest renovation, the spa at the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa (ojairesort.com) sports a clean, linear look with an appealing fireplace lounge. The spa's new Café Verde beckons with blue-glass mosaic-topped bistro tables around a trickling fountain in a sunny courtyard.

Despite all that's new, thankfully the spa continues to offer its signature "O" treatment. Though it's listed under the massage menu and incorporates the stress-relieving, healing aspects of shiatsu, it feels more like a nurturing, primal return to the womb. The treatment takes place in a secluded three-foot-deep blue-tiled pool heated to body temperature. Under an oversized umbrella and surrounded by rosemary plants and blooming rose bushes, the guest is invited to lie back in the water, eyes closed, and effortlessly float with the assistance of buoyant head and leg supports. Meanwhile, a therapist massages shoulders, cradles the body, gently stretches limbs, applies acupressure to trigger points, and rocks the head. When it's over, most people will feel so relaxed they'll need a few minutes to emerge from the warm watery embrace and come back to earth. ■



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Pursuits

By Cynthia House Nooney Photograph by Dan Holmes



STILL AFLOAT

A wooden yacht race sails toward its 33rd anniversary.

IN THE SUMMER OF 2007, a well-known yacht race among the wooden boat community called the McNish Classic was to be held for the last time. The occasion was bittersweet: Many entrants sailed to Channel Islands Harbor from coastal locations, including San Diego and San Francisco, to honor the event's founder, Dick McNish, who, at age 80, planned to sail his final race in the regatta's 30th and final year.

"But the darn thing was left on the race schedule the following year, so we had to show up again," McNish laughs. "And here we are, still doing it."

Dressed in Levis and a windbreaker, the veteran sailor moves deftly around the marina of Pacific Corinthian Yacht Club, a private member facility in Oxnard that sponsors the race. Dock workers call out, "Good morning, Mr. McNish," with reverence as he strolls toward *Cheerio II*, his beautifully restored and impeccably maintained 46-foot yawl. Built in 1931 and once owned by actor Errol Flynn, the vessel boasts polished planks—the luster of which most home's floors have never seen. McNish will set sail later this month for his namesake's 33rd annual race with longtime friend and race organizer Scott Harrison as part of his crew.

McNish and Harrison convene in the yacht's cozy cabin to share "old salt" tales that date back to 1976, when McNish took so long to complete a race that the officiates went indoors. Frustrated that his wooden craft didn't do well against modern design boats, McNish created an event exclusively for old-time vessels, which debuted in 1977. Described by many as one of the best-run regattas in Southern California, the McNish Classic typically draws about 30 wooden boats from around the state.

McNish developed an interest in sailing while hanging around the breakwater as a youth in Santa Barbara. At age 9, he entered a washtub derby (his "boat" was a washtub with an inner tube around it); later, he and his friends rented 18-foot sailboats for 25 cents an hour whenever they could scrounge up the money. "Girls were there too," smiles McNish. "That was another reason we were down at the beach."

His leading lady these days is *Cheerio II* (McNish's wife, Juanita, passed away last year). Since purchasing the boat in 1980, McNish has replaced its sails, decks, deck beams, and cockpit, and installed new countertops, water and fuel tanks, and more.

Properly maintaining wooden boats is no simple undertaking. They require extensive amounts of labor, and it costs more to care for them than fiberglass boats, which can simply be washed down after use. But they're also rich with history: *Cheerio II* has been designated as the state of California's 66th historic vessel and landmark. "Sadly though, many of the old boats aren't taken care of, so they [literally] get cut up [for disposal]," says McNish.

The lucky ones get rehabilitated. Dennis Conner, four-time winner of America's Cup, completely refitted *Cotton Blossom II*, a Q-class sloop built in 1925, after discovering it in poor condition in Blaine, Washington. It held special significance for Conner, since he'd sailed aboard it as a junior sailor in San Diego. "He's done a lot to raise the profile of wooden boats," says McNish. Conner has participated in the McNish Classic for the past two years. He skippered his 51-foot-sloop *Brushfire* to victory in 2008, and placed best in class last year with *America*, a schooner replica of a yacht that was built in 1851.

Spectators can enjoy the race from a boat, or sit at the breakwater of Channel Islands Harbor to view the beginning and end of the regatta, says McNish. "Everyone has their spinnakers up at the finish, so it's quite spectacular."

Ships Ahoy

The 33rd McNish Classic will be held Saturday, July 31, beginning at noon in Channel Islands Harbor. Entrants include cutters, ketches, schooners, sloops, and yawls. The winner receives the Strathmore Cup as well as his weight in Mumm's champagne. Pacific Corinthian Yacht Club (pcyc.org) in Oxnard hosts the race.

The race comprises a 17-mile course with an inverted start, which means slower boats begin first, and the entire fleet finishes about the same time. McNish employs a sophisticated handicap system that incorporates historical information about each vessel. The system works so well that even though McNish once finished first, his handicap placed him third overall. Ironically, he's never won the Strathmore Cup, a silver bowl that McNish and Juanita donated on behalf of their company, Strathmore Homes, for first place.

"I can't wait to get my hands on that man! He's a doll," says Santa Barbara resident Kym Renga, who, along with husband Armand, competes every year in the McNish Classic aboard their vessel *Charity*. "We've been involved with wooden boats for forever and a day, and wouldn't think of missing Dick's event. He always welcomes us [sometime during the event]. It's a super-personal touch, and he does it for everyone."

As three-time winners of the yacht race (along with a few best-in-class trophies), Renga says the event is about much more than the results. Camaraderie is palpable among wooden boat owners, she says, because everyone appreciates how much work is required. "Once you catch the bug, you're hooked. It's fun to see the same people every year."

Does McNish have any expectations about finally winning this year? "Heavens no!" he replies. "I just want to have a good time." ■

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In the Garden

By Billy Goodnick

HOW TO DRY OUT THE LAWN—ON PURPOSE

Today's water-saving landscaping techniques are all about the future.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE LAWN

As anyone who loves the sight of an emerald green lawn will attest, it isn't easy growing the icon of suburbia. Voracious webworms feast on the fescue; and inexplicable brown patches appear seemingly overnight, leading homeowners to wonder whether those crop circle believers might be right.

As a setting for recreation, lawns are indispensable. There are few alternatives that provide a durable but soft "floor" for playing with the kids or the pooch. But as a strictly ornamental bauble, lawns take their toll. The cost of mowing services, lawn products, and water are nothing to sneeze at (unless you're allergic to grass pollen). Reducing the size of an existing lawn—or removing it completely—will not only save money but goes a long way toward preserving water for the future.

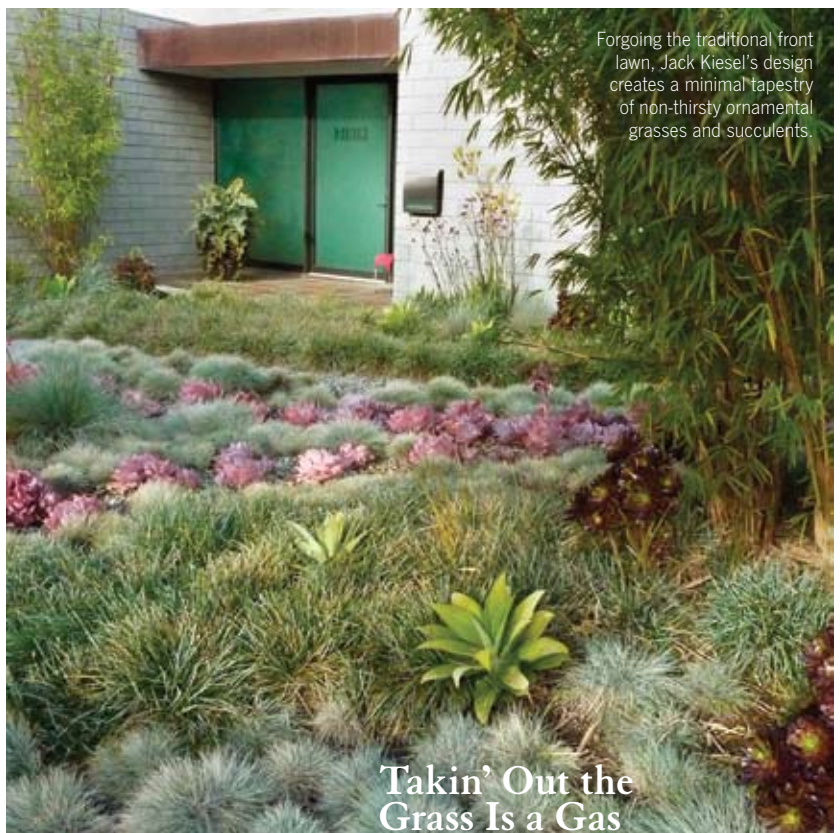
The Calleguas Municipal Water District is the wholesaler to 22 water purveyors in Ventura County. Eric Bergh, acting general manager of resources, says, "We're currently storing about a three-year reserve, but since we're largely dependent on imported state water, we need to keep conservation on people's minds."

"I've always felt that our residents would comply with the campaign to reduce water use by 15 percent," says Louise Helliwell, water conservation outreach coordinator for the City of Thousand Oaks Public Works Department, speaking of the city's conservation goal.

"Rather than take a punitive approach, we educate property owners, landscaping services, and school kids about saving water indoors and out." Asked about this year's higher rainfall, Helliwell says, "We don't want people becoming complacent. It's a drop in the bucket after a five-year drought."

TRENDS

For an 805 response to the notion of water conservation, I visited Thousand Oaks resident Len Loomis, whose front lawn recently went missing somewhere near Redwood Middle School. "I've made a lot of green improvements to the house, installing two solar hot-water systems and going all out on insulation," he says as we survey his front yard while standing on his "Leave Your Carbon Footprint at the Door" mat. "We bought the house for the swimming pool when the kids were little. Now it's my place for exercise. So I ripped out



Forgoing the traditional front lawn, Jack Kiesel's design creates a minimal tapestry of non-thirsty ornamental grasses and succulents.

Takin' Out the Grass Is a Gas

Honey, I shrunk the lawn: If you need a durable garden "floor" for active recreation, narrow the lawn to the smallest practical size, manage irrigation wisely by following your water agency's guidelines, and use only organic fertilizers and pest treatments.

Switch it up: For those who just like the look of a swath of green in the yard, substitute old-school fescue with native sedge (*Carex praegracilis*) or UC Verde buffalo grass. They use 50 percent less water. Sources can be found online.

Say goodbye: Eliminate the lawn completely and replace it with colorful drought-tolerant landscaping, a shaded reading retreat, or a place to grow something to eat.

my useless front lawn and replaced it with smarter landscaping to offset water I need for the pool.”

For those toying with the idea of “lawnicide” but who fear the expense, Loomis’ \$4-per-square-foot makeover—which included turf removal, tree pruning, construction, irrigation, planting, and mulch—should put their minds to rest. Now, a diverse bird- and butterfly-friendly garden with 43 varieties of non-thirsty shrubs, perennials, and ornamental grasses has replaced thirsty fescue grass. “I love how the garden comes to life when a breeze animates the grasses,” he says, pointing to a nearby tuft of Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*).

A BOLD APPROACH

Loomis might be the pioneer in his neighborhood of “lawnlubbers,” but his undertaking is tame compared to Santa Barbara architect David VanHoy’s new front yard. “My architectural work always makes a statement. When I remodeled my house, I knew my garden would have to embody the same bold approach,” VanHoy says.

Driving down his quiet residential Mesa neighborhood street, VanHoy’s redesigned house might be mistaken for a minimalist, contemporary office building. Gray concrete block is the dominant construction material; frosted green glass provides a cool backdrop for the Pepto-pink porch chairs. VanHoy admits his design limitations: “From the outset, I knew I had to turn the garden reins over to a creative mind like Jack’s.”

Jack is Ventura-based landscape architect Jack Kiesel, for whom every project is a blend of art and ecology. Kiesel almost never designs a garden with a front lawn. “From an ecological viewpoint, irrigated lawns have no business in Southern California,” he insists. His approach to VanHoy’s front yard was “contemporary and impressionistic, using the motif of a dry stream.” The pink leaves of *Echeveria* ‘Afterglow’ mark the flow line of the imaginary creek, while three species of blue-gray grass in graduated sizes trace the banks and upland edges.

The garden has been in for three years and aside from some initial weeding has needed only minimal care. It uses about 25 percent of the water of a typical lawn-dominated yard and doesn’t need fertilizer or pesticides.

GETTING STARTED

There are plenty of resources available to help homeowners and businesses conserve water. Most local suppliers’ websites are linked to informative resources, like plant-finder software and calculators that explain when and how much to irrigate. Homeowners can also request a free water survey from their city or water company to troubleshoot water-gulping trouble spots.

Whether motivated by the practical necessity of reducing summer water bills or the desire to landscape in an earth-friendly way, now is a good time to rethink the siren song of the perfect lawn. As a sign at Thousand Oaks City Hall reads, “Your Lawn Has a Drinking Problem.” ■



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Good Deeds

By Mark Langton Photographs by Judi Bumstead



Scott Mitnick, Andrew Powers, Candice Hong



Nikolay Chernavsky, George Hincapie, J.C. Simmons



Overall winner Michael Rogers, Robert Bradway

ANDY TAO



Jerry Jayne, Mary Klem



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CYCLING FOR A CURE

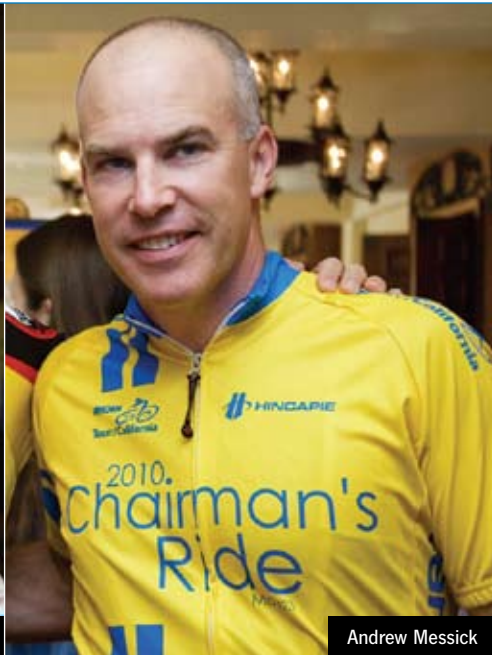
Breakaway from Cancer raises awareness and support.

THE EVENT: The Amgen Tour of California (amgentourofcalifornia.com) is the biggest bicycle race in the United States, attracting some of the world's best cyclists. On May 23, it concluded its eighth and final leg, racing through Thousand Oaks, Westlake Village, and Agoura Hills. One of the most important components of the Tour is Amgen's *Breakaway from Cancer* initiative (breakawayfromcancer.com), which raises awareness of cancer education and support programs. On May 11, a special ride was held with *Breakaway from Cancer* spokesperson George Hincapie, the current U.S. Professional Road Race Champion and 2010 Amgen Tour of California competitor. Participants in this fundraiser rode on the same course the pro cyclists would compete on 12 days later. As an official sponsor of the Stage 8 Overall Finish, *805 Living* initiated several *Breakaway from Cancer* fundraisers, which included a raffle at the Taste of the Tour event at Malibu Family Wines. In addition, a percentage of advertising revenue from the May 2010 issue was donated to *Breakaway from Cancer*.

THE CAUSE: With its corporate headquarters located in the heart of the Conejo Valley and facilities in more than 30 countries worldwide, Amgen has been a pioneer in biotechnology products and services for more than 25 years. In 2005, Amgen created *Breakaway from Cancer* to help promote four nonprofit cancer support organizations: Prevent Cancer Foundation (preventcancer.org), Cancer Support Community (formerly The Wellness Community; cancersupportcommunity.org), Patient Advocate Foundation (patientadvocate.org), and National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (canceradvocacy.org).



Matt Skelton



Andrew Messick



Talia Emery, Marjorie Fagan



Dennis and Terry Gillette



Phil Anschutz



Bill Koehler, Greg Ramirez, Denis Weber, Harry Schwarz

Choosing Champions

This year, Amgen chose four *Breakaway from Cancer* “champions.” Each is a cancer survivor (nominated by their communities) who has made a difference in the lives of others affected by cancer. One of those four is Steve Bartolucci of Thousand Oaks. Diagnosed in 2000, Bartolucci began chemotherapy to treat non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. During his first session he began watching the Tour de France and was inspired to read Lance Armstrong’s memoir about his own battle with cancer, *It’s Not About the Bike*. To counter the effects of the chemotherapy, Bartolucci began cycling and eventually became a fundraiser and advocate for the Lance Armstrong Foundation and a regional mentor for Team LiveSTRONG. He is also the leader of the LiveSTRONG Army of the Conejo Valley. After battling relapses in 2003 and 2005, Bartolucci received his first clear scan in July 2008. ■



Steve Bartolucci (right) with Yaroslav Popovych, winner of the 2010 Amgen Tour of California’s Stage 8 *Breakaway from Cancer* “Most Courageous Rider Jersey.”

Good Deeds

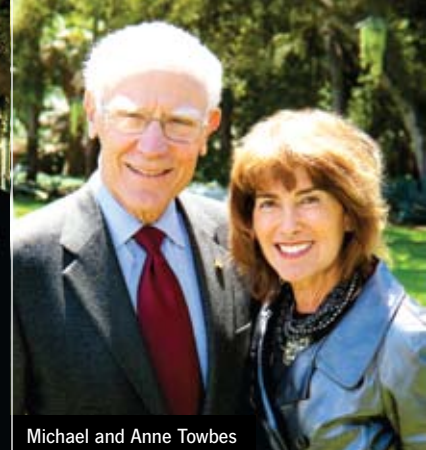
By Mark Langton Photographs by Amy Lundstrom



Girls Inc. board president Sarah Stokes, Debra Martin Chase, Girls Inc. executive director Monica Spear



One Hundred Committee founders Joanne Holderman, Jeri Rovsek, Ann Marie Powers, Peri Harcourt



Michael and Anne Towbes



Sandi Nicholson, Melody Taft, Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree



Stina Hans, Judy Foreman

GIRL POWER

Girls Inc. inspires girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

THE EVENT: Girls Incorporated of Greater Santa Barbara celebrated the 25th anniversary of its One Hundred Committee Luncheon April 29 at the gardens of Lotusland in Montecito. The event raised funds for its after-school and summer programs and featured keynote speaker Debra Martin Chase, a two-time Emmy-nominated motion picture and television producer whose work includes *The Princess Diaries*, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, and *The Cheetah Girls*. Chase has been honored by *Ebony* magazine, Women in Film, and *The New York Times*, and has been named by *Essence* magazine as one of 50 African-American women shaping the world. To kick off the celebration, a VIP cocktail reception was held at Lotusland the evening before the luncheon.

THE CAUSE: Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara has been working for more than 50 years as an affiliate of the 146-year-old national nonprofit organization. Through educational and research-based programs, activities, and advocacy, the group offers girls ages 4½ to 18 the opportunity to experience success, responsibility, confidence, and independence. (girlsincsb.org) ■



Donna Fisher Yates, Caroline Diani, Mindy Denson, Mari Mender



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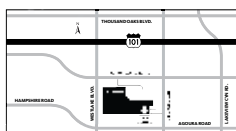
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Upgrades

By Mallory McCreary



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Gorgeous designs inspired by water.

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2. Jaclo's huge 16-by-20-inch **RETTANGO CHROMOTHERAPY DREAM LIGHT RAIN CANOPY** (\$14,500) changes color (or not) depending on your settings. Ferguson, Ventura, ferguson.com; and The Plumbers Warehouse, Ventura, eplumbing.com.

3. Lotus leaves float like platters on still pond water; Baker's 16-inch-diameter **LOTUS TABLE** from the Bill Sofield Collection (\$1,670) does the same on land while holding drinks or other refreshments. Cabana Home, Santa Barbara, cabanahome.com.



4. Frisky fish frolic all over Trina Turk's **PISCES FABRIC** in "pool" (\$96 per yard) from Schumacher. Cabana Home, Santa Barbara, cabanahome.com.



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5. In the shade or in the sun, the **HARMONY FULL CHAISE** (from \$9,525) from Brown Jordan equals poolside relaxation. Berks', Agoura Hills, berkspatio.com; and Patiworld, Thousand Oaks, patiworld.net.

6. Elk Lighting's **ODYSSEY SCONCE** in polished chrome (\$597) brings to mind cascading rivulets of water and jeweled raindrops. Designer Lighting, Westlake Village, 818-575-9560.

7. The **BAYVIEW CAST-IRON GARDEN UTILITY SINK** in "cashmere" (from \$1,222) from Kohler is tough enough to handle the grungy stuff while still maintaining a clean profile. Also shown: Bayview wood sink stand (\$855) and antique wall-mount sink faucet (from \$886). Pacific Sales, Camarillo and Thousand Oaks, pacificsales.com; JC Plumbing 'N' Things, Thousand Oaks, jcplumbing.biz.

5.



6.

8. Franke's **LITTLE BUTLER WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM** (from \$490; required HT-200 heating tank, \$360) offers hot and cold filtered water from its streamlined faucet. Warehouse Discount Center, Agoura Hills, wcdappliances.com; and franeksd.com.



8.

BE WATER-WISE: The Responsible Bathroom iPhone app is a joint project between American Standard and The Nature Conservancy. Visit the site (responsiblebathroom.com) or download the app for tips on water conservation and usage, a water-saving calculator, water rebate locator, and information on American Standard water-saving bathroom products.

7.



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just add water

The ocean, the lakes, the pools, the ice—water comes in so many forms in so many places around the 805 that the real headline of this story should be Just Add You. Here are some refreshing ways to enjoy the summer.

By Laura Samuel Meyn, Frank Nelson, Cynthia House Nooney,
Angela Pettera, and Sarene Wallace
Photographs by Gary Moss



Stylish Waterfront Camping

You don't have to love camping to see the charm in spending a weekend in a retro-cool 1967 Airstream Safari camper (set up by somebody else) at a beautiful, breezy waterfront site. Santa Barbara Silver Safari (sbsilversafari.com) will tow its swanky camper to a scenic spot of your choice in Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez, or Ojai (\$175 per night plus setup and cleaning fee; two-night minimum required).

"Of course our customers enjoy the opportunity to camp in an iconic midcentury Airstream trailer, but they also like that we do all the heavy lifting," says company co-owner Meredith Klassen, who runs the business with her husband, Jack. "Just show up and enjoy a fully stocked kitchen, down comforters, Starbucks coffee, fresh flowers, oilcloth table covers, and vintage camp accessories."

The company's most-requested spot is Ocean Mesa Campground, just north of Santa Barbara; its hilltop location offers stunning ocean views. Ojai's Lake Casitas has campsites that back up to the water.

—*Laura Samuel Meyn*





Ice Blocking at Arroyo Verde Park

Chill out with the kids this month and go ice blocking at scenic Arroyo Verde Park in Ventura (cityofsanbuenaventura.net). Ice blocking is like sledding, only with SoCal style. All you need is one of the park's grassy hills and a 10-pound block of ice purchased from a grocery store. A folded towel on top of the ice makes a nice cushion and keeps rear ends from getting soaked too quickly. Sit, shove off, and enjoy the ride. Afterward, take advantage of the 132-acre park's hiking trails, nature center, playgrounds, and barbecue and picnic areas.

—Sarene Wallace

Hidden Treasures

Seeking a bit of solitude in the sun? If so, try exploring three out-of-the-way beaches tucked along the Malibu coastline (parks.ca.gov). Easy-to-miss turns off the PCH and steep declines to the water's edge keep throngs away from these hidden jewels called El Pescador, La Piedra, and El Matador. Framed by dramatic sandstone cliffs and expansive views of the Pacific, these patches of paradise don't feel like typical Los Angeles beaches. Occasionally dotted with kayakers and spear fishermen, the narrow strands (located between Leo Carrillo and Point Dume State Beaches), are ideal for sunbathing, scrambling up rocks, and exploring sea caves. After summer's end they become even more secluded.

—*Cynthia House Nooney*

Sunset Sail

Picture this: A yacht cruising just off beautiful Santa Barbara as the sun goes down. For 10 minutes after sunset a magical twilight plays over the ocean and the mountains; then, up over those mountains rises a massive full moon. Such entertainment is quite something to see, says Dennis Longaberger, captain of the *Sunset Kidd* (sunsetkidd.com). He skips these romantic monthly cruises, which come with special Lunartinis from the onboard bar while "Dark Side of the Moon" and other theme music plays. While July 24 promises a great moon, the most spectacular celestial show happens July 25, when the full moon rises in a darker sky after the sun sets (on the 24th, the moon rises before the sun sets).

—*Frank Nelson*

Boating & Birding

Birders and other nature lovers might like to head to Lake Cachuma (cachuma.com) this summer and hop aboard a 30-passenger pontoon boat. The two-hour nature cruises occur every Friday at 3 p.m., Saturday at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., and Sunday at 10 a.m. July visitors have a good chance of seeing a variety of wildlife, including mule deer with fawns, rare western pond turtles, and all sorts of birds such as hawks, owls, grebes, coots, ducks, and herons. Bald eagles and ospreys, though more common in winter, are occasionally seen in summer. The lake is about 20 miles north of Santa Barbara on Highway 154.

—*F.N.*

It's Okay to Touch

Perched on Santa Barbara's Stearns Wharf just above the rolling ocean waves, the Ty Warner Sea Center offers nearly 7,000 square feet of summer fun for the entire family, especially the kids. It's a hands-on experience, and inquisitive youngsters can count on getting those hands (at least!) wet. The center offers a great introduction to all sorts of sea creatures, and there's even the chance to touch a real shark. (Don't worry, it's only a little one and very friendly.) The center, which operates under the umbrella of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (sbnature.org), is open every day except holidays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

—*F.N.*

Jumpin' July

July is one of the busiest months of the year for events at the Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (sbmm.org). One of the highlights is the annual Kardboard Kayak Race (July 10). Armed with cardboard and tape, contestants have one hour to design and build their kayaks before launching them off a nearby beach to see who can paddle farthest. Other special events in July include an art show, a local history lecture, a conservation movie about dolphins, plus an ongoing exhibition of early Santa Barbara postcards. That's all in addition to the regular exhibits and information relating to boats and navigation, diving and surfing, whales, and a host of other seafaring topics.

—*F.N.*



Ultimate Escapes

In the mood for a romantic getaway? Planning a family reunion or milestone birthday celebration? Turn to Santa Barbara Exclusive Rentals (santabarbaraexclusiverentals.com) for personalized service at high-end properties. Waterfront estates with magnificent views and luxury amenities are among those available, says owner Donna Hartman, whose clientele come from nearby and far-flung locations. Sunset strolls, long boarding, picnics, wine tours, and whale watching are just some of the requests she accommodates for vacationers of all ages.

“We provide the service that guests would expect from a five-star hotel,” says Hartman, “and go out of our way to make everything special and memorable. I want guests to have the time of their lives.”

—C.H.N.

Dogs on the Beach

Most people want to hit the seashore at some point during summer, but what to do about Fido? The 805 area offers a number of beaches where man’s best friend is welcome to tag along. Among them are Summerland Beach, Oxnard Shores, Ventura’s Harbor Cove, and Goleta County Park Beach. But owners looking for a place where their pets can really race along the sand and let off steam might like to head for Arroyo Burro Beach, popularly known as Hendry’s Beach. An easy drive out of Santa Barbara along Cliff Drive, this treasured off-leash gem scores a resounding two paws up.

—F.N.

Canary Hotel’s Poolside Evenings

The rooftop pool at the Canary Hotel in Santa Barbara (canarysantabarbara.com) is a nice place to while away an early evening, especially when there’s cheese to nibble and wine to drink. Every Monday night throughout the summer (except July 5) from 5:30 to 8 p.m., \$20 buys four pours of local wines and a selection of paired artisanal cheeses; the rooftop’s sweeping views of Santa Barbara are thrown in for no charge. Check Canary’s website for a calendar listing of the participating wineries.

—Angela Pettera



Riding Horses on the Beach

Cynics, beware: The romantic idea of riding horses on the beach really *is* as thrilling as it sounds—especially in the capable hands of expert guide Graham David Goodfield of Los Padres Outfitters (lospadresoutfitters.com). “I’ve been doing it my whole life—I grew up in this area—and I still enjoy it,” says Goodfield. “When you see dolphins right off the shore break, that’s pretty special.”

Goodfield plans his two-hour beach rides (\$150 per person) around low tide, taking clients out before 10 a.m. or after 5 p.m. to Summerland or Rincon Beach. He doesn’t mix groups, so each outing is customized: Spend the whole time on the sand or hit the trail in Montecito, too. There’s also a three-hour wine and cheese ride (\$175 per person) that can incorporate both beach and trail time, with a stop at a trailside picnic spot overlooking the ocean.

With such a romantic backdrop, it’s fitting that Goodfield’s beach rides attract so many couples; in fact, there have been some marriage proposals. “They always let me know ahead. I’ll stroll off and give them some private time,” he says. “I’ve never had one say no.”

—L.S.M. ■

water



THE BIG PICTURE AND THE LOCAL STORY

Countries around the globe are using water at unsustainable rates and the demand might soon surpass total supply. That crisis is already a familiar one in California, especially Southern California. Potable used water throughout the 805 comes from local bodies of water and groundwater sources, Northern California, and the Colorado River, but all of those resources are dwindling.

Even if we can conserve enough water to keep the taps flowing, is it safe to drink or are dangers hiding in the water supply? The oil catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico continues to demonstrate the fragility and vulnerability of the environment, which provides water for our existence and our way of life. It is perhaps clearer than ever that we can no longer take water for granted.

Our future is dependent on our stewardship of this water planet. Being proactive now means less hardship later. Fortunately, there are people who think about water all the time who can help guide the rest of us. Here are three stewards of local water to provide some frank talk and connect the dots between environmental conservation, water quality, and quantity.

Water is the driving force of all nature.

—*Leonardo da Vinci*

works

THE FUTURE OF
H₂O IN THE 805.

By Anthony Head

I believe that water is the only
drink for a wise man.

—Henry David Thoreau

WATER QUALITY

Steward: Mark Watkins, director Public Works Department, City of Thousand Oaks

The Public Works Department is responsible for the management of the city's public infrastructure, which includes the safety of tap water. (toaks.org)

“As far as safety regulations for drinking water are concerned, the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], the state department of health services, and the quality control boards—they all move in one direction, and that means regulations get stricter over time,” says Mark Watkins. “Which is why as an industry we’ve done such a wonderful job so that when you turn the tap you don’t think about whether it’s good or not. It’s good. Period. And it’s not that way everywhere in the world.”

In general, tap water can be considered a safe, economical alternative to bottled water. (The EPA requires more frequent testing for tap water than the FDA requires for bottled water.) Watkins says not to believe everything in the movies when it comes to threats of bioterrorism. Security is certainly high, but the chance of introduced substances creating widespread health effects through the water supply is extremely remote also because of the tremendous volumes of water.

Still, the quality of tap water depends on its sources and how it’s treated. The EPA requires every water supplier to issue annual Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR) listing the water sources as well as the levels of all detected contaminants. Unfortunately, this information can be murkier than pond water.

“Our CCRs are published in accordance with how we’re obligated to do it. The bottom line is that the state of California says here’s what makes water safe, and here’s all our data to prove our water is safe. But I agree it’s hard to read and make clear sense of all the measurements,” says Watkins of the CCR for Thousand Oaks. “There probably should be something right on the front of it that says, ‘Your Water Is Safe’ rather than that message being buried in the numbers. That might be something I think about for the next time we publish our CCR.”

More frank talk from Mark Watkins:

“We’re all pretty aware that this is a pretty arid region. So what we do with our water once we get it is of critical importance.”

Proactive Tip: Know your water quality. To find the Consumer Confidence Report for a particular city, go to epa.gov/safewater/ccr/whereyoulive. If you can’t understand it, call and talk to the water supplier.

There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew. —Marshall McLuhan

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Steward: Vince Kinsch, chapter chair, Ventura County chapter of Surfrider Foundation

Originally started by a group of surfers in Malibu in 1984, Surfrider Foundation's national network strives to protect and improve the quality of coastal ecosystems. (surfrider.org/ventura)

"In the old days, surfing in a rainstorm was one of those really fun things to do; that tends to be the best condition to surf," says Vince Kinsch. "We're told not to do that anymore because of the degradation of the quality of our coast. Depending on the time of year here in the Oxnard plain our water bodies can get pretty bad, especially after rains. In the past, we've had gross polluters of the oceans and streams and rivers that we've had to deal with; and we also have issues with farm runoff that still need to be resolved. The bottom line is that we've got to take care of our resources."

Surfrider recently produced a film called *Cycle of Insanity: The Real Story of Water* (vimeo.com/10328536), which presents the world's water situation in a straightforward way, and pays particular attention to the situation that California and the rest of the country faces.

"The film's concept is simple, water travels to the ocean. That's it. But that doesn't mean the solutions for protecting the environment are simple. As surfers, we're in the water a lot, so we're willing to make the sacrifice to ensure that there is clean water."

While the 20-minute film looks at the big picture of how interconnected and fragile the world's water sources are, Kinsch says his group works locally to educate people and try to move them away from personal, wasteful habits that form toxic runoff, like watering down driveways and using too many chemicals for lawn care.

More frank talk from Vince Kinsch:

"People worry that we don't have enough water—we don't. That's just a fact of life in Southern California. We as a community need to look at where our water is coming from, how we use it, and where it's going when we're done with it."

Proactive tip: Reduce the runoff.

On July 10, Surfrider Ventura conducts a public workshop: "Ocean Friendly Garden Basics." For information visit the website.



When the well's dry, we know the worth of water. —Benjamin Franklin

QUANTITY

Steward: Florencia Ramirez, owner, Azul Conservation Products, Ventura

Azul Conservation Products provides consumers with products and practical solutions for conserving water at home. (azulconservationproducts.com)

"I am thinking about water a lot. When I'm not thinking about my three children, I'm thinking about water," says Florencia Ramirez. "I've always been an environmentalist, but about three years ago I read a story about tips on saving water, including taking shorter showers. Well, I had no idea how long my usual shower was, but when I timed myself, it was a moment when I knew I had to make a change in my life and wanted to spread the word."

It turned out that Ramirez's usual shower lasted eight minutes, which she says is about average. "I've heard a lot of shower stories—the 20-minute shower, the shower until all the hot water is gone, the hour shower—but if the average person reduced showering by four minutes, they could save about 2,500 gallons a year each."

Azul Conservation Products makes an array of items designed to save water. The shower timer, for instance, is a simple device to help reduce shower times (Azul recommends four minutes). "It happens gradually," says Ramirez, "but they absolutely work. And the shower is a good beginning. People will typically start their reduction in the shower but then take their water-consumption reduction efforts outside the shower." ■

More frank talk from Florencia Ramirez:

"Conservation from the heart comes with age. But my two little children know that Mama [Nature] gets mad when you leave the water running. It's a good lesson for the rest of us."

Proactive tip: Conserve every drop you can. Try Azul's products, or go to bewaterwise.com to find more water conservation tips and rebate programs for Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.



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Evening of Hope Gala
Sunday August 1st 2010 - 3:00pm

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Dress: Garden party attire. Hats and Flats (No high heels, s'il vous plait)

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THE BEAUTY OF BASIL

From salads and sandwiches to pastas and pesto, basil is unrivaled in versatility.

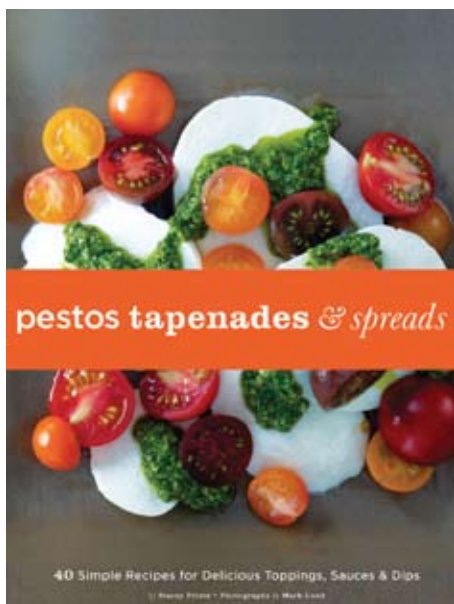
IF ITS SPICY-SWEET FRESH FLAVOR isn't reason enough to eat more basil this summer, then perhaps this will be: Basil isn't just delicious and aromatic, it happens to be very healthful, too. Low in calories and without fat, basil offers antioxidants, vitamins (especially K and also A and C), minerals (iron, potassium, calcium, manganese, and magnesium), and fiber.

More importantly, when it comes to cooking, there's simply no other herb that's quite as useful as basil. You might pinch off a little rosemary or sage for roasting, or you could snip some mint for iced tea and mojitos, but when it comes to basil, you'll need lots of it. Layer large, flat basil leaves with sliced

tomatoes and mozzarella for an irresistible *insalata Caprese*, or roll up a stack of leaves and thinly slice them to sprinkle over Italian pasta dishes and Asian curries.

But it's one of basil's best-loved uses—pesto—that typically requires the largest amount of the herb, usually several cups per batch. (Here's a time-saving tip: Spoon freshly prepared pesto into an ice cube tray topped with a little olive oil to help preserve the color and flavor. Freeze it, then pop the cubes out into a freezer bag for storage, and use one or two at a time, as needed.) For other great recipes and serving suggestions, turn to *Pestos, Tapenades & Spreads* by Stacey Printz (Chronicle Books, 2009; chroniclebooks.com). Printz says that when it comes to traditional basil pesto (see her recipe on page 66), there's no limit to its versatility. "I love it tossed with boiled fingerling potatoes—halve or quarter them depending on size, boil them, and toss with salt, pepper, pesto, and additional Parmesan," she says. "And I often use it as a salad dressing—add balsamic vinegar or fresh lemon juice to greens, chopped fresh tomatoes, [and] any other vibrant veggies along with a spoonful of the pesto."

No matter how you use your basil, remember that it's *always* best fresh (don't even think about substituting dried), and try to leave fresh basil as lightly cooked as possible. "Tender herbs or greens are best when they are at their brightest, so tossing them in at the end of a recipe is great," says Printz. "It helps maintain the flavor of the fresh herb."



Basil is in season this summer and is endlessly versatile in all types of delicious dishes (see page 66 for recipes).



At the Market

When shopping for basil, keep in mind that most pesto recipes call for large quantities—usually more than is found in a small prepackaged container of cut herbs. That’s just one of many reasons to buy a generous bunch of locally grown basil at an area farmers’ market, where you can ask for it by the pound.

At the Ventura County Farmers’ Markets (vccfarmersmarkets.com), fresh basil is available from ABC Farms and Beylik Farms, both located in Fillmore. Albert Baltazar, owner of ABC Farms, says that in addition to the sweet variety he also offers lemon and Thai basil in the summer months; the latter is perfect for Asian recipes. While there’s no shortage of recipes that call for the herb, Baltazar has some easy everyday uses for it, too: “It’s really good in a bagel with cream cheese,” he says. “I also like it in sandwiches instead of lettuce.”

On the Town

LOOKING FOR A FRESH BASIL OR PESTO FIX? HERE ARE SOME LOCAL SPOTS THAT DO WONDERFUL THINGS WITH IT.

BLUE TABLE in Calabasas (bluetablecalabasas.com) is a favorite of restaurant expert Angela Pettera for its pressed sandwich, which includes basil, *burrata*, and prosciutto. It also serves a Caprese sandwich with fresh mozzarella, tomatoes, basil, grilled eggplant, and balsamic vinaigrette. Blue Table’s Agoura Hills location (bluetable.net) features both sandwiches as well.

CAFÉ FIRENZE in Moorpark (cafefirenze.net) is popular for its fantastic pesto, used in such dishes as the Gnocchi Cinque Terre (potato dumplings tossed with fresh pesto). The restaurant also serves a Caprese salad highlighting the season’s best tomatoes and basil leaves.

CHOLADA THAI in Newbury Park (choladathaicuisine.com) is a great spot for Ga Pow (a stir-fry with garlic, chiles, fresh basil leaves, peppers, and mint), according to contributing events editor Mark Langton. He calls the dish “A wonderful *mélange* of flavors,” adding, “We got it with shrimp, but you can also choose chicken, beef, pork, or tofu.” The restaurant also uses fresh basil in several curry dishes.

CIGALE in Oak Park (cigalecafe.com), a French restaurant, is well-loved by contributing food editor Sarene Wallace for its vegetable-quinoa salad. Called *Du Jardin* on the menu, the salad combines quinoa with assorted roasted vegetables tossed in pesto (or *pistou*, as the French call it).

The kitchen at **MEDITERRANEO** in Westlake Village (med-rest.com) uses herbs from the recently planted herb garden on the property. Look for basil in such dishes as the Pan Plano Mediterraneo flatbread with marinated tomatoes, olives, caperberries, pesto, ricotta, and arugula; and *panzanella*, a traditional tomato and bread salad with fresh basil, red onions, olives, cucumbers, and *burrata*.

ROOT 246 in downtown Solvang (root-246.com) was recommended by reader Janet Laubly via Facebook. Root 246 uses fresh basil not only in the kitchen (the changing seasonal menu includes such dishes as oak-grilled Santa Barbara spot prawns with sweet corn-quinoa risotto and a basil *pistou*), but also at the bar (see the Herb Gimlet recipe on page 66).

GINO’S TRATTORIA in Thousand Oaks (ginos-trattoria.net) is where contributing lifestyle editor Cynthia House Nooney likes to stop in for a pizza Margherita, which is traditionally topped with fresh basil, mozzarella cheese, and tomatoes. “The fresh basil is subtle, not overwhelming, just the right touch,” says Nooney.

IN THE KITCHEN

Ingredient note: There are more than a dozen varieties of basil, but sweet Genovese is a universal favorite; it's what Stacey Printz used in her pesto recipes here, and it's what you'll find at most supermarkets. If you're growing your own or shopping at a farmers' market with a wider variety, consider trying Thai basil for the Thai pesto here, and for adding to stir-fries or curries.

THAI PESTO

This recipe comes courtesy of Pestos, Tapenades & Spreads by Stacey Printz (Chronicle Books, 2009; chroniclebooks.com). Printz writes, "This recipe is an ode to the delicate blend of herbs and spices commonly found in Thai cuisine—in this case a delicate blend of ginger, lime, and lemongrass. If you like your food hot, feel free to up the ante by adding more jalapeño!"

- 1 cup packed fresh basil leaves
- 1/3 cup chopped cashews
- Zest from one lime
- Juice from 1/2 lime
- 1 teaspoon peeled and grated fresh ginger
- 1 or 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce (dark or light)
- 1/4 teaspoon dried lemongrass
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

Place the basil, cashews, lime zest and juice, ginger, jalapeño, soy sauce, and lemongrass in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until a coarse mixture forms. With the machine running, gradually stream in the oil and blend until the pesto emulsifies.

Makes about 3/4 cup.

Serving Suggestions:

- Toss with shrimp, 1 to 2 tablespoons of oil, your favorite Asian noodles (such as wheat, egg, ramen, or rice noodles), and sautéed mushrooms and onions.
- Add to any stir-fry.
- As an appetizer, serve wonton cups filled with seared fish that has been mixed with the pesto and garnish with ribbons of fresh basil. To make the wonton cups, preheat oven to 350°F. Brush wonton wrappers with a little melted butter, press them into the depressions of mini muffin tins and bake for 6 to 8 minutes until lightly browned and crisp. Remove from the tins and cool on wire racks.

ROOT 246 HERB GIMLET

This recipe comes courtesy of Root 246 in Solvang (root-246.com), where it's among the restaurant's most popular cocktails.

- 1/2 ounce fresh lime juice
- 1/2 ounce simple syrup (equal water and dissolved sugar)
- 2 or 3 basil leaves
- 1 1/2 ounces vodka (Root 246 uses Crop Organic Vodka)

Muddle the first three ingredients then add vodka and ice. Shake in a cocktail shaker and then strain into a martini glass.

TRADITIONAL BASIL PESTO

This recipe comes courtesy of Pestos, Tapenades & Spreads by Stacey Printz (Chronicle Books, 2009; chroniclebooks.com). Printz writes, "This is a great recipe during the summer when basil is plentiful. Garden-fresh basil is one of my favorite parts of the warm sunny months and this pesto is so adaptable, you will find that it easily fits into any outdoor BBQ."

- 2 1/2 cups of packed fresh basil leaves
- 1 large or 2 small garlic cloves, minced
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup pine nuts or walnut pieces
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup good-quality extra-virgin olive oil

Place the basil, garlic, cheese, and nuts in the bowl of a food processor, season with salt and pepper, and blend until a coarse mixture forms. With the machine running, gradually stream in the olive oil and blend until the pesto has emulsified.

Makes about 1 cup.

Serving Suggestions:

- Toss pasta with the pesto and garnish with chopped fresh tomatoes; or add sautéed zucchini and/or Italian sausage.
- Place a spoonful atop grilled fish.
- Pound chicken breasts, dust with flour or bread crumbs and sauté. Top with pesto and fresh tomatoes and serve over hearty greens such as a mixture of arugula and spinach.
- Mix into mashed potatoes for added flavor and color.
- Serve on grilled bread with fresh tomatoes. ■



Pesto makes an easy and exotic appetizer when stuffed into wonton cups (top); traditional pesto has many uses, including as a topper for breaded chicken breasts (above).

805^{LIVING}

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RED, WHITE, AND NEW

Newly released wines from California's Central Coast have arrived.

Finding new wines to enjoy and share is one of the great rites of summer. The following suggestions—which only scratch the surface of what's out there—are 10 solid bottles to try right now.



JUSTIN 2009 SAUVIGNON BLANC, PASO ROBLES (\$15; justinwine.com)

If sauvignon blanc isn't the perfect summer wine, I don't know what is. Bright and lively, it tastes exactly like a July afternoon. Justin's features shades of citrus and tropical fruits, and there's a little bit of spring grass on the nose, too. Pack a picnic with this one; it's a screwtop, so skip the corkscrew.

MIDNIGHT CELLARS 2007 ZINFANDEL, PASO ROBLES (\$29; midnightcellars.com)

Paso Robles is zin-central, which is why they've been holding a Paso Robles Zinfandel Festival every March for almost two decades. It's also California's zinfandel capital because of its reputation for producing enormous wines that routinely reach above 16-percent alcohol. True to the character of the region, Midnight Cellars' zinfandel is 16.9-percent alcohol. That's huge, but it doesn't really flaunt its size. There is harmony and balance. There are dark and spicy flavors, and tannins that lose their grip just when you need them to.

NINER 2007 SANGIOVESE, BOOTJACK RANCH, PASO ROBLES (\$24; ninerwine.com)

Winemaker Amanda Cramer once described wine-making to me as a balance between tradition and innovation. That's evident with her sangiovese, which just so happens to be my favorite Italian varietal (and quite possibly the best grape of all time). Niner's starts out structurally strong, like a true New World red, then loosens up quickly, reminding me that Italy grows sangiovese to complement the tang of tomatoes, the earthiness of basil, and the simple wonder of cheese and bread. Anyone else want pizza tonight?



TREANA 2008 WHITE, CENTRAL COAST (\$25; treana.com)

This Rhône blend (viognier and marsanne) features Monterey fruit with Paso Robles technique. Ultimately, it's got that signature California heft. But while it's deep and rich, it's not weighty; I suspect the delightful leanness results from 25 percent of the wine fermenting and aging in stainless steel instead of oak. The flavors are still full; the bouquet leans toward the stone fruit side rather than flowers or perfume.



EBERLE 2008 BARBERA, PASO ROBLES (\$26; eberlewinery.com)

Nice. That's what the host will say if you bring this to her get-together. After the second sip, she'll look at you with that genuine "I wasn't sure at first, but now I'm *really* glad I invited you to the party" expression. The plush sweetness of dark cherry and black currant puts everyone else in a good mood, too. It's a northern Italian varietal, which means truffles, artisanal cheeses, pesto, oregano, and cioppino go with it.



LONGORIA 2007 TEMPRANILLO, SANTA YNEZ VALLEY (\$36; longoriawine.com)

Fair warning: There's probably not much of this left. Tempranillo is my favorite Spanish grape (and quite possibly the best grape of all time). Longoria's fifth vintage from Santa Ynez fruit takes this great grape to new heights with touches of syrah and merlot. The combination is soft and rich (so are the tannins). There were only 270 cases produced, so like I said, there's probably not much of this left by now. Better hurry.



ZACA MESA 2006 SYRAH, SANTA YNEZ VALLEY (\$23; zacamesa.com)

Wonderful, just as it should be from a winery with more than three decades of syrah know-how. It's big but not chunky; lush and outdoorsy with hints of wild sage. Though nice on its own, it would pair nicely with foods made with rosemary and garlic, especially when cooked over a campfire.

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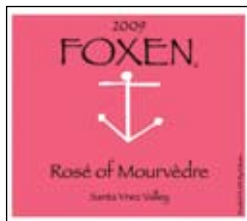
**LA FENÊTRE 2008 À CÔTÉ SYRAH,
'SOUTH MESA,' SANTA BARBARA**
(\$24; lafenetrewines.com)

I purposefully placed two syrahs next to one another on this list because both are from Santa Barbara County, and both are excellent. But whereas Zaca Mesa's syrah made me want to enjoy the woods, this one is for a backyard evening barbecue. It's concentrated; there's more spice here, too. And it wants food—something grilled, something full-bodied, but not fussy or overly complicated.



**DERBY WINE ESTATES 2006
FIFTEEN 10, PASO ROBLES**
(\$28; derbywineestates.com)

Last year, I wrote: "Rhône reds often overshadow their white cousins, which is a shame." In that lament, I cited Derby's White Rhône blend as an excellent example that's not to be overlooked. Allow me to introduce another Derby blend: The Fifteen 10 is elegantly structured with syrah, grenache, counoise, and mourvèdre. It reminds me of why I wrote that sentence in the first place.



**FOXEN 2009 ROSÉ OF MOURVÈDRE,
SANTA YNEZ VALLEY**
(\$25; foxenvineyard.com)

The mourvèdre grape is earthy and rustic. It lends Rhône-richness to this lively rosé. Light enough for the patio. Serious enough for the dinner party. Versatile enough for the following short list of food pairings: fajitas, baguette with butter and prosciutto, braised rabbit, grilled andouille sausage, french fries, soft goat cheese, *pâtes au pistou*, pasta with red sauce, grilled bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin, lamb with herbs, hamburgers, cheeseburgers, veggie burgers, and salade niçoise. ■

Head's Up:

Whisky Tasting, July 22

Whisky Business presents a discussion on the impact American distilleries make on the whisky industry; plus, how corn and rye whiskies differ from the malt and barley varietals made in Ireland and Scotland. There's also a sampling of eight American whiskies, for aficionados and neophytes alike.

Price is \$35 per person and includes light appetizers. The program begins at 6:30 p.m. at Eric's Restaurant inside the Palm Garden Hotel (palmgardenhotel.com) in Newbury Park. Reservations are required: 805-415-9177 or whiskybusiness@live.com.

805 Spotlight

TASTE OF THE TOUR 2010

805 Living teamed up with Malibu Family Wines to host the *Taste of the Tour* food and wine event on May 22, the day before the Stage 8 Overall Final of the Amgen Tour of California. Guests enjoyed a stellar lineup of culinary treats from area restaurants, sipped wines from Malibu Family Wines, and participated in a raffle to raise funds for Amgen's *Breakaway from Cancer's* nonprofit partners. A special thanks to everyone who participated for making this event a tremendous success.

1 Tim Kilcoyne, The Sidecar Restaurant; **2** Beth Percy Neal (Malibu Family Wines), Mario Alcocer (Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village); **3** Alberto Velazquez, Amy Commans, James Boldizar, Mediterraneo; **4** Ron Semler, (Malibu Family Wines), Tarcisio Mosconi, Francesco Velasco (Tra di Noi Ristorante); **5** Elly Salter, StoneFire Grill; **6** Dr. Lowell Novy (Novy Ranches), Lisa Semler (Malibu Family Wines); **7** Wade Powers, Christopher Malesa, Grissini Ristorante; **8** Andy and Jayme Brooks, Brooks; **9** Sean Kingsbury, Susie Pridmore, Crowne Plaza/C-Street; **10** Nancy Homer, Brent's Deli; **11** Roberto Carboni, Chef Roberto; **12** Jacopo Falleni, Fabio Viviani, Firenze Osteria; **13** Adam Horton, Saddle Peak Lodge; **14** Nancy Oseguera, Chris Byerrum, Meg Davis, Panera Bread; **15** Nicole Pecel, Christine Ruby, Pikey's Pub; **16** Sandy Skeeter, Colleen McCall, We Olive; **17** Will Duke, Natasha Trifunovic, Rick DeMarco, The Counter; **18** Monica Lambert, Sarah Ekeberg, Catering Celebrations by The Plug Nickel; **19** Derek Baugh, Malibu Family Wines; **20** Kevin Bening, Malibu Family Wines; **21** Jackie Merkle, Shave It Ice; **22** Omar Macias, Christopher Bryan, Ben Plummer (Safire) with Angela Pettera (*805 Living*).





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GARY HOVLAND

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CENTRAL COAST WINES MADE EASY.

By Anthony Head

J. Lohr's Fog's Reach Pinot Noir is terrific. I'm not kidding—it's yummy. Go get some. The rest of this month's column is a shameless plug for me because I've finally made it to the 21st century. That's right: I'm on Facebook. It only took me six

years or so to get there, but considering my computer is nothing but a glorified typewriter, that's actually impressive timing.

On this Facebook thing, I have regular wine picks from around the world, news on beer, and tips for spirited tipling.

You get to meet my dog, Brix. Plus, I post notes and photos from my travels.

But I want more. I want you to join me there. It's something I'm going to call a "virtual community" (I like the ring to that), and I want to start building it right away.

Just go to facebook.com and search for Armchair Oenophile, and then I'll see YOU on the Internet. (Oh, and I wasn't kidding about the J. Lohr pinot. Go to my Facebook page and find out more.) ■



J. Lohr 2007 Fog's Reach Vineyard Pinot Noir Arroyo Seco (\$35)
jlohr.com

Taste of the Town

By Angela Pettera



DINNER WITH A VIEW

The best waterfront dining from Malibu to Morro Bay.

DINING BY THE WATER IS A SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PRIVILEGE. It's especially pleasant during the summer months with a chilled cocktail in hand. Our area boasts plenty of restaurants with views of the ocean or harbor, estuary or lake, but not all are equal when it comes to cuisine. These are my favorite dining destinations from Malibu to Morro Bay, where the food on the plate rivals the spectacular views.

The Bistro at Bacara Resort & Spa in Goleta

(bacararesort.com/wine-dine)

View: Miro, the resort's smartly appointed dinner-only restaurant, has more sweeping ocean views from its wraparound patio, but The Bistro is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for sunny water gazing. Sit on the patio under an umbrella—or not, they can be moved according to guests' preferences—to see the waves over a grassy bluff. A path leads from the nearby pool area down to the beach for a post-meal stroll.

Eats: Classic comfort food is expertly made here using produce from Bacara's own ranch three miles away. Tomatoes are dropped off daily for the roasted tomato soup. The Bistro Royal with Cheese (prime beef cheeseburger with skinny fries) is a winner, as is the pappardelle with Bolognese sauce and the popular grilled chicken chopped salad.

Cocktail: It's hard to pass up a bottle of wine from the cellar, but the Bellini is made with champagne, peach schnapps, and white peach purée.

Duke's on Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu

(dukesmalibu.com)

View: Every table, in any of the multiple dining rooms, has a wide view of the Pacific, even at night (when the waves are lit). On Friday nights, Hawaiian dancers entertain at the outdoor Barefoot Bar, so tables fill up fast.

Eats: The fresh fish, cooked to order with a choice of sauces, really shines here. The signature preparation is the macadamia-bread-crumbs coating with a tasty lemon-caper sauce. Servers are knowledgeable about the fish varieties, which change often. The hula ice cream pie is worth the extra calories.

Cocktail: A nice match for the fresh fish is the Tropical Itch with passion fruit juice, vodka, curaçao (made from orange peel), and dark rum.

The spectacular view from The Bistro at Bacara Resort & Spa is made one better by a path that leads to the ocean (top). Different varieties of fish can be prepared in Duke's favorite style—sautéed with panko, macadamia nuts, lemons, and capers (opposite page).

Marisol at The Cliffs Resort in Pismo Beach

(cliffsresort.com/dining)

View: The ocean is just a few feet away from the tables on the patio. Patrons seated inside the restaurant (open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily) can also watch the water through floor-to-ceiling picture windows. A meandering path just beyond the patio hugs the shoreline for a spectacular walk through the resort grounds.

Eats: Chef Gregg Wangard loves using local Peacock Farms tomatoes in his beautifully crafted food. Oysters on the half-shell and the six-pack of crab cakes are great for sharing. For heartier fare, there's the braised short ribs with potato puree and rioja sauce.

Cocktail: The blood-orange margarita with tequila and Grand Marnier matches the color of the sunset.

Orchid at the Inn at Morro Bay

(innatmorrobay.com/dining)

View: Every table has views of Morro Bay's rising and falling tides. It makes for the perfect setting for Sunday brunch or as the sun sets over the tranquil waters at dinnertime. Morro Rock with its myriad bird life is visible in the distance.

Eats: Orchid is one of the best places to try Hearst Ranch's grass-fed beef and local halibut from Giovanni's Fish Market. There's also plenty of local produce on the seasonal Mediterranean menu. Brunch offers a nice classic eggs Benedict.

Cocktail: Sunday brunch includes a mimosa with freshly squeezed orange juice, but at happy hour the Lemon Drop made with Absolut Citron, lemonade, a dash of triple sec, and lemon slices is the way to go. ■



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Thoroughly updated (and sophisticated) ice cream sandwiches are now available from Malibu's Beachy Cream mobile cart. (beachycream.com)

DIALED IN

News from the local dining scene.

GOURMET ICE CREAM SANDWICHES

The Coolhaus ice cream sandwich truck (eatcoolhaus.com) has another contender on its tail: **Beachy Cream** ice cream sandwiches (beachycream.com), which are made in Malibu by co-owner Ann Ryan. She uses locally sourced organic ingredients to put together confections like the Key Lime Cowabunga with Key lime ice cream sandwiched between two coconut-oatmeal cookies. Strawberry Surfer Girl is made with strawberry-balsamic ice cream and sugar cookies. Ginger Wipe Out is candied-ginger ice cream between molasses-spice cookies. Ryan has a small cart roving Malibu to dispense her goodies; it's also available to rent for parties. Check Beachy Cream's Facebook page or Twitter feed for the cart's whereabouts.

BLIZZ FROZEN YOGURT OPENS

By now **Blizz Frozen Yogurt** (blizz yogurt.com) should be open at The Lakes shopping center in Thousand Oaks. The small Downey-based chain of self-serve yogurt shops has the requisite tart variety that no fro-yo spot should be without. They also offer a rotating roster of flavors like wild berry, pomegranate, and low-fat peanut butter. Toppings, applied by the customer, include fresh berries, melon cubes, *mochi* bits, cheesecake bites, and animal crackers. Blizz makes crêpes on-site for loading up with fresh fruit and soft-serve coolness. The yogurt can also be blended into smoothies, shakes, and coffee creations.

Muirhead Departs Safire

Mike Muirhead, chef of Safire in Camarillo (safirebistro.com), is moving to Montana with his wife and new baby. Christopher Bryan takes over as executive chef after working at Safire for seven years, the last three as Muirhead's sous chef. Of the Safire menu Bryan says, "We're going to keep our same focus." He has instituted a new "Bistro Fare" menu with entrées under \$20. "We're trying to be more accessible to everyone while maintaining the Safire quality. Not everyone can afford to go out and have an expensive dinner," Bryan says. The Bistro Fare menu, which will change seasonally, is available from 5 p.m. to closing every night.

Have a tip for our restaurant news pages?

Email our dining editor at angela@805living.com.

Winemakers' Cookoff

The Paso Robles Rotary Club is once again throwing a **Winemakers' Cookoff** (winemakerscookoff.com), where 30 local vintners show off not only their wines but also their cooking prowess. Food will be judged by the public and by a professional panel of food and wine journalists. Julie Beaver and the Bad Dogs provide musical entertainment. The 12th annual event takes place on Saturday, August 7 from 6 to 9 p.m. at River Oaks Hot Springs in Paso Robles. Tickets, which are \$75 per person, help fund college and vocational-school scholarships. Designated-driver tickets are \$40. Hotel packages and shuttle services are available. ■

805 DINING GUIDE

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

BELLINI OSTERIA BAR & LOUNGE

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

Romantic

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



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(805) 418-1760

Make reservations online: www.TheGrill.com

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 noisise really satisfies. Brunch dishes up classics like French toast, omelettes, and eggs Benedict.

BOUCHON

9 W. Victoria St.
Santa Barbara, 805-730-1160

bouchonsantabarbara.com

Wine Country

Entrées \$24–\$35

Romantic

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

CA' DARIO

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

cadario.net

Italian

Entrées \$15–\$28

Romantic

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

CAFÉ PROVENÇAL

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

cafeprovencal.biz

French

Entrées \$16–\$37

Romantic

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

CHARLIE'S MALIBU

22821 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-456-3132

charliesmalibu.com

American

Entrées \$16–\$45

Romantic

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

COAST RESTAURANT & BAR

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

canarysantabarbara.com

California Bistro

Entrées \$13–\$28

Romantic, Sunday Brunch

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

ELEMENTS

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

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.

ENOTECA TOSCANA WINE BISTRO

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

enotecatoscanawinebistro.com

Mediterranean

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

Live Music

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

ERIC'S RESTAURANT & BAR

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

palmgardenhotel.com

Californian

Entrées \$15–\$36

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

FINS CREEKSIDE

23504 Calabasas Road
Calabasas, 818-223-3467

and FINS SEAFOOD GRILL

982 S. Westlake Blvd.

Westlake Village, 805-494-6494

finsinc.com

Seafood

Entrées \$12–\$32

Live Music

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

FLEMING'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE & WINE BAR

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

flemingssteakhouse.com

Steakhouse

Entrées \$24–\$40

Romantic

This snazzy steakhouse keeps the prices relatively low while maintaining high energy levels, especially in the bar, which has its own appetizer menu. Big salads, prime meats, and seafood dishes rule the dining room, though, and sides are meant to be shared (read: big), so order accordingly. Desserts are large and come with a huge bowl of freshly whipped cream. The wine list is encyclopedic and award-winning. Almost every style is represented, from sparkling whites to petite sirahs to deep cabernets. There are also 100 selections by the glass available nightly. Check the website for special-event wine dinners and seasonal prix-fixe menus. Fleming's is open for dinner nightly.

GEOFFREY'S MALIBU

27400 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-457-1519

geoffreysmalibu.com

Cal-Eclectic

Entrées \$25–\$77

Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

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

GIANNFRANCO'S TRATTORIA

666 Linden Ave.
Carpinteria, 805-684-0720

Italian

Entrées \$13–\$28

Great Patio

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

THE GRILL ON THE ALLEY

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

American
Entrées \$19-\$42
Sunday Brunch

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

GRISSINI RISTORANTE ITALIANO

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

Italian
Entrées \$10-\$32
Live Music

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

**HAMPTON'S AT THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL
WESTLAKE VILLAGE**

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

Californian
Entrées \$23-\$50
Romantic, Great View, Sunday Brunch

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

HOLDREN'S STEAKS & SEAFOOD

1714 Newbury Road
Newbury Park, 805-498-1314
and 512 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-965-3363



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sweetarleens.com



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.

MASTRO'S STEAKHOUSE
2087 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-418-1811
mastrossteakhouse.com

American
Entrées \$26–\$76
Live Music

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

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

MOZ BUDDHA LOUNGE
30105 W. Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-735-0091
mozbar.com

Pan-Asian
Entrées \$17–\$36
Live Music

The crowds come for the cover-free live music in the lounge, but the large plates of pan-Asian cuisine hold their own in the dining room. Tiger prawns are tossed with *yakisoba* noodles and a ginger-garlic sauce; mahimahi comes with coconut rice and tropical fruits; chicken is stuffed with crab and asparagus. Though dishes can be ordered in individual portions, the menu suggests family-style servings for

sharing, so bring some friends. If your friends are energetic and hip—all the better. In warm weather, the patio with expansive views is a nice place to be.

NOBU
3835 Cross Creek Road
Malibu, 310-317-9140
nobumatsuhisa.com

Asian-Fusion
Entrées \$8–\$32 or Omakase menu \$80–\$120

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

ONYX AT THE FOUR SEASONS HOTEL WESTLAKE VILLAGE

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

Japanese
Entrées \$10–\$45

Romantic, Great View

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

PADRI CUCINA ITALIANA & MARTINI BAR
29008 Agoura Road
Agoura Hills, 818-865-3700
padrirestaurant.net

Cal-Italian
Entrées \$11–\$26

Live Music

Chef and owner Saverio Posarelli also shares a partner interest in Cafe Fiore on California Street in Ventura. The spirits flow freely at the Martini Bar's happy hour from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. The outdoor patio is great for smoking cigars or tucking yourself away in a private cabana and listening to live music Wednesday through Saturday nights. Inside, get cozy with a Cal-Italian menu of beef carpaccio, crab cakes, *burrata* cheese with arugula and pine nuts, lobster and leek ravioli, seafood risotto, osso buco (braised veal shank), and coconut crème brûlée with caramelized bananas.

RIVIERA RESTAURANT & LOUNGE
23683 Calabasas Road
Calabasas, 818-224-2163
rivieracalabasas.com

Continental
Entrées \$14–\$39

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

ROY'S
6363 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Woodland Hills, 818-888-4801
roysrestaurant.com

Hawaiian Fusion
Entrées \$21–\$33

Romantic

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

SEAGRASS
30 E. Ortega St.
Santa Barbara, 805-963-1012
seagrassrestaurant.com

Seafood
Entrées \$25–\$36

Romantic

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

THE SIDECAR RESTAURANT
3029 E. Main St.
Ventura, 805-653-7433

thesidecarrestaurant.com

Continental
Entrées \$10–\$25

Sunday Brunch, Live Music

Set in a 1910 Pullman train car, this restaurant has been around since 1933. The current owners have a devotion to fresh, locally grown produce; artisanal cheeses; and farm-fresh eggs. Chef Tim Kilcoyne turns out beautiful steaks, creamy polenta, and a build-your-own salad with options like organic greens, niçoise olives, roasted butternut squash, English cucumber, Point Reyes blue cheese, smoked salmon, focaccia croutons, and spiced hazelnuts. At brunch, the hollandaise is tangy and the house-made lemon curd is irresistible. Tuesday night is grilled cheese and jazz night. Look for purveyor dinners and murder mystery theatre nights.

SPARK WOODFIRE GRILL
1555 Simi Town Center Way
Simi Valley, 805-823-4756
sparkredfish.com

Seafood
Entrées \$14–\$28

Live Music

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

SUZANNE'S CUISINE
502 W. Ojai Ave.
Ojai, 805-640-1961
suzannescuisine.com

Cal-Med
Entrées \$15–\$28

Romantic

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

TIERRA SUR RESTAURANT AT HERZOG WINE CELLARS

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

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

TRATTORIA FARFALLA

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

Romantic

The warm and sexy environs here make this a superb spot for a date. The lighting is flattering at the high pub tables in the lounge, at the brown leather booths running the length of the restaurant along the open kitchen, and on the tented patio. The cooking from chef-owner Santino Coccia is good enough to swoon over. Any selection from the fresh Mozzarella Bar will be wonderful. Add some prosciutto to the cheese selection to create a light meal. The mushroom risotto is scooped out of a giant wheel of Parmesan onto your plate. Flavorful skirt steak comes as a main course or on the Piemontese salad. The popular dessert, Torta della Nonna (grandmother's cake), is a warm and sweet ricotta cake with lemon zest and pine nuts.

TUSCANY IL RISTORANTE

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

Romantic

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

VINEYARD HOUSE

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

Entrées \$11-\$28

Sunday Brunch, Kid-Friendly

The large, wooden, wraparound deck allows diners to gaze

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

WATERMARK

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

Romantic

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

ZIN BISTRO AMERICANA

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

American

Entrées \$15-\$35

Great View, Romantic

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

FOODIE

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

BROOKS

545 E. Thompson Blvd.
Ventura, 805-652-7070
restaurantbrooks.com

New American

Entrées \$17-\$28

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

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TORO.

CAFÉ 14

30315 Canwood St.
Agoura Hills, 818-991-9560
cafe-14.com

Eclectic
Entrées \$24–\$34

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

DOWNEY'S

1305 State St.
Santa Barbara, 805-966-5006
downeyssb.com

Cal-French
Entrées \$29–\$37

Romantic

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

THE HUNGRY CAT

1134 Chapala St.
Santa Barbara, 805-884-4701
thehungrycat.com

Seafood
Entrées \$16–28

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

LOOK KANDA SUSHI

3637 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-230-0101
kandasushito.com

Japanese
Sushi \$5–\$18; Small plates \$4–\$14

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

LEILA'S RESTAURANT & WINE BAR

752 Lindero Canyon Road
Oak Park, 818-707-6939
leilasrestaurant.com

Cal-Eclectic
Entrées \$15–\$30

An exhibition kitchen dominates this little but lovely space so diners can watch chef Richard De Mane turn out his Peking duck confit pancake, port-roasted pear salad, and Moroccan

spiced salmon. There's also a communal table up front for more social dining. The adjoining wine bar and patio expand the space nicely for comfortable dining everywhere.

NEW 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 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.

ROOT 246

420 Alisal Road
Solvang, 805-686-8681
root-246.com

New American
Entrées \$14–\$35

Romantic, Sunday Brunch

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians tapped celebrity chef Bradley Ogden to create this temple to New American dining in downtown Solvang. The decor is modern and whimsical with oversized armchairs in one of the bar areas, lounge furniture on the outdoor patio, flat-screen televisions in a subdued interior lounge, a mixture of sleek booths and tables in the main dining room, and a glass-walled chef's table adjoining the huge kitchen. Executive chef Jonny Hall collaborates with Ogden on the seasonal menu, which changes ever so slightly each day. Fresh vegetables are the stars of the show here, along with artisanal cheeses and sustainably raised meats. The New American creations aren't exotic, but they do bring together familiar

tastes in new ways. For example, a Maytag blue cheese soufflé is paired with Bing cherries while ahi tuna gets a companion five-bean salad, olive tapenade, and a quail egg on the plate. Everything from the small collection of breads that hit the table at the start of the meal to the diminutive desserts is top-notch. The entire menu is available in all of the different seating areas. The collection of wines is impressive, with 90 percent coming from California. Every Wednesday night a different local vintner plays guest sommelier. Root 246 is open for dinner nightly, for lunch on Saturday, and for brunch on Sunday.

SADDLE PEAK LODGE

419 Cold Canyon Road
Calabasas, 818-222-3888
saddlepeaklodge.com

New American
Entrées \$37–\$47, Tasting Menus \$80–\$200

Romantic, Sunday Brunch

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

LOOK SAFIRE

4850 Verdugo Way
Camarillo, 805-389-1227
safirebistro.com

New American
Entrées \$12–\$41

Romantic

The prettiest dining room in Camarillo dishes up excellent New American fare from chef Chris Bryan. A wood-fired oven crisps up 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 chopouses, 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.

WINE CASK

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

Wine Country
Entrées \$19–\$32

Romantic

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

A GOOD BET

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

BODEE'S

3304 Maricopa Highway
Ojai, 805-646-5300
bodecs.net
Californian

Entrées \$18–\$34

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

BRENT'S DELI

2799 Townsgate Road
Westlake Village, 805-557-1882
brentsdeli.com

Deli

Entrées \$6–\$20

Kid-Friendly

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

LOOK! CAFÉ FIRENZE

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

Italian

Entrées \$13–\$34

Romantic

Pastas are handmade daily at this beautiful, sprawling Italian restaurant. Chef Kimberly Fujitaki makes a lovely wine-poached pear salad and bruschetta topped with roasted zucchini and shrimp. Ravioli is filled with lobster or braised short ribs. Main meat dishes include osso buco, rib-eye steak, and chicken piccata. Weekly wine-tasting events take place at the fully stocked bar.

CHOLADA THAI CUISINE

1282 Newbury Road
Newbury Park, 805-498-7801
choladathaicuisine.com

Thai


Entrées \$9–\$17

Kid-Friendly

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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.

LOOK COSMOS GRILL

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

Eclectic
Entrées \$9–\$20

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

THE COUNTER

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

American
Entrées \$7–\$14
Kid-Friendly

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

C-STREET RESTAURANT

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

Californian
Entrées \$15–\$45
Kid-Friendly

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

DARBAND GRILL

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

Middle Eastern
Entrées \$10–\$19
Live Music

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

ELADIO'S

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

Italian
Entrées \$10–\$20

Great View, Sunday Brunch

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

FEAST BISTRO

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

New American
Entrées \$12–\$20

Romantic

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

GINO'S BISTRO

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

Italian
Entrées \$13–\$29

Kid-Friendly

Gino 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.

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.

NEW STONEFIRE GRILL

3635 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-413-0300
stonefiregrill.com
American
Entrées \$7-\$15
Kid-Friendly

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

LOOK THE SUNSET RESTAURANT

6800 Westward Beach Road
Malibu, 310-589-1007
thesunsetrestaurant.com
New American
Entrées \$12-\$30
Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

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

SUSHI AGOURA

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

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

TERRI'S CAFÉ

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

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

LOOK TRA DI NOI

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

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

TUTTI'S OFF MAIN

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

Kid-Friendly, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

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

VIVOLI CAFÉ & TRATTORIA

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

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

THE WHALE'S TAIL

3950 Bluefin Circle
Oxnard, 805-985-2511
thewhalestail.com
Seafood

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(818) 879-5232

www.tire-man.com

Entrées \$10–\$43

Great View, Sunday Brunch

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

WILLY'S SMOKEHOUSE

28434 Roadside Drive
Agoura Hills, 818-991-7227

Barbecue
Entrées \$9–\$24
Kid-Friendly

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

WOLFGANG PUCK L.A. BISTRO

30990 Russell Ranch Road West
Westlake Village, 818-597-1902
wolfgangpuck.com/bistro

Californian
Entrées \$9–\$15

Kid-Friendly, Sunday Brunch

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

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.

P.F. CHANG'S CHINA BISTRO

2250 Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-277-5915
pfchangs.com

Chinese-American
Entrées \$6–\$18

Two huge Ming horses guard the entrance to this Chinese-American temple at The Lakes where you can sip up-to-date cocktails and down large portions of minced chicken in lettuce cups, double-pan-fried noodles, Cantonese roasted duck, salmon steamed with ginger, wok-seared lamb, and New York-style cheesecake or the The Great Wall of Chocolate (cake). Big round tables make gathering in groups a treat.

WOOD RANCH BBQ & GRILL

5050 Cornell Road
Agoura Hills, 818-597-8900
and 540 New Los Angeles Ave.
Moorpark, 805-523-7253

and 1101 E. Daily Drive
Camarillo, 805-482-1202
and 3449 E. Main St.
Ventura, 805-620-4500
woodranch.com

Barbecue
Entrées \$11–\$27

Kid-Friendly

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

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.

CHAPTER 8 STEAKHOUSE & DANCE LOUNGE

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

Steakhouse

Entrées \$17–\$39

Live Music, DJ, Dancing

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

CHAR FASL

5843 Kanan Road
Agoura Hills, 818-889-9495

Persian

Entrées \$13–\$20

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

DON CUCO MEXICAN RESTAURANT

254 W. Los Angeles Ave.
Moorpark, 805-523-2261
doncucorestaurants.com

Mexican

Entrées \$8–\$19

Kid-Friendly, Sunday Brunch

The Yucatan style of cooking prevails in this appealing Mexican restaurant with stained-glass depictions of what look like Aztec pyramids. Inside, booths are styled in tan-and-green striped fabric while lanterns and an iron candelabra hang from the ceiling. On the covered patio, wooden tables and chairs are comfortably spaced. The food enlivens your palate with zesty flavors, starting with the spicy salsa. An intense mole sauce blankets a chicken enchilada. The long bar pours plenty of tequilas and mixes large margaritas.

DUKE'S MALIBU

21150 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, 310-317-0777
dukesmalibu.com

Hawaiian/Seafood

Entrées \$17–\$30

Great View

The gorgeous ocean views are maximized in the dining rooms and bars of this large Hawaiian-themed seafood and steak house. Every staff member sports a laid-back smile and friendly demeanor. Skip the starters and go straight for the main courses. The seasonal fish choices are prepared six different ways—the Parmesan-crusting version with macadamia nuts and the 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

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elreycantina.com

Mexican

Entrées \$3–\$13

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

FIAMME

3731 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.

Thousand Oaks, 805-497-9444

fiammerestaurant.com

Italian/American

Entrées \$12–\$26

Live Music

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

FOX SPORTS GRILL

30970 Russell Ranch Road

Westlake Village, 818-338-7080

foxsportsgrill.com/westlake

American

Entrées \$6–\$27

Sports on 20 screens

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

GALLETTO BAR & GRILL

982 S. Westlake Blvd.

Westlake Village, 805-449-4300

gallettoбарandgrill.com

Italian/Brazilian

Entrées \$15–\$26

Live Music

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

GINO'S TRATTORIA

720 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.

Thousand Oaks, 805-494-7743

Italian

Entrées \$10–\$17

Kid-Friendly

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

KABUKI JAPANESE RESTAURANT

20940 Ventura Blvd.

Woodland Hills, 818-704-8700

kabukirestaurants.com

Japanese

Entrées \$10–\$18

Kid-Friendly

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

NEW LADYFACE ALEHOUSE & BRASSERIE

29281 Agoura Road

Agoura Hills, 818-477-4566

ladyfaceale.com

French-American

Entrées \$9–\$15

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

LAZY DOG CAFÉ

172 W. Hillcrest Drive

Thousand Oaks, 805-449-5206

lazydogcafe.com

American

Entrées \$8–\$24

Saturday & Sunday Brunch

Who loves puppies? Everyone, right? So a café decorated with fire hydrants, puppy photos, paw-print fabrics, and bone-shaped door handles has to be fun. The inexpensive eats represent what Americans love, from pizza and pasta to burgers and grilled cheese. Salads are topped with items like roasted veggies, the fish of the day, or even chicken tenders. Bigger meals include meatloaf, flatiron steak, chicken potpie with a cap of puff pastry, and Idaho trout baked in a cast-iron skillet. For dessert, a hot fudge sundae comes to the table in a porcelain dog bowl. Lazy Dog Cafe, located at The Oaks mall, is open for lunch and dinner daily.

LIMÓN LATIN GRILL

1555 Simi Town Center Way

Simi Valley, 805-955-9277

limongrill.com

Pan-Latin

Entrées \$8–\$20 (some steaks up to \$40)

Live Music

The flat-screen TVs above the bar make this a great spot to catch a sporting event, while the area around the fireplace on the patio near the cabanas is great for listening to live music.

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

THE MELTING POT

3685 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.

Thousand Oaks, 805-370-8802

meltingpot.com

Fondue

Entrées \$18–\$23 individually or \$59 for two

Kid-Friendly

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

MOONSHADOWS

20356 Pacific Coast Highway

Malibu, 310-456-3010

moonshadowsmalibu.com

Cal-Asian

Entrées \$19–\$30

Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch

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

OLD PLACE RESTAURANT

29983 Mulholland Hwy.

Agoura Hills, 818-706-9001

oldplacecornell.com

American

Entrées \$11–\$34

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

SCHECK & SHAY'S ROCKIN' DINER

3907 Cochran St.

Simi Valley, 805-306-9566

simidiner.com

American

Entrées \$7–\$12

Kid-Friendly

Styled like a 1950s diner with plenty of chrome, formica, and vinyl, this homage to car-hop culture offers vintage foods with updated flare. Don’t miss the Rednecks and Rings appetizer (fried pickles and onion rings) on a cute cast-iron stand with three good dipping sauces. Burgers go from big (Just a Burger with a half-pound of meat) to genormous (Da Bomb piled with avocado, bacon, onion rings, and double the cheese). The chicken-fried steak

gets homemade country gravy. The premium sides include fire-roasted creamed corn, or pasta salad loaded with artichoke hearts and kalamata olives. Shakes, malts, and floats ensure you won't leave hungry.

SHEILA'S PLACE WINE BAR & RESTAURANT

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

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

TAVERNA TONY

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

Owner Tony Koursaris is a solicitous host, overseeing your good time either inside by the fireplace or outside on the patio. Weekends bring live Greek music, dancing waiters, and belly dancers. Eat your flaming cheese, moussaka, and grilled lamb family-style 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
tupeljunction.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 G el 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.

CHAMPAGNE FRENCH BAKERY CAF 

180 Promenade Way
Westlake Village, 805-379-5911
champagnebakery.com
French
Entr es \$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, cr pes, and salads vie for your attention with an array of delicious baked goods including croissants, madeleines, custard brioche, and crispy *palmier* cookies.

NEW CHOCOLATINE

2955 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Thousand Oaks, 805-557-0561
chocolatine.net
Bakery
Entr es \$7–\$10

A chocolate caf  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 cr pes. 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
Entr es \$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 haba ero 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.

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
Entr es \$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.

MY FLORIST CAF  & BAKERY

76 S. Oak St.
Ventura, 805-653-0003
myfloristcafe.com
American
Entr es \$10–\$14

Live Music

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

THE NATURAL CAFE

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

THE RANCH CATERING

30843 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.
Westlake Village, 818-575-9033
theranchwestlake.com
American
Entr es \$4–\$10
Kid-Friendly

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

MEET JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU

As a sailor, a filmmaker, and an explorer, Jean-Michel Cousteau has been astounded by the ocean's beauty and its complexity nearly all his life—just like his father, Jacques Cousteau. Today, based in Santa Barbara, Cousteau carries on his father's legacy through the Ocean Futures Society, dedicated to exploring the world's oceans and educating the public about the critical connection between the environment and humanity. His new memoir, *My Father, the Captain*, was published in May.

The book was published by National Geographic, which is very pleasing for me because my dad and our team worked with National Geographic nonstop for seventeen years before we went on TV with *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*.

My father was a very fascinating gentleman. He was very tough. He was my friend, my father, and my boss. I had to juggle that all the time. Until he passed away, he'd been a great symbol to all of us.

When I was seven, my family began going diving every holiday, every vacation, every weekend. Years later, when we were on *Calypso*, I realized that there was more and more junk in the ocean and fewer and fewer fish than I used to see when I was seven. That really got to me.

We need to stop using the ocean as a garbage can. Chemicals and heavy metals dumped into the sewer ultimately find their way to the food chain in the ocean, and they accumulate to the point that the fish—which we're harvesting for food—are loaded with chemicals, which we put right back on our plate.

In 1985, I did a one-hour [TV] special focusing on the Channel Islands. I based the expedition out of Santa Barbara and we were here for about two months. Now, I'm [originally] from the South of France, where there is a certain climate, and vegetation, and architecture; and at the end of the expedition, I said, "This is just like the South of France. I'm going to move here one of these days." Well, it took me until 1992 to make that happen.

At Ocean Futures—whatever we use, whether it's film, lectures, books—it's for communication and the same message: If you protect the ocean, you protect yourself. ■

Read additional excerpts of this interview at 805living.com. To learn more about Jean-Michel Cousteau and the Ocean Futures Society visit oceanfutures.org.




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