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# Tra di Noi Ristorante, Malibu

## The Thorne Family Farm



Farmer Larry Thorne walks through his strawberry fields in Malibu at least twice a day when they're in season, checking on their progress. Strawberries ripen over a period of hours, not days, so he likes to be on top of them. "One thing you learn from farming," muses Thorne, "is that there's a time for everything and then after that, it's too late." A misty marine layer keeps the temperatures cool for his strawberries, which they like. As he passes the rows of winter squash Thorne notes, "The squash grew two inches today."

This month Thorne Family Farm is growing wild arugula, beefsteak tomatoes, golden beets, winter peas, rapini, mustard greens, lettuces, fava beans, Mars onions (a sweet, red onion with a flavor like the Walla Walla), string beans and butter chard. Of the butter chard which he grows in a variety of colors like red, white, green, purple and yellow, Thorne beams, "You don't have to stem it. We pick it real young." He's also growing organic oranges, Meyer lemons, blueberries and even Turkish figs on the seven-acre farm nestled in Zuma Canyon near Zuma Beach.

Some of the equipment Thorne uses to till his ground was his father's. Thorne's dad farmed hundreds of acres in Culver City and Malibu 60 years ago. Howard Hughes and William Randolph Hearst used to buy sweet corn from him. When Larry had children of his own, he

set up a small farm stand for them along the roadside where they could sell fruit, vegetables and sunflowers so that they could learn the family business.

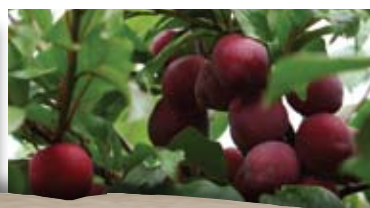
Today, Thorne's son Grant, daughter Olivia and wife Laurel all still help out on the farm when Larry needs them. "We spent a lot of the summer planting strawberries," fifteen-year-old Olivia recalls, laughing. "Olivia planted thousands of strawberry plants," admits Larry. "That's why I call it Thorne Family Farm. It's a happy moment when all four of us are out here working together. It makes me feel that life is the way it's supposed to be. I don't care how rich you are, you need to be in the garden with your kids."

Because it's such a labor of love for Thorne, he keeps his following small. "I want to try to create a clientele who appreciate exactly what I'm growing. I'm trying to match what I grow with my customer base," says Thorne. "I try to set up a conversation between me and the people who buy from me. I want feedback." Thorne is working on setting up family box programs patterned after CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) programs. But with the box programs, families only pay for 1 or 2 months' worth of produce at a time versus 6 or 12 months' worth. And parents can bring their children to the farm to help pick their own food. (Call Larry Thorne at 310-663-2107 for more information.)

Of his farm, Thorne says, "I want to stay small and get people who appreciate eating just-picked produce." Thorne Family Farm dedicates 20-30% of its

farmland to growing produce exclusively for Tra Di Noi Ristorante in Malibu. A few months back, Thorne sat down with Tra Di Noi's chef Francesco Velasco and together they worked their way through an Italian seed catalog. Because of that, says Thorne, "I'm growing things now that I would never have heard of otherwise. Velasco, too, is grateful for this farmer-chef relationship: "We saw this great opportunity to grow whatever we want for our customers. Our customers can go to the farm and buy the same produce that I serve here at the restaurant. I always say, 'If we start with really great ingredients, we can expect to end with really great dishes.'"

"One of the best things he grows for us are the strawberries," says Velasco, "also the fava beans, and the zucchini flowers." Velasco thinly slices those beautifully ripe strawberries and lays them on a blanket of pastry cream which is spread over a thin crostata crust. Thorne and his wife tasted that strawberry crostata for dessert one evening. "It is so good, it makes me want to grow more strawberries," enthuses Thorne, "and that's hard work!" Every time Thorne visits the restaurant with his family, he's amazed at the masterpieces Velasco creates with Thorne Family Farm's produce. "He fixes sweet corn in ways I've never heard of. I don't know what he puts on the tomatoes, but God they're good. He's incredible."



“I want to stay small and get people who appreciate eating just-picked produce.”

- Larry Thorne



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GARY MOSS

## Our Health & Wellness Generation

**M**y mom used to exercise to Jack LaLanne in front of the television. So did many other men and women across the country during the 34 years LaLanne stretched, toned, and strengthened his body in front of the cameras. I participated, too, when I was a little kid. Mom used me as her weight when she did leg presses. Long gone are those days, though, when my “health care” centered around eating a balanced diet of the four basic food groups and playing dodgeball in gym class. For anything serious, a visit with the family doctor (aka my physician father) typically remedied the problem.

LaLanne is still going strong (see *P.S.*, page 96), and Mom is, too. As for me, I belong to the generation of men and women across the country with a much greater understanding of—and appreciation for—health and wellness. It’s still diet and exercise, but it’s also happiness and feeling good; it’s discovery and education; and it’s about the *quality* of living our lives.

This issue is meant to help inspire readers to attain their desired quality of life. We emphasize being proactive because the desire to be healthy starts in the brain (which also must be kept in shape), and the right attitude then influences how we approach everything in life. I think a person with a positive attitude anticipates positive results, so hopefully everyone can find something positive in these pages to help take care of their well-being.

The other side of the health and wellness equation is the role of caregivers. Despite a tricky economy and the uncertain future of health care reform hanging in the air, caregivers remain steadfast in their devotion to patients. The foundation of the medical community is built upon the spirit of compassion, and we found everyone from doctors and nurses to administrators and research experts striving to do their jobs with this same spirit (see page 60). The bottom line, we found, is that they are not trying to treat illnesses, but trying to treat people. This element of compassion, which I believe comes from the heart, should always come into play when taking care of others—and ourselves.

Here’s to your health,

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

*Lynne Andujar, Editor in Chief  
and Associate Publisher  
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# Behind the Scenes

## HAPPY AND HEALTHY

Sometimes healthful inclinations—like skipping dessert, for instance—can be a bit of a drag. But there are plenty of enjoyable habits that do the body, mind, and soul good. This month we asked our contributors which healthy habit they've incorporated into their lives that they enjoy so much, they forget it's virtuous. From savoring good food to sweating it out, here is what makes them happy and healthy at the same time.

Contributing photographer **JUDI BUMSTEAD** (*Good Deeds*, pages 46 and 50) says her healthy outlook helps her stay happy. Being a licensed family therapist as well as a photographer, I have learned to look through the lens of life with gratitude. I have found that having an attitude of gratitude helps me in every way. The more that I appreciate what I have, the more I value life in the moment, and I attract more things to be thankful for.

Writer and copy editor **HEIDI DVORAK** ("Inspiration Destination," page 56; *P.S.*, page 96) stays healthy by keeping her standards for food high, even when she's on the go. I never eat fast food. If I'm on the road, I will stop at a market or produce stand and buy something before I would ever go to a drive-through. The idea of hastily made food-to-go makes me wonder about what's in the product. Dvorak's writing frequently appears in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* and *LA Weekly*.

Contributing columnist **MARYANN HAMMERS** (*Mind/Body/Soul*, page 40) loves her fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. I've been a vegetarian ever since my college days, and it's no sacrifice at all. I'm not sure I even remember what meat tastes like anymore, and that's fine with me because I'd rather bite into a sweet, crisp Fuji apple, or dig into a plate of whole-grain pasta, or inhale the aroma of homemade soup simmering on the stove and brimming with fresh veggies.

Senior editor **MALLORY McCREARY** (*Finds/Travel*, page 30; *Upgrades*, page 52) is blissful in her freedom from an old sugar addiction. I used to be a slave to food cravings—a mid-morning sweet tooth, 3:30 peanut M&M attacks, and ice cream (anytime). But when my increasingly active schedule meant I missed a fix, my body went into shock and I vacillated between cranky and comatose. I cut sugar out cold turkey, and after a few weeks of hell where I never felt sated, I managed to shake the monkey off my back and return my moods and productivity levels to normal. I have a treat occasionally—but the gotta-have-it-now cravings are gone for good.

Contributing editor **CYNTHIA HOUSE NOONEY** (*Pulse*, page 21) has found recent research to be encouraging to her (accidentally) healthful habits. I can't say that I began drinking a glass of red wine every night because of its alleged health benefits; my interest was more superficial. But as research continues to suggest that moderate consumption of red wine and dark chocolate can help protect against disease, I feel like I've hit the jackpot. Who knew two of my vices would turn out to be healthy choices?

Research editor **TAJINDER REHAL** has come to enjoy being an early—and active—riser. For the past three years, I've been getting up at 4:30 a.m. twice a week to catch a 5:30 a.m. spin class. At first, it was rough and I kept asking myself, "Why am I giving up precious sleep to torture myself at the gym?" But after a few weeks, I found I enjoyed the calm and peacefulness of the early hours before dawn. I start my day off energized and pumped for whatever is in store for me—in fact, I miss it when I can't make a class. ■



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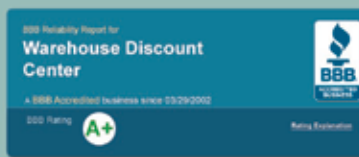
**Pro Line™ Series Range**  
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# PULSE

TRACKING THE BEAT OF THE 805 | OCTOBER 2010

## A REFUGE FOR NEW MOMS

Whether tears are being shed for joy or because of sleep deprivation (or both), expectant and new moms can find refuge at The Pump Station & Nurtury in Westlake Village ([pumpstation.com](http://pumpstation.com)), where guidance and empowerment are dispensed daily. Certified lactation consultants Wendy Haldeman and Corky Harvey (who are also registered nurses) began their business 24 years ago, and recently opened the Westlake location to create a community where area moms could turn for assistance with childbirth, breastfeeding, and baby care. >>



Nurses and certified lactation consultants Wendy Haldeman (left) and Corky Harvey started a “baby boot camp” class years ago; today they dispense education and advice from Pump Station & Nurtury retail locations in Westlake Village, Santa Monica, and Hollywood.

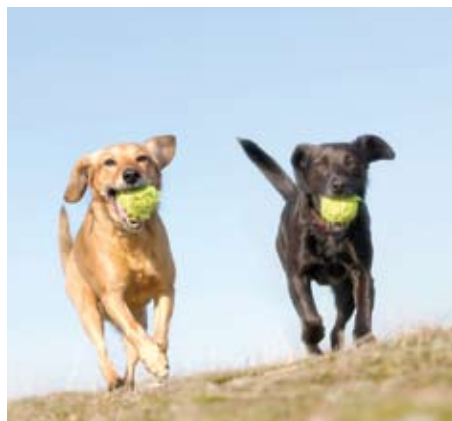


“We want to provide moms with a warm and loving place where the magical process of life is celebrated. Everyone here takes extra time to provide education regarding baby health, and to acknowledge the challenging roles of mothers,” says assistant manager Emily Patasini. Breast pumps and nursing bras are available, as well as baby carriers, toys, blankets, and clothes.

Support groups devoted to breastfeeding and baby care are offered weekly, and monthly classes cover topics such as growth and development, sign language, infant massage, and baby and toddler CPR.

Of course there’s room for dads too; and there’s a class for bringing grandmothers up-to-date. “We serve wine and cheese in that class and it’s quite popular,” laughs Patasini.

—Cynthia House Nooney



## EXTREME DOG-WALKERS KEEP YOUR BEST FRIEND FIT

Don’t let Fido sleep through the beautiful autumn days, even if you’re missing out because of work. Kyle Britt, the Extreme Dog-Walker ([xdogwalking.com](http://xdogwalking.com)), and his team take dogs on three-hour, off-leash outings along local hiking trails. They can also take the poochies out to enjoy days at the beach and regular hour-long walks.

Britt, who lives in La Conchita and looks after canine customers from Ventura to Goleta, started the business two years ago. He has about 45 dogs on the books, roughly half of them regulars, and says the “Nature Day” hike (\$40) is the most popular outing for fall. Britt says he and an assistant can comfortably manage 10 dogs at a time without any misbehavior or running away.

—Frank Nelson

## Hassle-Free Health Care

New shop offers shots and more.

Overdue for a physical? Need a flu shot or special travel medicine? These needs and more can be met at WellnessMart, MD, in Thousand Oaks ([wellnessmart.com](http://wellnessmart.com)). Founder Dr. Richard McCauley says he conceived the one-stop health care shop in 2004 with two overall goals: “To be a doctor’s office for healthy people, and to educate consumers about the advantages of paying out-of-pocket for small things like blood tests and vaccines.”

An added bonus: no stuffy waiting room. Customers step up to the counter at the brightly lit location with easy-to-read medical menus to receive prompt service. Options include laboratory testing,

vaccinations, medical exams (including sports team physicals), X-rays, MRIs, CT scans, nutrition education, custom orthotics, custom athletic mouth guards, allergy relief, and CPR training.

Insurance plans are also available for individuals, families, and businesses. Passionate about fixing America’s “broken health care system,” McCauley and his medical staff aim to provide services at fair prices with a straightforward approach. “Routine health care is affordable,” says the doctor. “We all need insurance for things like catastrophic illnesses, but not for ‘oil changes’ like shots and screenings.”

—C.H.N.

**AFTER OPENING YOGA JONES IN VENTURA** ([yogajones.com](http://yogajones.com)) in 2003, founder Tina Chappel witnessed burgeoning relationships between the studio’s students and teachers. “I was delighted and [it] makes me proud,” says Chappel, “because relationships create a community.”

Dedicated to helping spread the benefits of yoga, Chappel offers classes for all ages and levels, including vinyasa flow, Iyengar, kundalini, and Taoist, as well as capoeira, a Brazilian art form combining dance and martial arts. “I hire wonderful presenters from near and far to provide rich learning experiences for anyone interested,” she says, noting that classes range in focus from therapeutic to esoteric.

Chappel also facilitates monthly workshops; enrollment is now available for a two-day Ayurveda event over Halloween weekend. Ayurveda, which means the “science of life,” is still a bit of a mystery in Western society, explains Chappel: “It’s the sister science to yoga, and goes very deep into the roots of health in India. In America, we’re so physically caught up in exercise that we often overlook other important aspects to a balanced life.” Attendees will learn effective tools and techniques for their own path to well-being, including optimal diet and lifestyle choices, yoga postures, and massage tips.

—C.H.N. ■





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Talia Emery, M.D.

# Finds

By Lynne Andujar

## GREAT GEAR

Fantastic finds for fitness-minded folks.



**Don't Leave Home Without It**  
Knog "Beetle" LED bicycle safety light (\$23); Westlake Cyclery, Westlake Village, westlakecyclery.com.



**Get Your Groove On**  
8GB iPod "Nano" (\$149); Apple Store at The Oaks, Thousand Oaks; or at Westfield Topanga, Canoga Park; or apple.com.



**Fits Like a Glove**  
Vibram FiveFingers "KSO" athletic footwear (\$85); Jack's Shoes of Westlake, Westlake Village, jacksshoesofwestlake.com.



**H<sub>2</sub>Oh!**  
EarthLust 20-ounce "Peacock" stainless steel water bottle (\$18); Letter Perfect Stationery, Santa Barbara, letterperfectstationery.com; or earthlust.com.



**Street Smart**  
ElliptiGO "8S" low-impact outdoor elliptical bicycle (\$2,199); elliptigo.com. To test drive the ElliptiGO, contact Bill Strauss at bill@elliptigo.com or 805-886-9680.

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# BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Eclectic inspirations create free-spirited autumn looks.

Vince sheer T-shirt (\$120); Madison at The Promenade at Westlake, Westlake Village, madisonlosangeles.com.

Olive and Olivia pleated tank (\$35) and fringe vest (\$55); Sogno, Westlake Village, 805-494-0999.

Woven braided belt (\$19); Soto, Westlake Village, sotoboutique.com.

Joe's Jeans "Skinny Military" pants (\$148); Planet Blue at The Promenade at Westlake, Westlake Village, shopplanetblue.com.

Tail Feathers "Birds of a Feather" earrings (\$198); Planet Blue (see previous).

Vintage Jules "One-of-a-Kind Crystal" lariat (\$300); Soto (see previous).

Beaded bracelet (\$23); Sogno (see previous).

Kage "Margaux" bag (\$495); creationsbykage.com.

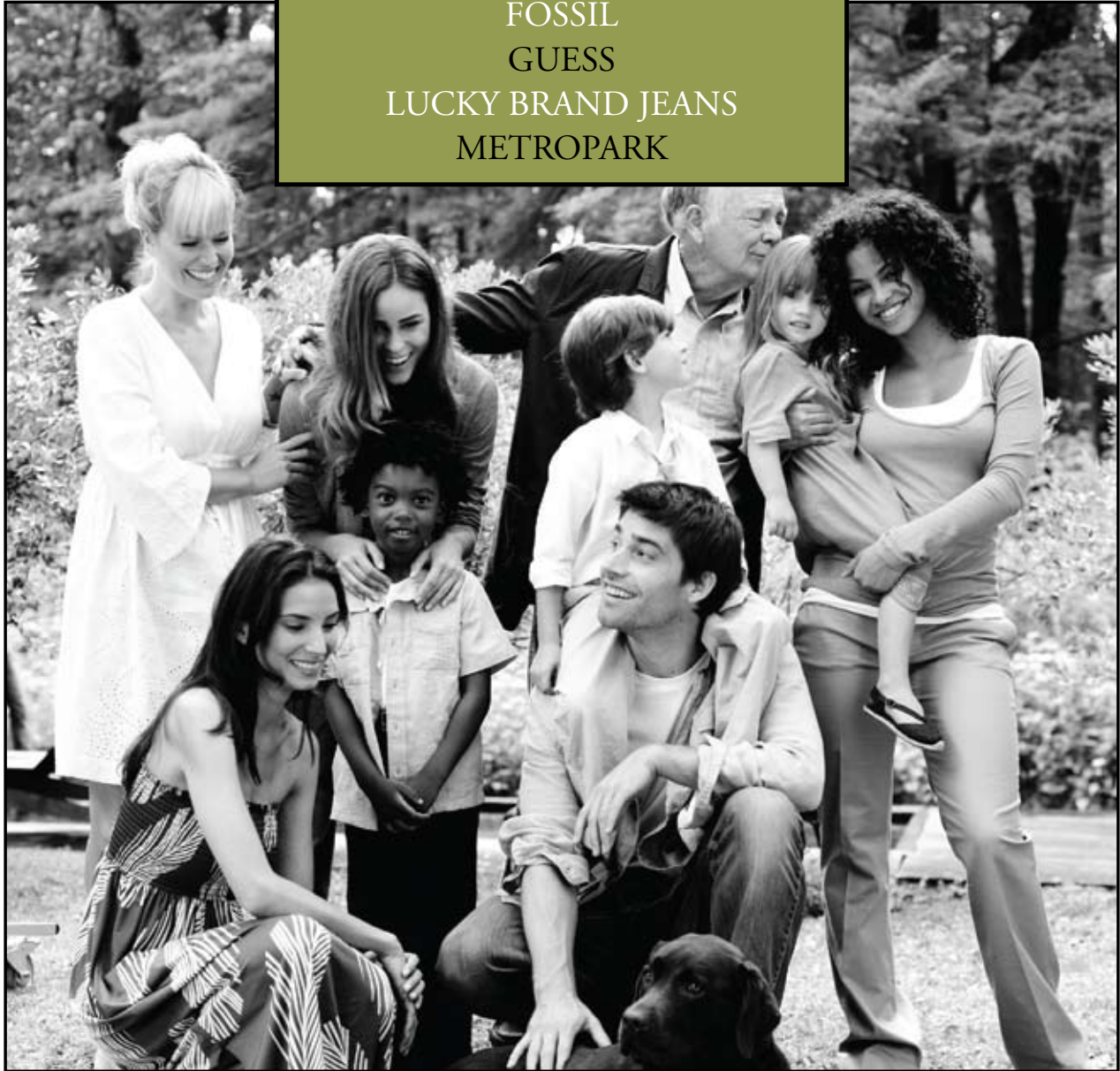
Bovina "Bone" bangle (\$160), Garcia "Link" jacket (\$76), and Mike Lanes "Cosmo Girl" jeans (\$169); Twyla K, Westlake Village, shoptwlyak.com.

"Camo" ballet flats (\$195); Madison (see previous).

Old Gringo "Leopardito" boots (\$339); Jack's Shoes of Westlake, Westlake Village, jacksshoesofwestlake.com.



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## LACE IT

Tall or short, these boots tie up fall in style.



1. Marni "Ankle Boots" (\$940); marni.com.

2. Frye "Melissa Riding Tall" boots (\$398); thefryecompany.com.

3. Me Too "Ana 14" boots (\$139); Jack's Shoes of Westlake, Westlake Village, jacksshoesofwestlake.com.

4. "Thandi" boots (\$1,250); Jimmy Choo at Westfield Topanga, Canoga Park, jimmychoo.com.

5. "Trigg Tie-Up Hiking Boots" (\$425); Tory Burch at The Malibu Lumber Yard, Malibu, toryburch.com.

6. Charles David "Regiment" boots (\$385); Charles David at Westfield Topanga, Canoga Park, charlesdavid.com.

7. "Trixy" booties (\$109); Nine West, Simi Valley Town Center, Simi Valley, ninewest.com.

8. Diane von Furstenberg "Jameson Lace-Up" boots (\$395); Saks Fifth Avenue, Santa Barbara, saksfifthavenue.com.

9. "Timberly" boots (\$49); Soto, Westlake Village, sotoboutique.com.



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By Mallory McCreary



## NATURALLY NEWPORT

Stand-Up Paddleboarding (SUP) has been sweeping the 805 as the hot new sport du jour. For those who want to try it but are worried about balance—or looking like a fool in front of friends and neighbors—a getaway to learn this surprisingly easy sport may be just the thing.

Enter a trip to Newport Beach and **SUPCore** (949-338-4995), where owners Noelle Kozak and Suzanne Yeo offer inspiration (in the form of their amazingly toned bodies) and guidance and support (in the form of personal instruction and demonstration) to tackle SUP. They also combine power yoga, strength-training workouts, and running with SUP through private and group lessons (\$90 for private, from \$35 for group). “Yoga is so dynamic that almost every posture can be layered for the beginner, intermediate, and advanced [student],” Kozak says. “The beauty of it all is that no matter what skill level one is, everyone is on the same playing field by trying to do these exercises on a SUP board.”

The company operates out of the Newport Aquatic Center on Newport’s Back Bay. There are no waves and no wake, so it’s a serene environment for first-timers. After a few strokes, when the form starts feeling natural, participants can relax and enjoy the calm lapping of the water, the sounds of shorebirds, and a peek at the yachts and gracious homes that dot the harbor and define Newport living.

A stay at the AAA Five Diamond **The Island Hotel Newport Beach** (islandhotel.com) is the perfect partner to a day spent SUPing on the water. Try dinner with delectable, innovative cuisine at the Palm Terrace restaurant from chef Bill Bracken, a relaxing spa treatment (ask for massage genius Saiko), or private yoga and tennis lessons (available with advance notice). The Island manages to pull off what many resorts with stellar waterfront locations fail to do: blending an easy-casual elegance with the right amount of pampering and relaxation.

And for active pursuits of a different kind, Newport’s celebrated Fashion Island mall (shopfashionisland.com)—with stores like Betsey Johnson, Bloomingdale’s, and 7 For All Mankind—is right across the street.

## Weekend Boot Camp

For aggressive types who want nonstop action, the **Pinnacle Challenge** (thepinnaclechallenge.com) is a three-day Palm Springs retreat of hiking, yoga, diet, exercise, and personalized fitness and education for a healthier lifestyle (October 7–10, November 11–14, January 13–16). “Participants gain ... an understanding of what their bodies are doing while they are working out,” says Pinnacle co-founder Robin Sullivan. A fitness assessment and metabolic testing at the beginning of the weekend gives participants an idea where they stand and what they need to do to reach their weight and fitness goals. “We take

your numbers and work with you on the trail so you can feel what it is like to be in your specific zones,” Sullivan says, adding that nighttime lectures cover nutritional information and workout tips, so attendees can learn how and what to eat as well as “what your personal workout week should look like based on your goals.” The retreat is limited to 12 people, with four certified trainers guiding fitness activities. The price (from \$1,100) includes shared lodging, organic meals and snacks (with recipes to take home), and two massages in addition to the fitness assessment, instruction, and metabolic testing.

## GOING THE DISTANCE

The Santa Barbara International Marathon comes to town November 6 (sbimathon.com); the website posts links to several nearby hotels and includes the distances from the start and finish lines. Some specials for sore muscles to note: **Bacara Resort & Spa’s** “In the Steam” package (from \$395; bacararesort.com) includes a 50-minute spa treatment per day; book three nights at the **Harbor View Inn** and receive a free spa treatment at Spa Beaumontia (from \$195; harborviewinnsb.com); add the “Indulgence Bath Experience” (\$75) to a stay at the **Spanish Garden Inn** (spanishgardeninn.com), which includes a tray of treats to nibble on and read while luxuriating in a deep bubble bath. ■



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By Mark Langton

## October 9–10: OJAI STUDIO ARTISTS FALL TOUR

Various locations, Ojai Valley. More than 50 of Ojai's most prominent artists open their studios to the public to view the latest creations as well as works in progress. (ojaistudioartists.org)

## October 14: CONEJO VALLEY MOTHERS AND MORE

Westlake Village Civic Center. College costs for a child born this year will be approximately \$140,000 for a public university and \$310,000 for a private institution. This free seminar features Matt Chambers of Alexander Financial Strategies, who will discuss techniques for funding your child's education. RSVP required. (conejovalleymothersandmore.org)

## October 22: CRAVE

The Veterans Hall, San Luis Obispo. More than 20 different varietals and blends from around 40 Paso Robles wineries are showcased. Gourmet appetizers are provided by several local purveyors. Comfortable sofas and chairs plus a live DJ create a casual lounge atmosphere for attendees. (pasowine.com)

## October 22–February 28, 2011: CLYDE ASPEVIG

Santa Barbara Historical Museum. Considered one of the greatest living artists of Western landscapes, Clyde Aspevig has garnered numerous honors, including the 2007 Masters of the American West Award from the Autry National Center in Los Angeles. (santabarbaramuseum.com)

## October 23: IVAN AMODEI: AN EVENING OF MAGIC, COMEDY & ILLUSION

Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village. The award-winning magician opens a series of shows that feature close-up magic in an intimate setting. Amodei is accompanied by acclaimed cellist Irina Chirkova. (ivanamodei.com)

## October 23–December 19: PARALLAX

Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum. This unique exhibition combines the works of two painters, Peter Rostovsky and Paul Winstanley, who use photographs as inspiration. The result is a unique contrast and exploration of the perceived objectivity of photography versus the subjectivity of paintings. (sbcaf.org)

## October 30–31: SANTA BARBARA CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE

Santa Barbara County Courthouse. On Saturday, two auto shows feature historic and current Italian automobiles and classic American brands. Sunday features judging of some of the most exotic and rare classic automobiles in the world. Other activities include wine tasting at the VINO d'Elegance, an automotive expo, and Halloween activities for the kids. 805 Living is a sponsor and proceeds benefit the Foodbank of Santa Barbara. (elegantcars.com/santabarbara/elegance)



10/30–31

## Here's an idea:

### READY, SET, COOK!

Coast Restaurant & Bar at the Canary Hotel in Santa Barbara hosts an entertaining alternative to eating out. Diners become the chefs as they prepare their entire meal and learn inside tips from the restaurant's kitchen staff. Menus feature seasonal, locally sourced ingredients. Reservations required. (canarysantabarbara.com)

## Family Fun



10/10

### October 9: SANTA BARBARA HARBOR & SEAFOOD FESTIVAL

Santa Barbara Harbor. An abundance of fresh seafood is what this event is all about. There are also cooking demonstrations, live music, boat rides, and a tall ship tour. (harborfestival.org)

### October 10: OLD-TIME FIDDLERS' CONVENTION AND FESTIVAL

Rancho La Patera and Stow House, Goleta. Youngsters will also get a kick out of this "old-time" event. There will be two stages showcasing American music including bluegrass, resonophonic guitar, and country blues. (fiddlersconvention.org)

### October 15–17: HARVEST FESTIVAL ORIGINAL ART AND CRAFT SHOW

Ventura County Fairgrounds. As the West Coast's largest show of its kind, there will be unique handmade works on display and for sale. (harvestfestival.com)

### October 16–17: CALABASAS PUMPKIN FESTIVAL

Juan Bautista de Anza Park, Calabasas. Enjoy carnival rides, arts and crafts, country fair contests, live music, a classic car show, and more at this annual Calabasas event. Also on hand will be a huge selection of pumpkin-infused food including spiced coffee, milkshakes, ice cream, gelato, crêpes, hot sauce, beef curry, and pie. (calabasaspumpkinfestival.com)

### October 16–17: VENTURA HARVEST ARTWALK

Ventura Downtown Cultural District. Ventura's diverse and influential artistic community puts its works on display, with all types of art—including live music and multicultural performances—being featured. (venturaartwalk.org)

### October 23: KINETIC SCULPTURE RACE

Ventura Harbor. Fantastically engineered human-powered vehicles masquerading as sculptures negotiate a racecourse consisting of water, sand, mud, and pavement. (kineticrace.com)

### October 31: HOWL-O-WEEEN POOCH PARADE

Rancho Tapo Community Park, Simi Valley. Dress your pooch and compete for prizes. There will be demonstrations by disc dog athletes, flyball competitors, and pet adoptions. (howlooweenpoochparade.com)

### November 5–7: PASO GATHERING

Pioneer Museum, Paso Robles. Whether you own a horse or just love cowboys, there's something for you at the region's premier Western art and cowboy gear show. Browse saddles, handcrafted leather goods, silver, boots, hats, and more. (pasoroblespioneeremuseum.org) ■



10/16–17



## Wellness awaits...just around the corner.

There's a unique destination of purpose located in Westlake Village that provides a remarkable 360° approach to health and wellness. Here, you'll find certified experts in Eastern and Western medicine, nutrition, fitness, life balance and spa who provide strategies to achieve sustainable lifestyle changes through preventive medical care, personal consultations, engaging packages, healthy cooking classes and more.

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# HOTticket

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## OCTOBER

**October 15, 17:** Santa Barbara's internationally acclaimed chamber ensemble **CAMERATA PACIFICA** performs in Santa Barbara on October 15 and in Ventura on October 17. Anna Polonsky (piano), Adrian Spence (flute), and Ani Aznavoorian (cello) perform Feld's *Four Pieces for Solo Flute* and *Flute Sonata*; Martinu's *Trio for Flute, Cello, and Piano, H. 300*; Tcherepnin's *Suite for Cello Solo, Op. 76*; and Brahms' *Sonata for Piano and Cello in E minor, Op. 38*. (cameratapacifica.org)

**October 15-17:** One of the most anticipated times of the year in Paso Robles and surrounding regions is the **HARVEST WINE WEEKEND**, a huge celebration of the year's grape harvest. More than 130 wineries will host more than 150 events including barrel tastings, blending seminars, food and wine pairing dinners, live concerts, and more. (pasowine.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 and visit some of the local natural areas that the EDC has helped to preserve and 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-December 5:** The Actors' Repertory Theatre of Simi Valley brings the contemporary classic **ANNIE** to the Simi Valley Cultural Arts Center. This story of a Depression-era orphan trying to find her parents won nine Tony Awards in 1977 including "Best Musical," and spawned some of Broadway's most memorable tunes including "Tomorrow." (simi-arts.org)

**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*—



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# CONFIDENCE

IN YOURSELF AND  
YOUR SURGEON

**BOB SAGET** comes to the Ventura Theater with his (believe it or not) R-rated stand-up comedy routine. (venturatheater.net)

**October 30:** The Ojai Valley Inn & Spa concludes its summer **CLASSIC FILM SERIES** with Alfred Hitchcock's legendary thriller, *The Birds*. The screening provides a unique viewing experience under the stars, with food and beverages available. All profits go to HELP of Ojai and Share our Strength. (ojairesort.com)

**October 31: THE PERFECT GENTLEMEN,** an award-winning international vocal quartet, comes to the Bank of America Performing Arts Center at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza. Blending a vaudevillian slapstick stage show with barbershop, doo-wop, pop, and hip-hop vocals, the Gentlemen's harmonies soar. Not to be missed is their signature original piece, "Salute to the 20th Century," which chronicles the devolution of music over the last century. (toaks.org/cap)

## NOVEMBER

**November 1:** Cuban singer and international jazz icon **OMARA PORTUONDO** brings her soulful, sultry style to the Lobero Theatre in Santa Barbara. Her 1997 recording *Buena Vista Social Club Presents Omara Portuondo* received a Grammy Award, and she has won multiple Latin Grammys. Cuban jazz pianist Roberto Fonseca opens the program. (lobero.com)

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

**November 19-28:** The **LOS ANGELES AUTO SHOW** at the Los Angeles Convention Center promises more than 20 world debuts and almost as many North American debuts. Visitors will get to see the newest all-electric



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vehicles, which become available to the public in 2011. Changes in technology, safety, and fuel economy make this the most anticipated car show in recent history. The show also features everything associated with automotive accessories and high-performance equipment. (laautoshow.com)

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

**DECEMBER**

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

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

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**OCTOBER**

**October 9:** Habitat for Humanity's **TOUR OF GREEN HOMES** benefit showcases various homes around Santa Barbara County. Green-building providers in the Santa Barbara and



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Montecito areas will be in attendance with information on sustainable construction and the latest in green-building technologies and materials. (sbhabitat.org)

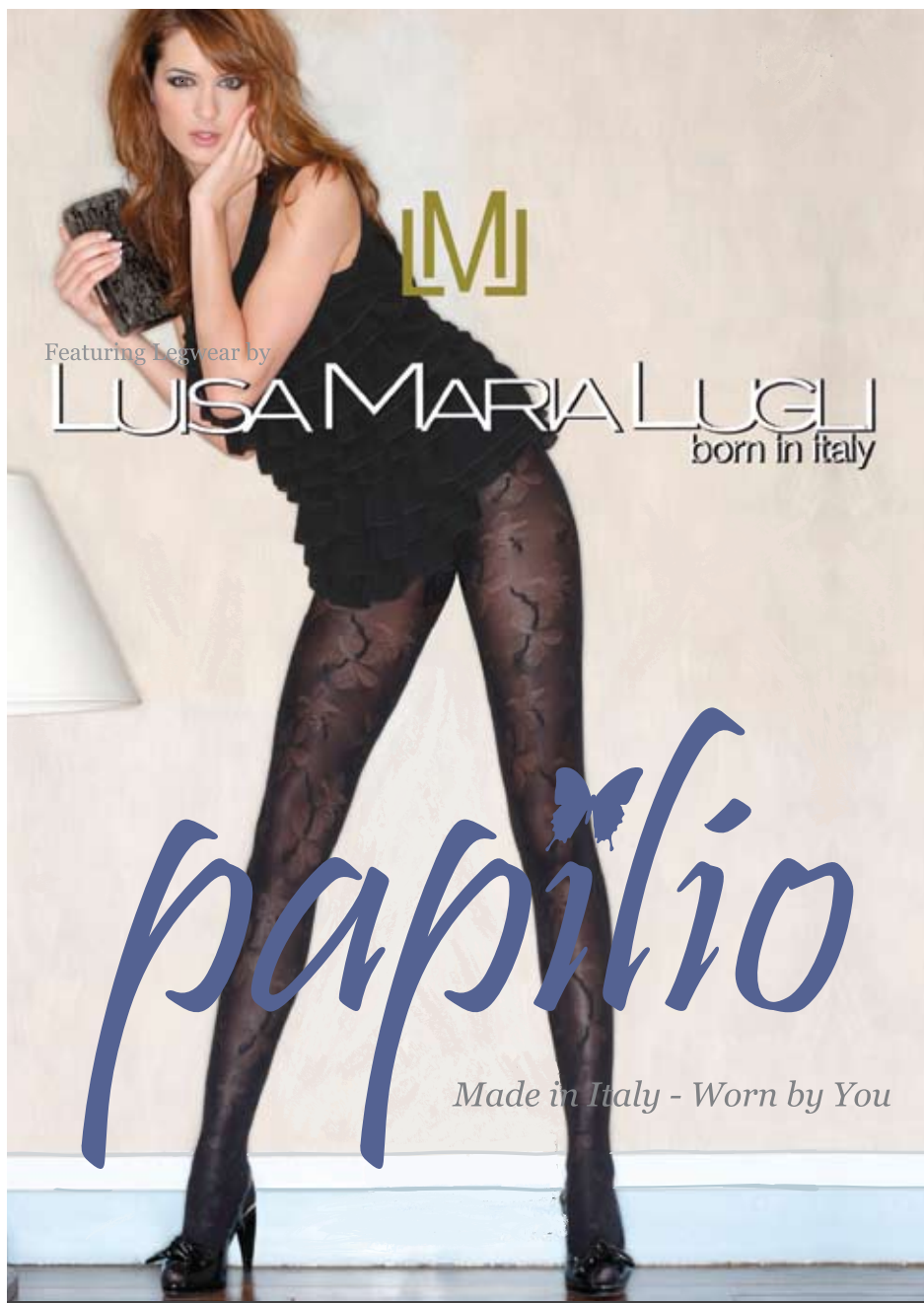
**October 9:** The Court Appointed Special Advocates Program (CASA) holds its annual **5K WALK/RUN** at Ventura College. Proceeds benefit CASA's programs, which serve Ventura County's court-dependent abused and neglected children. (icfs.org)

**October 15-17:** Santa Barbara's Earl Warren Showgrounds hosts **C.A.L.M.'S ANTIQUES & VINTAGE DECORATIVE ARTS SHOW AND SALE**. Eighty dealers will be selling furniture and artifacts for the home and garden, as well as decorative accessories, paintings, jewelry, and a myriad of objets d'art. Proceeds benefit Child Abuse Listening and Mediation's programs, which address the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. (calmantiqueshow.com)

**October 16:** The Casa Pacifica Angels **SPOTLIGHT ON STYLE** fashion show and luncheon takes place at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village. The event includes a champagne reception, fashion and style boutiques, and a runway fashion show. Proceeds benefit Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families, a crisis-care and residential treatment facility for abused, neglected, or at-risk children in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. (casapacifica.org)

**October 16-17:** Ride a bike and help raise funds to find a cure for multiple sclerosis (MS): **BIKE MS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA** starts at San Buenaventura Park in Ventura with rides for every skill level; distances range from 15 to 160 miles. The tour takes riders through some of the most scenic routes in the area, with rest stops every 15 miles and on-route support vehicles. After the ride enjoy a festival with food, music, a beer garden, and a massage tent (not in the same place, though). (bikemssocal.org)

**October 17:** The Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association (CORBA) presents its annual **FAT TIRE FESTIVAL** at Castaic Lake Recreation Area. As one of the biggest mountain bike events in Southern California, the festival will have events for the entire family. Group rides are led by guest professional racers. There will be vendor booths, demo bikes, mountain bike contests, a poker ride, a cyclo-cross race



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## Insider

(a multi-lap course with pavement, off-road sections, and obstacles), and a prize drawing. Proceeds benefit CORBA's programs, which include Youth Adventures at-risk youth mountain bike rides, trail work and maintenance in the Santa Monica Mountains and Angeles National Forest, and free monthly skills classes. (fattirefest.com)

**October 20:** Assistance League of Conejo Valley (ALCV) hosts a lecture by best-selling author Kate Jacobs (*The Friday Night Knitting Club*) at its annual **BOOKS AND LOOKS** luncheon at the Hyatt Westlake Plaza in Westlake Village. Guests will be treated to a fashion show and boutique shopping from local specialty vendors. ALCV raises funds for its youth assistance programs, which provide clothing, school materials, and educational seminars to children in need, as well as entertainment programs for residents of elder-care facilities. (alcv.net)

**October 23:** The Boys & Girls Clubs of Conejo & Las Virgenes **STAND UP FOR KIDS** annual gala and auction takes place at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village. There will be a cocktail reception, gourmet dinner, celebrity inspirational speakers, and live entertainment. (bgcconejo.org)

**October 30:** Rotary Club of Ventura-East holds its **NIGHTMARE ON THE HILL CASINO NIGHT** at the Poinsettia Pavilion in Ventura. In addition to casino games, there will be food, dancing, and prizes for the best costumes. Proceeds benefit various community service projects, including YMCA's Operation Splash, which helps underprivileged kids learn to swim. (rotaryventuraeast.org)

## NOVEMBER

**November 4:** Girls Inc. of Santa Barbara holds its **CELEBRATION LUNCHEON** at Coral Casino at the Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara; Kathy Ireland is the guest speaker. Girls Inc. provides after-school and summer programs to inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Educational programs focus on a variety of topics including science, math, and technology; economic and financial literacy; athletics; health and sexuality; culture and heritage; leadership and advocacy; and media literacy. (girlsincsb.org)

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**November 6:** Santa Barbara's Dream Foundation, the first national organization to grant wishes to adults with life-threatening illnesses, holds its ninth annual **CELEBRATION OF DREAMS** fundraiser at the Bacara Resort & Spa in Santa Barbara. Festivities include an elaborate fashion show featuring celebrity designer Salvatore Ferragamo presenting samples from the Spring 2011 collection; a star-studded musical program of A-list talent (including Rob Lowe); and live and silent auctions, which include luxury international getaway packages. The Dream Foundation is also in critical need of donated airline miles since an increase in demand has delayed granting travel dreams. Visit the website and click on "miles." (dreamfoundation.org)

**November 7:** The National Charity League Conejo Valley Chapter celebrates its 40th anniversary with the fundraiser **FORTY YEARS OF GIVING** at the Hyatt Westlake Plaza in Westlake Village. Activities include a holiday boutique, appetizer buffet, raffle, and silent auction. (assetydoc@yahoo.com)

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*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](mailto: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

## EAST MEETS WEST FOR WELLNESS

Ancient Asian techniques are the newest offerings at area spas.

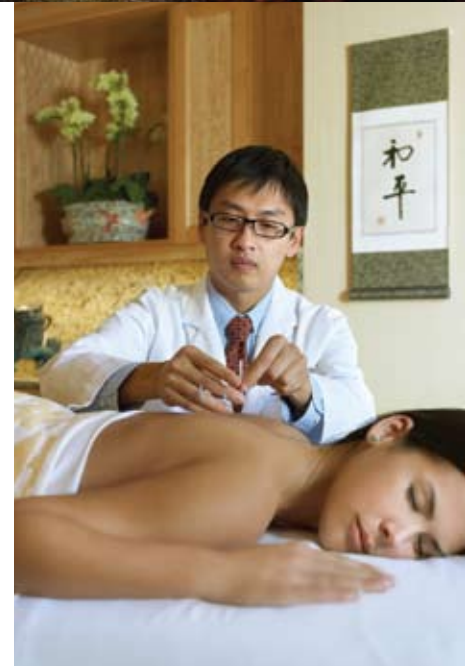
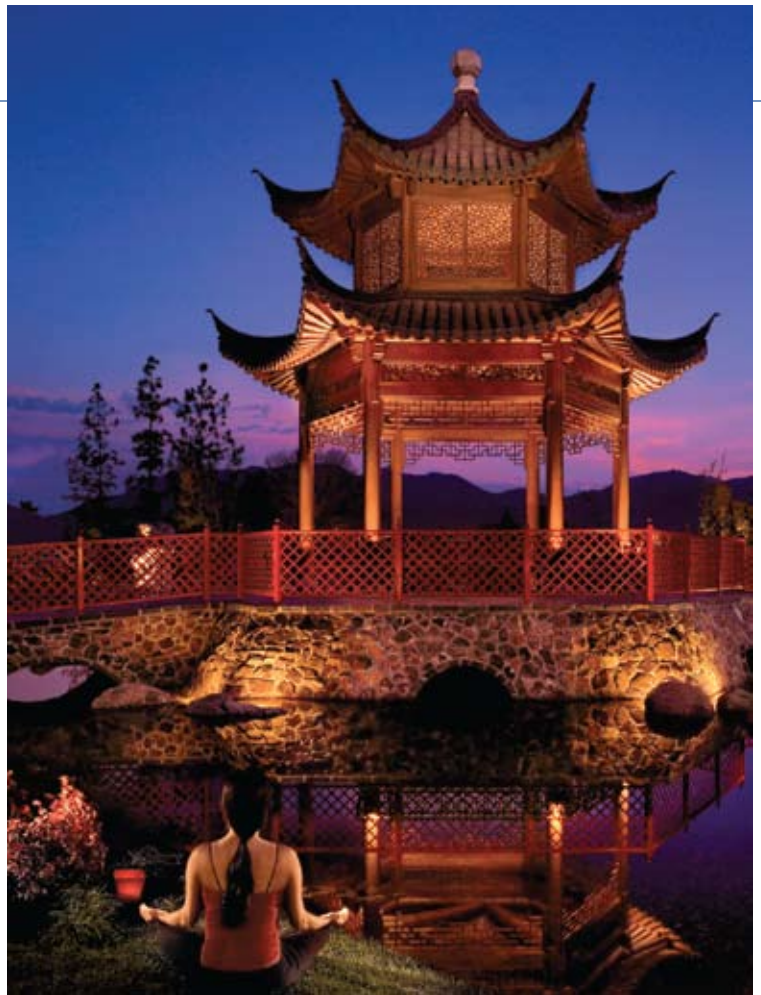
**SPA-GOERS ARE GETTING SMARTER.** No longer content with merely being pampered, fluffed, and puffed in posh surroundings, they seek real treatments for reducing stress, losing weight, and relieving aches and pains. They want holistic wellness for mind, body, and soul. So it's no wonder that many Southern California spas have recently embraced ancient Eastern philosophies and programs.

**Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village** ([fourseasons.com/westlakevillage](http://fourseasons.com/westlakevillage)) offers the perfect setting for immersing oneself in Eastern traditions, with grassy walking paths, bonsai gardens, massive boulders from Thailand's River Kwai, glistening reflective ponds, and a pagoda from Beijing. And the California Health & Longevity Institute ([chli.com](http://chli.com)) here was one of the first local facilities to offer East/West therapies, including acupuncture, acupressure, and energy-based treatments like Reiki and Thai massage.

Dr. Steven Tan, an integrative medicine physician and director of the Institute's Complementary and Alternative Medicine program, explains that while a person should get to a hospital ER *pronto* in case of a crisis (heart attack, infection, car accident), Chinese medicine is best suited for getting "healthier at the core," which is the Institute's overriding goal.

"Western medicine is powerful at managing acute symptoms, but there are gaps when it comes to promoting wellness, dealing with stress-related conditions, and getting to the root of our health issues," Tan says. "These issues are better addressed through holistic health models that look at the bigger picture of how we live, eat, sleep, exercise, manage stress, regulate emotions, and relate to others—all of the themes covered beautifully by Chinese medicine. This is where the Eastern emphasis on balancing our lives, physically and emotionally, coupled with therapies such as acupuncture, meditation, and herbs that address our symptoms and promote underlying biological balance, comes in."

For more than a century, Pasadena's elegant grande dame of a hotel, now called **The Langham Huntington Hotel** (but still called simply "The Huntington" by many in the community) has gracefully presided over winding Oak Knoll Drive, which is lined by stately mansions and towering oaks. Its lush grounds boast California's first Olympic-sized swimming pool while a 1932 wooden picture bridge—with hand-painted scenes of California landscapes—spans a tranquil Japanese garden. The hotel's well-known, much-loved Huntington Spa had been known for luxe facials and other typical treatments. Now that's changed.



The tranquil gardens at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village offer respite from the daily grind (top); Dr. Steven Tan practices acupuncture on a patient as part of the California Health & Longevity Institute's Complementary and Alternative Medicine Program.





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Dr. Paulette Saddler serves as the traditional Chinese medicine doctor and acupuncturist at the newly opened Chuan Body + Soul at The Huntington Spa ([pasadena.langhamhotels.com](http://pasadena.langhamhotels.com)). “It’s a back-to-basics approach to healing and health,” she explains. “Hundreds of years ago, physicians viewed the body holistically, but in the 1900s, with the explosion of knowledge of each organ, medicine started to specialize. But everything *is* connected to everything else, and health has to involve the whole person. That’s what traditional Chinese medicine is about.”

Saddler says it makes perfect sense to adopt Asian medical therapies in the new spa because it’s the perfect setting for people who work hard, need a break, and want healing services.

Saddler performs several acupuncture variants, including no-needles-needed cupping (where impurities are drawn out from the skin through suction) and moxibustion (where a lit herbal stick is held close to an acupuncture point to bring a “pleasant heat sensation that penetrates deep into the skin,” Saddler says). In addition, there are rituals and treatments based on the five elements of traditional Chinese medicine: fire, water, earth, metal, and wood. Spa-goers fill out a short questionnaire (favorite season, times of the day when motivation lags) to determine their dominant element and where they might be deficient. Based on that information, incense candles, teas, and essential oils are incorporated into treatments such as “The Tao of Detox” wrap (\$385) and the Chuan Harmony acupressure massage (\$185).

For those who love an ocean-side atmosphere, **Casa del Mar** ([hotelcasadelmar.com](http://hotelcasadelmar.com)) is a 10-year-old Santa Monica beachfront hotel. Once a stylish 1920s beach club (later the home of The Pritikin Center), it’s now a spectacular setting for Casa del Mar’s new Sea Wellness Spa.

There are several treatment rooms, a private yoga studio, a Thai massage room, and a very Zen and lovely candlelit lounge with gauzy curtains, bamboo walls, spicy scents, and trickling fountains. But the most innovative facet of the Sea Wellness Spa is its newly forged collaboration with nearby Moonview Sanctuary ([moonviewsanctuary.com](http://moonviewsanctuary.com)), a treatment center for people who are overcoming a crisis or addiction, dealing with chronic health issues or pain, or who want to achieve peak performance in life, work, or athletics.

A Moonview treatment begins with a traditional Chinese medicine counseling session (\$30) to determine which modality (yoga, meditation, acupuncture, energy rebalancing, or something else) is best suited for each person’s particular situation.

“We find the techniques and tools to help you move whatever is blocking you,” says Moonview practitioner Andre Zitcer. “Chinese medicine is rooted in the spirit, and in helping people take on their own health.”

The bottom line is that while “new and improved” slogans may be good for detergents and face creams, sometimes time-tested traditions are the cure when it comes to spiritual wellness. The best thing to experience at a spa may not be the massage, facial mask, or moisturizer to soften your skin, but rather the wisdom of the ancients. ■

The Japanese garden at The Langham Huntington Hotel in Pasadena (top); yoga on the beach (middle) in front of Casa del Mar in Santa Monica (bottom).

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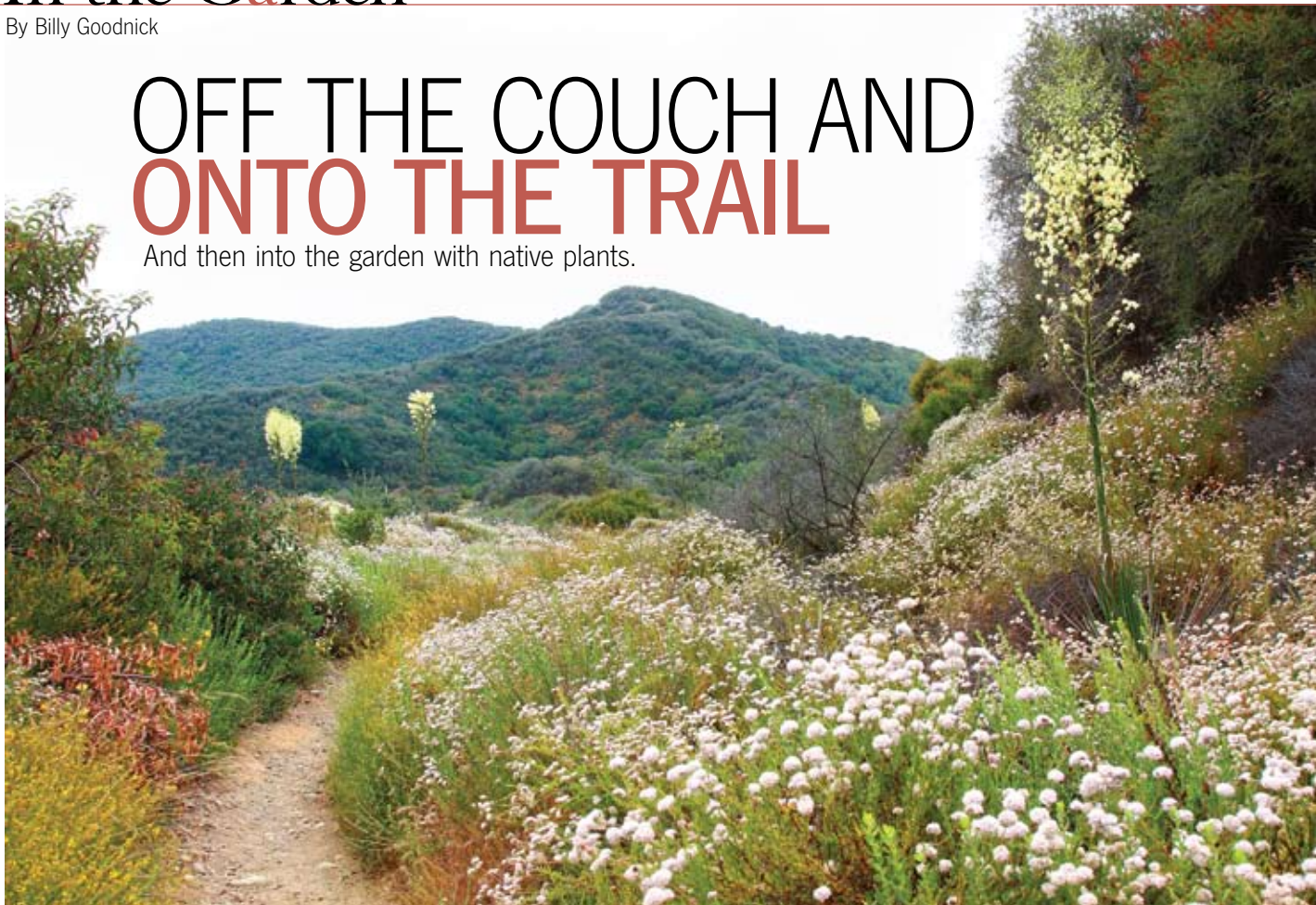


# In the Garden

By Billy Goodnick

## OFF THE COUCH AND ONTO THE TRAIL

And then into the garden with native plants.



**IF IT'S TRUE THAT AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION** is worth a pound of cure, then it's never too late to get off the couch, pull on a pair of hiking boots, head out the door, and start moving. With 500 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) offers 805 residents a unique opportunity to exercise, relax, and reconnect with nature—activities proven to reduce the stress caused by hyperactive lives. The mountains are laced with trails where exotic wildflowers bloom, breezes are scented with aromatic foliage, city sounds soften, and inspiring views beckon.

The SMMNRA is the world's largest urban national park (or as I see it, "garden"), weighing in at a whopping 153,075 acres. It stretches from its decidedly urban eastern tip near the Hollywood Bowl to the salt-sprayed sands along the Pacific Coast Highway at Point Mugu. Within this vast area visitors can hike or bike through what ecologists call "plant communities" that have evolved for hundreds of thousands of years. These riparian areas, covered by chaparral, oak woodland, coastal scrub, and grassland, contain many beautiful plants that can make the transition from wildland to the home garden. And since these plants have been around a lot longer than we humans, they're used to getting along without help from us.

If getting in shape while scouting for ideas on what to plant around your home sounds like a splendid way to spend the day, start planning an adventure at the National Parks Service Visitor Center at 401 W. Hillcrest Drive in Thousand Oaks ([nps.gov/samo](http://nps.gov/samo)). It offers free maps

and brochures, as well as the quarterly *Outdoors* publication that guides the public to programs and events. Plant lovers can learn about hikes guided by trained naturalists, and those who don't mind getting dirty can don a pair of gloves and volunteer for hands-on creek restoration.

"My involvement with the Santa Monica Mountains began by photographing wildflowers as a hobby," says park volunteer Tony Valois, who holds a doctorate in electrical engineering. "I became interested in the plant life and ecology of the mountains. Now I volunteer at the Circle X Ranch contact station as a campground host, interpreting the natural environment for visitors."

Valois also created a wildflower photo gallery and "flower finder" program at the SMMNRA's website ([nps.gov/samo](http://nps.gov/samo)); he then modified it into a smart phone app.

Valois recommends that beginners start their exploration on the Pentachaeta trail at Triunfo Creek Park, or the loop trail at Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa, home of the Native American Culture Center and a native plant garden. These easy to moderate hikes pass through chaparral and coastal scrub.

Circle X Ranch is his favorite spot in the SMMNRA. "It's the most pristine location with very few non-native species and fabulous views. Sandstone Peak is the highest point in the Santa Monica Mountains at 3,111 feet, and has 360-degree views. On a clear day, you can see the Channel Islands, the inland valleys, and in winter, the snow on Mount Baldy," Valois says.

Native plants thrive along the Rodgers Road Trail (part of the Backbone Trail) in Topanga State Park in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Hikers looking for a challenge will get a workout on the 6-mile round-trip to Sandstone Peak, via the Mishe Mokwa trail. The loop passes through stands of red shank chaparral (*Adenostoma sparsifolium*), a tree-like shrub with dramatic reddish-brown bark and tiny, narrow leaves that help the plant conserve moisture in this arid, windswept locale. Given well-drained soil and plenty of sun, red shank chaparral can grow into a small tree in a garden, but not all natives in the wild can make the transition to “civilized” conditions around our homes.

The simplest way to know if a native plant will succeed in a home garden is to check what’s available at local nurseries. If a species adapts well to the wide range of conditions in irrigated, tended gardens, it’s bound to be available to the public.

That’s where **Nopalito Native Plant Nursery** in Ventura ([nopalitonursery.com](http://nopalitonursery.com)) comes into the picture. Cousins Rick and Antonio Sanchez and Kenji Akune (Rick’s high school buddy) opened their business in October 2009, located next door to Lassen’s Natural Foods. “Our customers come from all over the area—Ojai, Ventura, Thousand Oaks, even Santa Barbara,” says Antonio. “They tend to be environmentally aware and want to create gardens that don’t use a lot of water and resources. They also want plants that are beautiful and fun to be around, and we’re all about that. Like our website says, ‘Plant Natives ... Enjoy Life!’ ”

Nopalito carries natives that fit virtually any garden style. For an English cottage perennial border, Antonio recommends beard-tongue (*Penstemon ‘Margarita BOP’*), a tidy plant that forms an 18-inch-high clump of foliage topped with pinkish-purple flowers. Add a low swath of lavender-petaled seaside daisies (*Erigeron ‘Wayne Roderick’*) and a dash of graceful Mendocino reed grass (*Calamagrostis foliosis*) for instant whimsy.

Around Mediterranean-style homes, replace old-school shrubs like Indian hawthorn with aromatic, blue-flowered Cleveland sage (*Salvia clevelandii ‘Winnifred Gilman’*). Then deep-six those boring white petunias and replace them with luscious fern-leaf Sonoma Coast yarrow (*Achillea millefolium ‘Sonoma Coast’*).

Though we’re continually warned about the stress that comes with multitasking, there are always exceptions to the rule: Exercising while connecting with nature while discovering new plants sounds like a win-win-win. ■

---

## Native Plant Dos and Don’ts

**Do** consider the mature size of a plant before deciding where to put it. Proper spacing of plants significantly reduces pruning and allows the plant to achieve its natural form.

**Don’t** add planting mix or compost to the planting hole—simply pulverize the largest dirt clods with a shovel or cultivator, then place the loose soil around the root ball. Use water to settle the soil and eliminate air pockets.

**Do** water the plant regularly during the first year until it’s established. Even drought-resistant natives need some nurturing.

**Don’t** leave the soil around the plants exposed to the elements. Maintain a 3-inch layer of bark mulch around and under new plants. Prevent the mulch from touching the bark of trees and woody shrubs.



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# Good Deeds

By Mark Langton Photographs by Judi Bumstead



Shahar Sehati, Sha Sehati, Bill Fulton



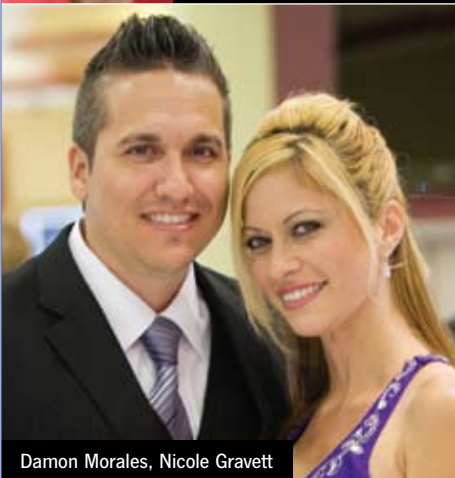
Augie Martinez



Kara Erickson, Roger Gorman



Trudy Kallman, Gigi Kohanium



Damon Morales, Nicole Gravett

## BLING FOR BENEVOLENCE

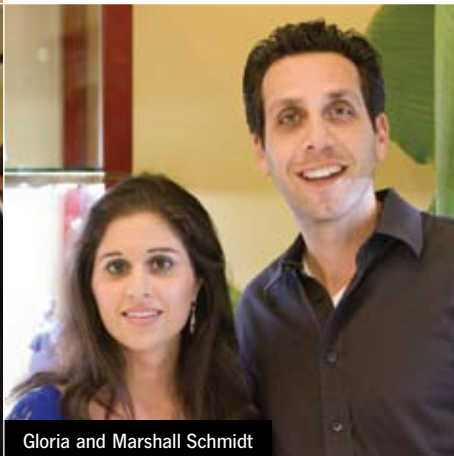
Jewelry Couture's grand opening benefits Casa Pacifica.

**THE EVENT:** Jewelry Couture by Sehati officially opened its doors on June 16 with a celebration at its sprawling Ventura location. The 13,500-square-foot facility—one of the largest of its kind in the country—features an array of jewelry and watches from top name brands, along with services like custom designing, watch repair, and engraving. The evening featured live chamber music and a runway fashion show with stunning examples of the company's offerings. A portion of the evening's sales was donated to Casa Pacifica.

**THE CAUSE:** Serving abused, neglected, and emotionally disturbed children in the tri-county area since 1994, Casa Pacifica offers a broad range of services and programs including residential treatment and education. The center has also become a training center for professionals from around the region. In addition to the main campus in Camarillo, Casa Pacifica also operates two offices in Santa Barbara, which provide in-home therapeutic behavioral services. ([casapacifica.org](http://casapacifica.org)) ■



Steven and Jennifer Elson



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**OCTOBER 30<sup>TH</sup> SATURDAY 10 AM - 4 PM**

- Concours d'Italiano
- American Classics Auto Show
- Vino d'Elegance
- Halloween Activities for children

**OCTOBER 31<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY 10 AM - 4 PM**

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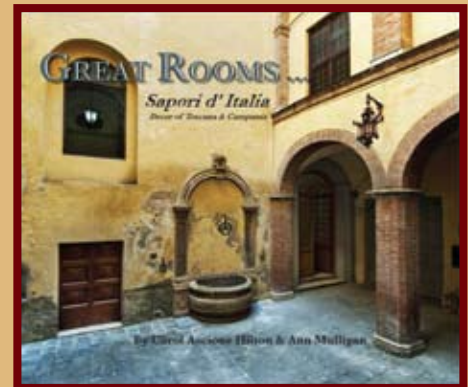
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# Good Deeds

By Mark Langton Photographs by Judi Bumstead



Jim and Cindy Hawse, Rosemary and Jim Allison



Vicki Raven-Todd, Mona Hosseini, Shelley Aldrich



Sue Chadwick, Sandy Berg, Rose Simmons



Alister and Karen George, Hannah Grossman



Bill Krantz, Liz and Chris Kimball

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The “joy of giving” helps raise funds for cancer research.

**THE EVENT:** The American Cancer Society of Ventura County held its annual fundraiser on August 1. This year’s theme was “Joie de Vivre” (Joy of Life), and the event treated guests to a French-themed evening at a luxurious private estate in the Santa Rosa Valley. Attendees enjoyed the farmers’ market featuring local produce, cocktails and hors d’oeuvres, and participated in a silent auction while being entertained by jazz singers and musicians. A specially prepared French countryside-inspired gourmet dinner followed, as well as a live auction.

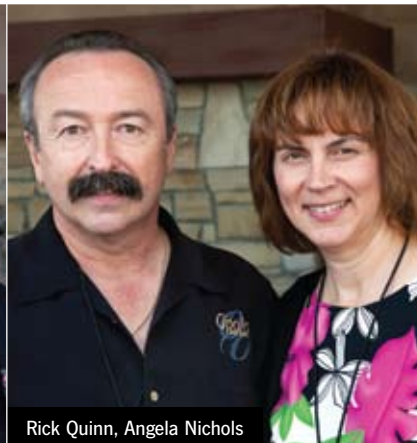
**THE CAUSE:** The American Cancer Society (ACS) has been fighting cancer and searching for a cure since 1913. Between the early 1990s and 2005, ACS has helped decrease the overall death rate from cancer by 15 percent, which means about 650,000 premature deaths were avoided. As the largest private-sector contributor to cancer research in the United States, ACS has donated more than \$3.4 billion since 1946. (cancer.org) ■



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3.



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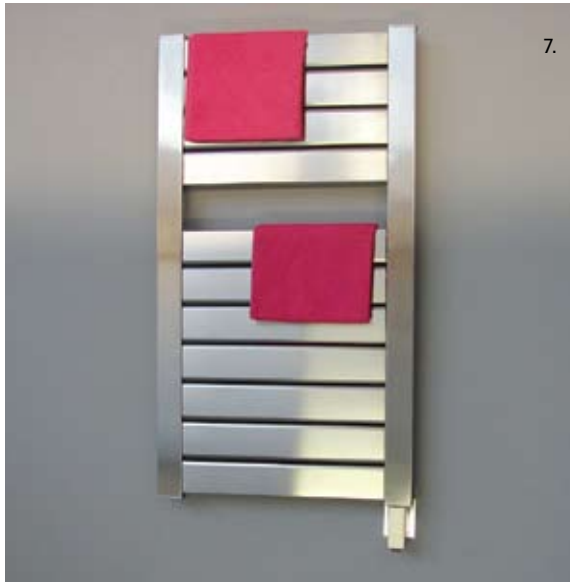


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5. The **JAIN GRAY CERAMIC FLOOR LAMP** (\$750) from Arteriors—with its “Live well, laugh often, and love much ...” message embossed on the base—is a constant reminder of what’s important in life; Cabana Home, Santa Barbara, cabanahome.com; or Pure Life and Home, Ventura, purelifeandhome.com.

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# INSPIRATION DESTINATION

Searching for Javier Bardem and other worthy pursuits  
at Rancho La Puerta.

By Heidi Dvorak

Begin your stay at Rancho La Puerta  
by walking the full-scale replica of the  
classic labyrinth found at Chartres, where  
you can tap into your consciousness.



**I don't have the luxury that the** Julia Roberts character has in the film *Eat, Pray, Love*. No one's going to fund a yearlong trip for me to exotic locales like Italy, India, and Bali so I can "discover myself." But with my almost nonstop work schedule and the demanding job of parenting two sons, I've come to a point where I could use a little self-discovery.

A health resort seems just the ticket. Although there's no shortage of world-class resorts that make promises of rejuvenation, something 805-close is preferable so I don't have to waste a lot of time getting to my destination. That way, I can spend every precious minute exploring my inner self, and maybe even meeting someone like *Eat, Pray, Love* co-star Javier Bardem. (A girl can dream, can't she?) Rancho La Puerta, located in the high desert in Baja California, Mexico, fits the bill.

Founded in 1940 by Deborah Szekely and her late husband, Edmond, the 150-acre ranch sits within the Sierra Mountain range. It's a three-to-four-hour drive from the southern tip of the 805; or a short flight to the San Diego Airport, where a Rancho La Puerta bus will take guests across the border. A stay lasts from Saturday to Saturday, which helps me solidify a generous block of time to work on myself.

I book my reservation and choose to drive myself there to savor the scenery and get some much-needed alone time. As the guard opens the gates and I park, I step into what looks like paradise. Native cacti, brilliantly hued wildflowers, sagebrush, chaparral, and towering indigenous trees serve as the background for well-placed Mexican artifacts: gurgling stone fountains, wagon wheels, pottery, and meandering brick walkways. The staff, composed mostly of locals, is well-schooled. I'm greeted with iced lemonade, fresh fruit, and English-spoken guidance.

To begin my journey, I decide to walk myself to my room unescorted and, thus, the workout begins. It turns out that every



destination here requires more than a bit of walking, and that's the point. Szekeley designed the ranch with fitness in mind, so even if guests don't take any classes, they still get exercise. Eighty-seven guest villas are scattered throughout the vast property, each spaced apart and so private that I rarely see anyone else.

Inside my villa, the decor might be called "rustic Mexican," but the ambience emphasizes stylish comfort with a living room, fireplace, bedroom, kitchenette (with filtered drinking water), and full bath, all enhanced by Mexican-style furnishings, vibrant wall hangings, sculptures, and paintings by local artists.

There is an obvious absence of radios and TVs to reduce artificial distractions. It's tempting to recline on a chaise longue on the secluded brick patio, but armed with a schedule, I'm more than curious about what this place can uncover for me.

I'm off to a "Meet and Greet" led by gregarious fitness director Barry Shingle, who explains to new guests how to navigate through the next seven days. More than 50 coed exercise classes are taught daily, including strength training, yoga, Pilates, swimming, running, cardio boxing, tennis, dance, volleyball, meditation, tai chi, water works, and hiking. Non-athletic options abound: jewelry making, movies, nutrition lectures, meditation, and gourmet cooking classes.

It's time for dinner, the first of many meals (along with breakfast, lunch, and snacks served daily) I'll eat at the grand hall, an expansive dining room that exudes Spanish colonial elegance, with a sweeping

spiral staircase, stone fireplace, and wooden tables set with brightly striped linens and native earthenware. A handsome Mexican waiter (no, not Javier Bardem, but I can pretend) escorts me to a table of eight. Guests are as varied as the fitness offerings: singles, couples, former college mates, mothers and daughters, young and old. At my table alone, there's a divorced oral surgeon from Michigan, a hotelier and his wife from San Francisco, a widower from the Czech Republic, two sisters reuniting from Arkansas and England, and an art dealer from New York.

Javier, er, the waiter, describes the cuisine as "low sodium, low fat, lacto-ovo vegetarian," which might be interpreted as "dull." But dinner turns out to be an intensely flavorful tomato soup, veggies from the on-site organic garden, fresh-caught halibut grilled to perfection, and cinnamon flan. I ask to try the alternative entrée, chayote lasagna, made with squash and fat-free ricotta, and find that it's as decadently delicious as its white-bread, high-fat cousin. Best part: I can have seconds of everything.

After dinner, guests drift to various evening activities. Tonight's guest speaker is showing slides of her new book about India, *Sherlock Holmes* is screening in the lounge, and a candlelight meditation is taking place at one of the gyms. Me? I head to my room for a good night's sleep.

Morning arrives and I'm off to a buffet-style breakfast of a veggie omelette, house-made granola, and fresh papaya. I take mine alone on the patio, underneath huge sycamores. While perusing the fitness schedule, I'm

overwhelmed by the number of classes taught in any of the 11 fitness centers. In true Julia Roberts style, I throw caution to the wind and head for Latin Dance. The instructor is a handsome Latino (his accent is somewhat reminiscent of Javier Bardem), whose sexy demeanor is so intoxicating that he has the class of about 40 salsa-ing in no time. His jokes and our screw-ups keep us laughing to the point of tears.

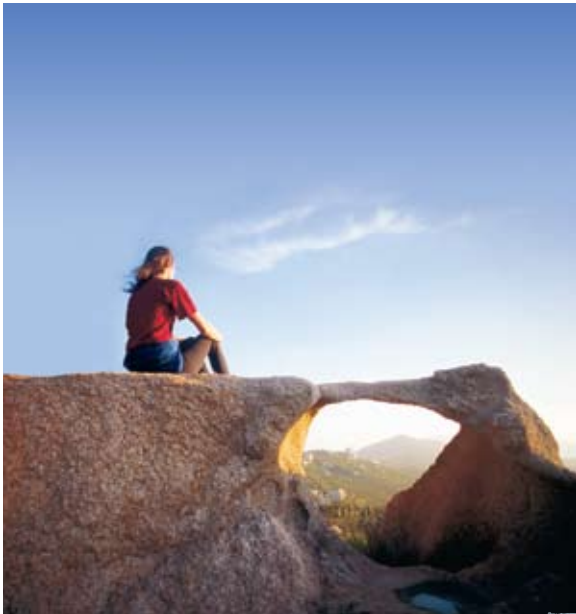
At home, one sweat-inducing, calorie-burning class like this and I'd call it a day. Now I'm curious to keep going.

It turns out that every class here takes exercise to a higher level. It's not about executing moves with perfection but appreciating my body's ability to move. A tai chi routine, when narrated by a master instructor, helps me forge a connection to nature. A Pilates class gives me insight on how to incorporate core strength in my day. A bicep curl is not just a bicep curl: It's about connecting my breath and body in a way that makes me feel wholly alive.

I get a little more daring each day. One morning, I take the 5-mile Mountain Coyote Hike as the leader's guided instruction helps me to pay attention to skin, my muscles, the way my breath fuels my body. A feeling of grandiosity takes over that's almost intoxicating. A self-portrait drawing class turns out to be more than an art class as I examine how I choose to portray myself. Fat? Frowning? Forlorn? Pretty heady stuff.

If that's not enough, there are three state-of-the-art spa centers equipped with hot tubs, cold-plunge pools, saunas, showers, and steams. The ranch's Hot Riverstone Massage turns out to fuse yet another mind-body connection: As a masseuse rubs me down with organic oils then glides smooth, warmed stones across my back, chest, belly, arms, and legs, I take a deep breath and realize how lucky I am to be in this world.

After a week of eating well, exercising mindfully, and thinking about my place on the Earth, I'm ready to head home. So what did I get out of this week of fresh food and fitness? Learning how to treat myself well is a lesson in itself. And it's an important one that I'm determined to remember as I return to the muddle of responsibilities and madness. I didn't get to eat tons of pasta, meditate at an ashram, or meet anyone even close to Javier Bardem, but I did get to see something in a new light that I hadn't seen before: myself. ■



**Opposite page:** The ranch cooking school called Cocina Que Canta or “the kitchen that sings.”  
**This page, from left:** Just one of the scenic stops that overlooks 42 miles of hiking trails; typical ranch decor crafted by local Mexican artisans; organic produce is picked every morning from the on-site 6-acre farm; all-things-yoga take place at the Montana Gym; house-made soups like butternut squash change daily; every twist and turn of the property’s 150 acres offers spectacular views of the natural habitat within the Sierra Mountain range.

Accommodations range from \$2,715 to \$4,515 per person, per week including meals, fitness classes, evening programs, and scheduled transportation to and from the San Diego Airport on Saturdays.



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# PEOPLE OF THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY

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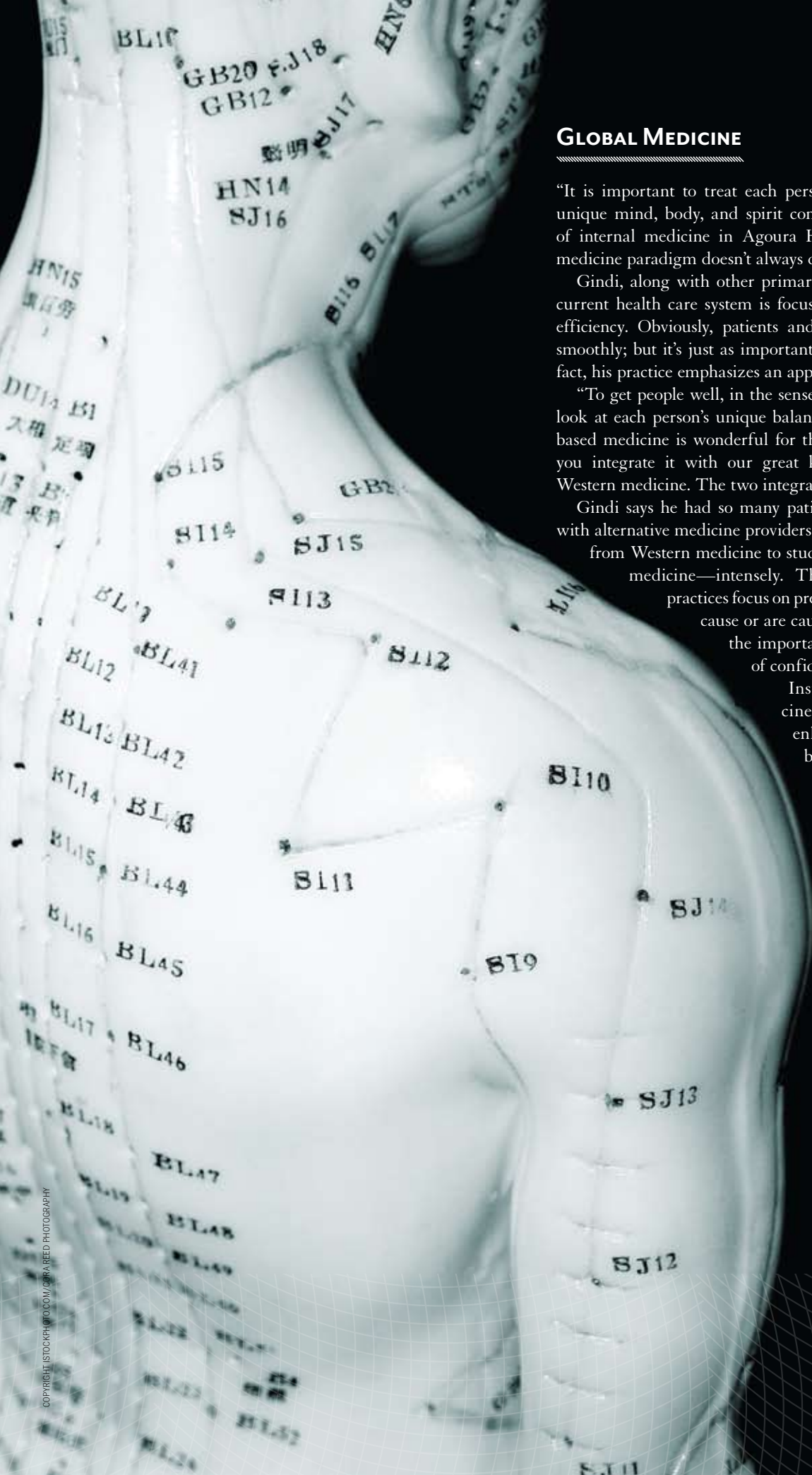
*Local voices from our community of caregivers.*

**A LOT OF THE FOCUS OF HEALTH CARE REFORM IS ABOUT NUMBERS:** numbers of uninsured, numbers of people waiting in the emergency rooms, numbers of costs and savings and budget-busters. The numbers go on and on. When the attention turns to the human element, the emphasis usually falls on us, the patients.

What sometimes get lost in the numbers (and the PPOs, HMOs, POS plans, managed care networks and other elements framing today's health care industry) are the people providing the care. Although "family doctors" are now "primary care physicians," they still do the lion's share of treatment for their patients; they're also usually the first point of contact for a massive constellation of specialists, devoted to their work as well.

The following cross section of professionals represents a fraction of the local health care industry, but it demonstrates that whatever "health care reform" might accomplish, caregivers want to remain focused on providing real care for real people.

*By Anthony Head*



## GLOBAL MEDICINE

“It is important to treat each person as a unique individual with a unique mind, body, and spirit constitution,” says Jack Gindi, doctor of internal medicine in Agoura Hills. “Unfortunately, the Western medicine paradigm doesn’t always do that very well at all.”

Gindi, along with other primary care physicians, believes that the current health care system is focused too much on streamlining and efficiency. Obviously, patients and doctors want any process to go smoothly; but it’s just as important not to sacrifice quality of care. In fact, his practice emphasizes an approach based on individual needs.

“To get people well, in the sense of the word ‘wellness,’ we have to look at each person’s unique balance of issues,” Gindi says. “Eastern-based medicine is wonderful for that approach. It’s even better when you integrate it with our great knowledge, abilities, and skills of Western medicine. The two integrate fabulously.”

Gindi says he had so many patients tell him about their successes with alternative medicine providers that he took a 15-month sabbatical from Western medicine to study acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine—intensely. The complexities of these ancient practices focus on preventing imbalances in the body that cause or are caused by disease. He also appreciated the importance given to building relationships of confidence between doctor and patient.

Instead of displacing Western medicine, Gindi says, Eastern medicine enhances it. His patients, especially baby boomers and younger, are especially receptive to a more global approach to medicine; and, he says, even more of the senior population is taking notice. “It also might be regional. I think where we live in California is much more open to different approaches. After all, the inspiration for me learning about Eastern medicine came from my patients.”

DR. JACK GINDI  
Agoura Hills, 818-706-7773

## THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY HOSPITALS

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The bottom line is that hospitals function to prevent and treat illnesses every day. It's a business model that brings together patients, members of the medical staff, insurance companies, and in many cases, some level of government. Hospitals are also employers, oftentimes among the largest within a community, and support the fields of treatment, research, education, and prevention. As an economic institution, a hospital must remain profitable (or at least in the black) in order to strategically navigate the complexities of modern health care, a system that's on the brink of massive change.

All that makes the task of running a hospital probably one of the toughest in the health care universe. Greg Angle is 18 months into his tenure as president and CEO of Los Robles Hospital and Medical Center in Thousand Oaks, and he says that health care management's future is, to some degree, uncertain. "There are so many moving parts within the health care industry that I don't think many people can predict with any degree of certainty [what] reform, as it's currently articulated, will ultimately look like."

This much seems certain: There will be increased demand for services because of the expansion of access coupled with an aging population. Angle sees another trend: "The health care system is evolving so that many patients are seeking more outpatient settings. This can lead to a greater fragmentation of care." He says Los Robles will continue to evolve to meet this trend, whether that means bringing more services under one roof or reaching out to form vital off-premise partnerships. "Moving forward, it's critical to ensure a continuity of care."

To remain relevant and productive for local, regional, and national communities, Angle believes it's of paramount importance to continually reinvent a hospital's role. "The majority of my time is making certain that the needs of our physicians are met and figuring out how best to improve the quality and efficiency of care to our patients," he says. "It's good business to provide good quality care."

LOS ROBLES HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER  
Thousand Oaks, [losrobleshospital.com](http://losrobleshospital.com)

## GENETICS: *Brave New World of Personalized Medicine*

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The genomic revolution didn't start in 2003, when the Human Genome Project successfully completed mapping the full genetic sequence found in our DNA; but that accomplishment was a huge research milestone that sharply focused the advancement of "personalized medicine."

"'Personalized medicine' refers to just how different each person is," says Grant Bitter, founder and CEO of Genomic Express, Inc., in Westlake Village. "We all respond to different forms of treatment, and research at the molecular level is what is driving the most effective ways of finding those treatments."

Genomic Express is a state-of-the-art molecular genetics laboratory offering a myriad of tests, from how caffeine metabolism can affect pregnancy to how different forms of training are more effective for elite athletes. Bitter says one of the underlying goals of Genomic Express is to work directly with individuals, empowering them to be proactive in managing their health and wellness.

"Human health care is undergoing profound change with the rapid increase in genetic knowledge," Bitter says. "There is such a huge amount of information, though, that today we only grasp a small percentage of information for improving health and medical practices. But because of the emphasis on genetics, medicine is truly beginning to be tailored to individual needs."

GRANT A. BITTER, PHD  
Founder, CEO, Genomic Express  
Westlake Village, [genomicexpress.com](http://genomicexpress.com)



## ADDICTION

“If you think someone you know is in trouble, get them help,” says Sherry Gaba, a licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist in private practice in Agoura Hills. It is a familiar directive because addiction, in some form, seems to be hiding in just about everybody’s family. Although addiction takes a long list of forms, addiction medicine is a specialty that, while by no means new, is currently emphasized in popular culture.

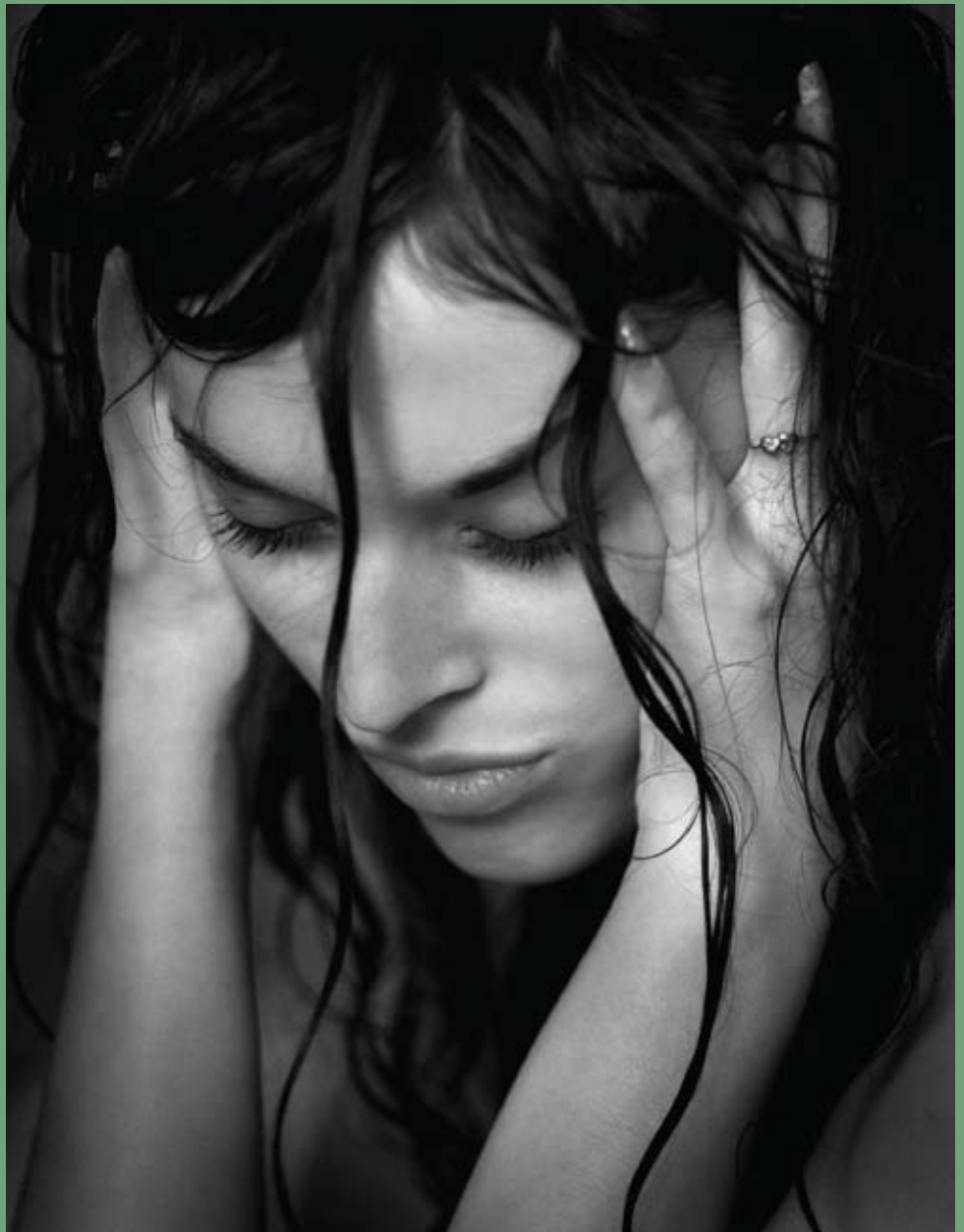
Gaba, who has appeared as an expert on television programs, says, “There are a lot of people who don’t know what goes on in rehab, and [these shows] definitely show you. They show the pain that families go through. They show how unmanageable life becomes, and they demonstrate severe consequences. It’s good

education, though I’ll not deny it makes for a good TV show because it’s drama.”

Just as importantly, they open a window to understanding how many different rehabilitation approaches are offered, including medical technology. Individuals have options to address their specific needs, which Gaba says is critical for success: “Trauma comes in all different sizes and manifests itself in many ways. There are a lot of people working in this field and our goal is to give addicts the same treatment as any other disease. Every person has a unique journey to take before life becomes manageable again.”

**SHERRY GABA**

Licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist  
Agoura Hills, [sgabatherapy.com](http://sgabatherapy.com)





## THE SKIN WE LIVE IN

---

Consider the skin: our largest organ, both insulating and waterproof, a massive network of sensory receptors keeping the brain in constant and never-ending contact with its surroundings. It's also, generally, the body's first line of defense against everything from ultraviolet sun exposure to sexually transmitted diseases.

According to Dr. Michael Bastien with Dermatology Associates Westlake in Westlake Village, the skin's importance is too often overlooked. "Unfortunately, as a society, we haven't educated the public about adequate skin care, which includes prevention," he says.

As a dermatologist, Bastien deals with acne, eczema, chronic conditions like psoriasis, and other autoimmune skin diseases. He also prevents skin cancer, or at the very least, he dramatically decreases his patients' odds of getting it—because he insists that they be the first line of defense for their own skin.

"It's a lethal disease that people should be able to recognize," Bastien says. "Then [a dermatologist] can remove the tumor, if needed, early. There'll be no spread of the disease, no need for chemotherapy."

Like other fields of medicine, dermatology benefits from genetic and molecular research, including drug-specific treatments based on patients' genome profiles. This growing personalized medicine aspect appeals to Bastien. "I've seen a million warts, and I've seen a million basal cell skin cancers," he says. "The love of medicine, for me, is working with people. I've had many of the same patients for years, and I've had the opportunity to educate them over time to come in regularly for full-body exams to catch things early. And if something does pop up, they know to get in here as soon as possible."

**DR. MICHAEL BASTIEN**  
Dermatology Associates Westlake  
Westlake Village, 805-495-0551

## ALZHEIMER'S AND THE COMING OF THE SILVER TSUNAMI

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“The baby boomers are booming and Alzheimer’s disease is rising at extraordinary rates. It’s the health crisis of the 21st century. Whether or not people want to admit it, it’s on its way,” says Arlene Stepputat. As program director for California’s Central Coast chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association, she oversees delivery of services to families, professionals, and individuals dealing with Alzheimer’s. The first point of contact is often in an office, but her office also conducts consultations by telephone, email, and sometimes at the home. “We go where the need is.”

That need is already substantial, and it’s growing alarmingly; furthermore, Alzheimer’s is a terminal diagnosis. It’s the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. and there’s no cure. Despite a handful of drugs showing promise of slowing the disease’s advancement in some people, in the end every patient requires round-the-clock care.

The toll on the patient is devastating, especially when they’re cognitive of their own bleak future. In the early stages, they can try to deal with it by getting involved in clinical trials. Eventually and inevitably, they lose the capacity to make critical care decisions.

It’s for this reason that Alzheimer’s is one of the few medical conditions where “treatment” emphasizes the caregivers as much as (if not more than) the patients. “It wears on caregivers, particularly on senior spouses,” Stepputat says. “They don’t want to put their spouse in a facility and they compromise their own health and well-being trying to take care of them. The statistics show that a lot of times the caregiver gets sick and dies first.”

Many health care providers refer to Alzheimer’s as “the long good-bye” because caregivers see the slow slipping away of personality and memory in family members. Stepputat says that perhaps the most important facet of care is the emotional support for the caregivers for the duration of the disease, whether it’s five or 15 years.

Stepputat warns that right now, within our health care system, we as a nation (and a community) are not prepared for what’s coming, referring to the disease’s sobriquet “silver tsunami.” “Even if we found a way to prevent Alzheimer’s tomorrow, there are still millions of people living with the disease today,” she cautions.

November is National Alzheimer’s Awareness Month and organizations like the Alzheimer’s Association will try to provide even more education to the public. “Community advocates are needed,” Stepputat says. “The changes come from a groundswell of the public to advance the research and caregiving. And that groundswell is needed right now.”

ARLENE STEPPUTAT, MA

Program director, Alzheimer’s Association California Central Coast  
[alz.org/cacentralcoast](http://alz.org/cacentralcoast)



## MAKING BABIES

---

In 1978, the world's first test-tube baby was born. (She was named Louise Joy Brown.) At the time, in vitro fertilization (IVF) was experimental and revolutionary, and the event was a historic first for fertility medicine. And yet, what is being done today in the same field of medicine would have still been the stuff of science fiction several decades ago. What has remained constant (since even before 1978) is that women's biological clocks keep ticking.

"We're not aware of any mechanism that slows down the reproductive arena, and so unfortunately the quality of a woman's eggs still declines with time," says Dr. Richard Buyalos. In clinics like Fertility and Surgical Associates of California in Thousand Oaks, fertility specialists like Buyalos use modern technology to link molecular genetics with clinical medicine. His area of practice is expanding rapidly, he believes, because there is much more awareness about the decline of fertility potential with age.

The irony, says Buyalos, is that society, at least in urban areas, is nudging back the average age of initiating a family (or starting a second family). "Inevitably, when some couples pursue fertility later in life they won't be able to achieve a viable pregnancy with the woman's own eggs. Probably 20 to 25 percent of the people we see are using a third-party donor. They use eggs harvested from a third party."

So far, fertility medicine has been able to successfully freeze sperm and fertilized eggs for future use, and Buyalos believes a third alternative is close at hand: "I think more emphasis will be on unfertilized eggs that can be harvested and preserved. This will allow healthy eggs to be taken from an earlier time in the mother's life, which won't have the genetic issues of a woman who is older. But we're not quite there yet."

As that technology continues to be refined, other advances—like screening embryos for sickle cell and life-shortening conditions like Huntington's disease before they are transferred to the patient—are already in place. At first, all this science may sound clinical and detached, but ultimately, fertility specialists know their work is for the family. They focus on ensuring the best-quality care because pursuing fertility is an emotional, financial, and time commitment (and that's before the kid is born). ■

DR. RICHARD BUYALOS  
Fertility and Surgical Associates of California  
Thousand Oaks, [fertilityassociates.com](http://fertilityassociates.com)

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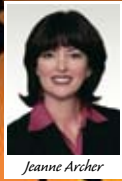
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It was a privilege to stand as chair of the Joie de Vivre—Evening of Hope Gala, 2010. The Live Auction and Cancer Challenge was the highest EVER raised in this State!!!!. "With cancer affecting virtually every family in Ventura County, this is one battle that crosses all societal and political boundaries, and I am so delighted with the overwhelming response to this event."

The success of this year's American Cancer Society Evening of Hope Gala 2010 is a true testament to the philanthropic support of the community and individuals who are committed to making a difference in the fight against cancer. I was thrilled to have had the opportunity to chair such a wonderful and inspiring celebration that will have a direct impact on the lives of cancer patients and caregivers.

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Rosemary Allison  
Event Chair 2010 Joie de Vivre  
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# JOIN THE BEET GENERATION

From soups to salads, they're in the groove.

**BEETS HAVE ARRIVED.** Though once considered dowdy, today these healthful root vegetables are hip with a Facebook page “liked” by more than 2,440 people at last count. And they're the object of desire for fictional paper salesman and beet farm owner Dwight Schrute in the popular TV series *The Office*. This pop-culture affection reflects home cooks' and chefs' growing culinary adoration.

“[A beet is] just a delicious little package of flavor,” says self-professed beet lover Janet Fletcher, Napa Valley-based columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and author (with Sur la Table) of *Eating Local: The Cookbook Inspired by America's Farmers* (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2010).

Diners are discovering beets for their flavor and impressive antioxidant and folate stats. They're feasting on the classic merlot-colored variety as well as the golden, the unusual white beet, and Chioggia—an Italian heirloom also called candy cane beet for its concentric red and white rings.

“Their flavors vary slightly with the varietal but are always an intense earthiness with a sweet counterpoint. Their texture is firm and when they're cooked al dente they provide a most satisfying succulent texture,” says Todd Aarons, executive chef of Tierra Sur Restaurant at Herzog Wine Cellars in Oxnard ([herzogwinecellars.com](http://herzogwinecellars.com)).

Aarons emphasizes these attributes with seasonal cold beet soup, as well as with a hot Venetian-style soup with chicken broth, julienned beets, leeks, carrots, and fried risotto croutons. He twists and turns beets' flavors by roasting, braising, and pickling them—even frying them into potato-style chips dusted with truffle salt.

While they're usually served cooked, raw beets can be juiced or shredded over green-leaf salads. Aarons turns them into their own salad by splashing ultra-thin slices with rice wine vinegar.

He and his fellow chefs are also going sweet on beets, using them to make desserts like frozen custard, jewel-tone sugar cookies, and ice cream (see recipe at [805living.com](http://805living.com)).

Clearly, the dark days of beets relegated to being canned and tossed over iceberg lettuce salads or boiled for borscht are gone. Home cooks, too, have discovered that fresh beets are much more engaging, especially when roasted.

“Once [beets] are roasted and the skin [is] rubbed off, it is like polishing an earth-encrusted diamond to reveal its true luster,” says Aarons.

Fletcher explains, “When you boil them, you boil out a lot of the flavor and some of the color with the red beets, so roasting is a much better technique. It concentrates the flavor and you don't lose the color and you don't lose the nutrients.”

Salads bring out roasted beets' colorful personality and versatility. Slice or cube them and accent with nuts, a tangy or salty cheese (ricotta salata or feta), and something acidic (vinegar or citrus). Arugula is a popular addition, too. The resulting salads are jazzy contrasts of textures and flavors.

One of my favorite go-to fall salads layers sliced roasted beets, a drizzle of olive oil, pomegranate (seeds or juice), crumbled goat cheese, toasted pine nuts, and sea salt. Delish. When short on time, I'll grab ready-to-eat steamed, peeled baby beets from Trader Joe's ([traderjoes.com](http://traderjoes.com)) and the salad's a snap to make.

“Beets are so delicious on their own, they don't need much,” Fletcher advises. So just give them the opportunity to dazzle—and they will.

## Be a Beetnik

AREA CHEFS SHOW OFF THE VEGETABLE'S DELICIOUS (AND GROOVY) ROOTS.

At the **Wine Cask** in Santa Barbara ([winecask.com](http://winecask.com)), chef Jeff Magown creates both a first course and a side dish of roasted heirloom red and gold beets and baby carrots. The first course showcases each root veggie by plating it on a dish with individual compartments; they're finished with goat cheese, herb salad, and tarragon vinaigrette. Diners can order a side dish of Roasted Beets & Market Baby Carrots with feta cheese and crushed pistachios.

**Leila's Restaurant and Wine Bar** in Oak Park ([leilasrestaurant.com](http://leilasrestaurant.com)) serves a well-balanced slow-roasted beet and mesclun greens salad tossed with a rosemary-honey vinaigrette. Spiced, candied walnuts and a warm goat cheese medallion make this sweet-savory dish stand out.

Nanci Kuhn-Poirier inspired her husband, Didier Poirier, chef and owner of **71 Palm Restaurant** in Ventura ([71palm.com](http://71palm.com)), to create Nanci's Fresh Beet, Goat Cheese & Arugula Salad, which starts with a bed of arugula topped by organic beets. Sonoma goat cheese, mandarin oranges, and toasted pine nuts are the bow on this balsamic vinaigrette-dressed present from Poirier to his wife. “She loves these flavors,” he says. (The lunch version has candied walnuts.)

Chef Crystal Harris likes to let beets “shine on their own” when designing dishes for **Square One Restaurant and Wine Bar** ([squareonesb.com](http://squareonesb.com)). One such dish on the Santa Barbara restaurant's ever-changing menu pairs pasta with farmers' market Chioggia beets, brown butter, house-made ricotta, and micro celery (dainty sprouted leaves).

At **Mediterraneo** ([med-rest.com](http://med-rest.com)) in Westlake Village, Fuji apple, Concord grapes, pistachios, and pickled red onion play off the classic beet salad pairing of arugula and goat cheese. The heirloom beets are marinated in a white balsamic emulsion.

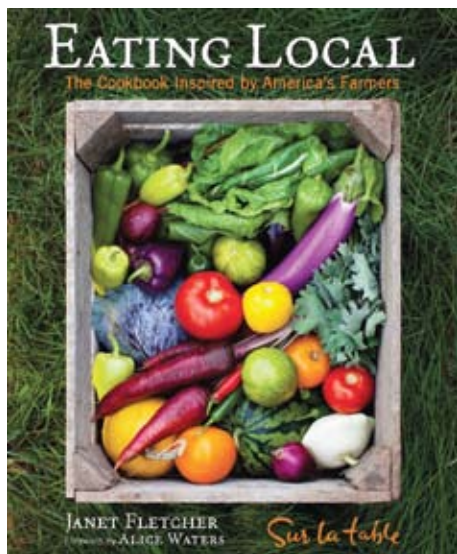
My husband's beet-avoiding boss is married to a beet lover. When they dine out, she enjoys the salad at **Arts & Letters Café** ([artsandletterscafe.com](http://artsandletterscafe.com)) in Santa Barbara. Lemon juice and olive oil season the local beets, soft goat cheese, toasted pistachios, Mud Creek Farm tangerines, and Sylvetta (wild arugula).





No longer sentenced to canning or borscht, jewel-tone beets add color, flavor, and texture to a variety of fall dishes.

# RECIPES



## CREAMY BEET AND TAHINI DIP

*This recipe comes courtesy of Eating Local: The Cookbook Inspired by America's Farmers, by Sur la Table and Janet Fletcher (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2010). Writes Fletcher, "Anissa Helou, a Lebanese-born food writer living in London, makes this luscious dip for dinner parties. You can make it a day ahead, though you will probably need to adjust the lemon and salt before serving."*

- 1 pound red beets (weight without greens, about 3 medium beets)
- 1 clove garlic, sliced
- ¼ cup tahini, stirred well to blend
- 3–4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, or to taste
- Kosher or sea salt
- Toasted pita wedges, Belgian endive spears, fennel wedges, or romaine hearts for dipping

Preheat oven to 375°F. If the beet greens are attached, remove all but ½ inch of the stem. Reserve the greens and stems for another use. Put the beets in a baking dish, and add water to a depth of ¼ inch. Cover tightly and bake until a knife pierces them easily, 45 to 55 minutes. When cool enough to handle, peel the beets and cut into quarters.

Put the beets and garlic in a food processor and puree until smooth. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the tahini. Add the lemon juice gradually. You may not need it all, or you may want a little more. The tahini requires a lot of lemon for balance. Season with salt.

Serve the dip with pita wedges or vegetables for dipping. It will keep, refrigerated, for up to one week.

*Makes about 2½ cups.*

## GOLDEN BEET AND BUTTERMILK SOUP

*This soup is ideal for serving during Indian summer's hot temps. The recipe comes courtesy of Eating Local: The Cookbook Inspired by America's Farmers, by Sur la Table and Janet Fletcher (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2010). "Made with golden beets, it is the color of lemon custard. Made with red beets, it is shocking pink, like borscht. The soup can be made up to a couple days ahead," writes Fletcher.*

- 1 pound golden beets (weight without greens, about 3 medium beets)
- 1 large clove garlic, sliced
- 3 cups buttermilk
- ¼ cup chopped fresh chives, or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, plus more finely chopped for garnish
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar or white wine vinegar, or more to taste
- Kosher or sea salt

Preheat oven to 375°F. If the beet greens are attached, remove all but ½ inch of the stem. Reserve the greens and stems for another use. Put the beets in a baking dish, and add water to a depth of ¼ inch. Cover tightly and bake until a knife pierces them easily, 45 to 55 minutes. When cool enough to handle, peel the beets.

Cut the beets into quarters. Put the beets, garlic, and 1½ cups of the buttermilk in a blender and puree until smooth. (You can use a food processor but the results will not be as smooth.) Add the remaining 1½ cups buttermilk, the chives or dill, and the vinegar and puree again. Season to taste with salt. Transfer to a covered container and chill well.

Taste before serving and adjust the seasoning. Serve in cups or bowls, garnishing each portion with a sprinkle of the chives.

*Serves 4.*

## ROASTED BABY BEETS WITH TRUFFLE-CHIVE VINAIGRETTE

*This recipe comes courtesy of Todd Aarons, executive chef of Tierra Sur Restaurant at Herzog Wine Cellars in Oxnard (herzogwinecellars.com). For this dish, Aarons likes to serve the roasted beets in large, bite-size pieces.*

- 2 pounds raw baby red, gold, Chioggia (candy stripe) beets (stems and tops removed and saved for another preparation)
- Cold water
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt

**Roasting the beets:** Preheat oven to 400°F. Wash outside of beets well with cold water. If using beets of different colors, separate the red beets from the other varieties. Place inside a roasting

pan or even a sauté pan with a lid that has an oven-safe handle. Fill the bottom of the pan with ½-inch cold water and sprinkle salt over the beets. (According to Aarons, the tiny bit of water prevents the beets from burning on the bottom and keeps the skin moist enough to peel later.) If using the roasting pan, cover it tightly with aluminum foil or use the self-fitting lid. Place in the preheated oven. Baby beets are small in circumference and should be checked for doneness with a paring knife after 30 minutes. Insert knife into the biggest beet in the pan. The knife should have little to no resistance. Remove beets and let them cool to the touch. While still warm, use a kitchen towel (one you do not care about staining) and gently rub the skins of the beets until they slide off. You may thinly slice the beets or cut in large, bite-size pieces.

**To finish:** Arrange beets on plate and drizzle with the Chive-Truffle Vinaigrette (recipe below). Garnish with the remaining 2 tablespoons of chives and the other half of the sieved hard-boiled eggs.

## CHIVE-TRUFFLE VINAIGRETTE

- 2 shallots, minced
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup champagne vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 1 cup olive oil
- ¼ ounce fresh black truffle shavings
- Sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup minced chives, plus 2 tablespoons
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, sieved

In a blender or food processor, place the shallots, mustard, and vinegar and blend. Slowly add the olive oil in order to emulsify the dressing. After the mixture has become smooth, add the truffle shavings and blend once more. Season with sea salt and black pepper to taste. Transfer vinaigrette to a mixing bowl and mix in ¼ cup of chives and half the sieved eggs. Taste and adjust seasoning again. This vinaigrette will be at its peak of truffle infusion if you make it an hour in advance.

*Serves 4–6 as an appetizer. ■*

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## AFTER-DINNER DRINKS

All's well that ends well?

RECENTLY, I WAS REMINDED OF A WINE AND FOOD EXCURSION taken many years ago to Umbria, the heart of Italy, where I never passed up the opportunity to enjoy its leisure-time trinity of gelato, espresso, and grappa. Most readers are familiar with the first two delectables, but the trio's true star, grappa, remains something of a mystery in this country. It also, I discovered that night, has the power to turn an otherwise sane individual into the kind of person who massacres Frank Sinatra standards during karaoke night at a trattoria in Spoleto.

For the uninitiated, grappa is an Italian *digestivo*, an after-dinner drink commonly served whenever there is reason to extend the evening. For many of those who have tried it, grappa is akin to swallowing moonshine along with a flint, and knowing one good spark could ignite their insides. Grappa's sting is a result of being distilled from the stems, seeds, and other untamed grape remains from wine production. The end product is high in alcohol and strong in personality, a combination worthy of its firewater reputation.

But putting a little fire in the belly is the whole idea behind sipping grappa. It can taste sublime, whether sharp and woody, or lean and herbaceous, or just tight and clean. When taken on a full stomach, it eases the winding-down process while also waking the

senses again. (It is not meant, as it happens, to assist in the butchering of Ol' Blue Eyes after consuming the fourth or fifth rustic feast of the day accompanied by countless bottles of Sagrantino di Montefalco. The lesson to remember is that grappa is best savored in small quantities.)

The Italians also have bitter, herbal *amaro* and anise-infused sambuca; both spirits are just as refined as grappa and considered digestivos despite being made from totally different ingredients.

This world of after-dinner drinks is centuries-old and defined broadly and loosely, depending on which culture is in charge of the craft. Some products are the result of simply not wanting to waste any of the leftovers after making wine or liquor, while others began as tonics for a great many ailments of their day. Either way, for individual producers, such drinks have become signature products, full of history and tradition.

The French have a rather impressive collection of digestifs, in particular their brandies. Cognac, named for the town, is warm and golden, usually with a hint of vanilla from the oak barrels this grape-based spirit ages in; Armagnac, named for a region, can be darker and more rounded because, while also from grapes, it is aged longer; eau-de-vie (the term means "water of life") is clear brandy, redolent with the élan of whatever fruit the vintner chose.



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>>Taste<sup>SPIRITS</sup>

It can be tricky distinguishing which wine comes after a meal. Food-accompanying varieties, often French sauternes, "late-harvest" wines from Canada, and Madeiras from Portugal, are sweet and rich like any good dessert should be. Taken on their own, however, a vintage port or an off-dry Spanish sherry renders elegant warmth as a reminder that this is the end of the line.

There are also countless liquors, liqueurs, and cordials that are distilled from herbs, fruits, grains, spices, roots, and flowers. The recipes are a point of pride and a reason for great secrecy for individual producers. Using local ingredients, they also make easy pairings for regional cuisine. The Greeks' ouzo, with licorice and anise flavors, is perfectly suited as an aperitif to start a Mediterranean meal as well as ending it; fennel- and caraway-flavored aquavit is enjoyed all through traditional Scandinavian dinners. It's a sure bet that a well-aged single-malt Scotch will follow dessert throughout Scotland. Best served at room temperature, these after-dinner drinks typically arrive neat and in dainty glasses (a reminder not to overindulge).

There is no denying that such libations cleanse the palate, but common knowledge also holds that they—especially when made with bitter herbs—are palliatives that actively aid the digestion process. My own experience bears out that bitters relieve those cumbrous feelings in the belly after a saturatingly big meal. As for claims that they truly initiate biochemical reactions to benefit digestion, it's doubtful. Science (always the ants at the picnic) has determined that if high alcohol consumption aids anything it aids heartburn and acid reflux. (But that's why we have Nexium.)

Heading into the season of celebratory meals, at some point of the evening or evenings, we all know we'll turn our focus from what we've eaten to how well we're digesting it. There is bound to be an appropriately flavored tippie to keep the conversation lively. An elegant, warming spirit might also inspire the will to get to the sofa and attempt to watch the Dallas Cowboys over all that noise, if that is your goal. ■

### Head's Up:

Polo and Champagne in Pacific Palisades, October 10  
The inaugural **Veuve Clicquot Polo Classic Los Angeles** ([vcseason.com](http://vcseason.com)) takes place for free at Will Rogers State Historic Park. There is nothing like watching the ponies while sipping bubbly.

Grand Opening in Paso Robles, October 15  
As part of **Harvest Wine Weekend**, Edward Sellers Winery ([edwardsellers.com](http://edwardsellers.com)) opens the doors to its new winery and tasting room. There will be barrel samples, barbecue, current vintages, and live music.

Beers (and more beer) in Santa Barbara, October 16  
Taking place in Elings Park, the **Santa Barbara Beer Festival** ([sbbeerfestival.com](http://sbbeerfestival.com)) celebrates the excellent brewing traditions of the West and the world.

GARY HOVLAND



## The Armchair Oenophile®

CENTRAL COAST WINES MADE EASY.  
By Anthony Head

*K*y-ah-may? Maybe it's *Kee-a-my*. Or perhaps something more like *Kah-muwah-ah-ah-ah-ahh!* I'm glad I can write Kiamie Kuvée

because I certainly can't pronounce it. So allow me instead to simply remark on the wonderful flavors of this round, ripe, and rich mingling of cabernet sauvignon, syrah, merlot, and zinfandel. The emphasis here is on the interplay of the varietals, so none of them dominates the conversation going on in the glass. Even though it's substantial, it's not heavy-weighted, which is another possibility that sometimes is encountered upon inviting too many grapes to the party. This blend is a delicious case of everyone enjoying each other's company.

Despite the fact that there is nothing remotely intimidating about this wine, I think I have my idea for this year's Halloween costume. Picture this: I'll wear an oversize cardboard bottle of Kiamie Kuvée; and when I say "trick or treat" it'll scare

the hell out of anyone who opens the door and tries to pronounce the name. ■

*Kiamie Wine Cellars 2006 Kiamie Kuvée, Paso Robles (\$38)*  
[kiamiewines.com](http://kiamiewines.com)



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## A NEW ERA IN GREEK DINING

Petros in Los Olivos brings a fresh take on timeless Hellenic cuisine.



Petros restaurant in Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa focuses on fresh ingredients in its Greek dishes. Shown here: skewered large grilled shrimp and chicken breast with vegetables, served with homemade tzatziki and rice.

**ON THE WEST COAST OF FLORIDA** there's a spoon-sized town that time forgot called Tarpon Springs. In the early 1900s the live sponges in the warm Tarpon Springs waters lured scads of Greek fishermen to the area. Stop by there today and Greek captains still take tourists out into the shallow waters to watch a man in an iron helmet descend underwater to harvest what will become bath sponges. It's like stepping into a 1950s documentary.

Going to Tarpon Springs is a whole lot like going to a Greek restaurant anywhere in America. The theatrical dining presentations haven't changed in 60 years: dousing *kefalotiri* cheese with alcohol and setting it ablaze; singing Greek songs while dancing with furniture; keeping the ouzo flowing like Yanni's hair.

Closer to home, though, things are changing. In Los Olivos, Petros in Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa ([fessparker.com/restaurant.htm](http://fessparker.com/restaurant.htm)) is a modern and stylish Greek restaurant—sleek and sophisticated without cheesy entertainment. Additionally, chef and owner Petros Benekos is showing diners what modern Greek cooking is: harmoniously flavorful, bright, and zingy.

Not that I don't love a good, hearty moussaka with ground beef and béchamel, but many of Petros' dishes defy the norm by being light and healthful. Take the fish of the day à la Grecque (\$30), for example. One night it was red snapper, grilled simply with lemon juice, olive oil, and fresh Greek oregano. It can come with the Horiatiki ("peasant") Salad—a sturdy construction of fat cucumber spears, chunks of avocado, rings of onion, and quarters of tomato dressed in capers, olive oil, and oregano. A hunk of perfect feta and four Vólos olives complete the salad (\$12 on its own).

"Greek cuisine is based on good ingredients," Benekos tells me while I dive into his creation. "If you don't have good feta, good tomatoes, good olive oil, you can't make this food."

Benekos' feta hails from Ioannina, his hometown in Greece. The tomatoes are grown on a local 805 farm, and Benekos pays top dollar for the ripest ones. He's motivated to go to all this trouble and expense because when he first came to America he experienced those frozen-in-time Greek restaurants. "They were really taverns, not upscale restaurants," he says, annoyed. He took serious umbrage at the "Greek" salads made with flat iceberg lettuce, soft kalamata olives, and harsh vinaigrette. "Obviously that's a pitiful thing. That's what gave me the kick to open a restaurant. I thought, 'Somebody has to change this thing.'"





Chef and owner Petros Benekos (left) believes good ingredients are the key to good flavor; an array of dips served with pita: *kafteri*, *tzatziki*, and *taramosalata*.



Five years ago Benekos opened the first Petros in Manhattan Beach, near where he lives. But he also owns a ranch in Los Olivos and wanted to bring his food farther north into wine country. Here he has more meat on the menu, but otherwise the cuisine is essentially the same as at the critically lauded original. And because Petros is ensconced inside Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa, it serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. Guests of the Inn are rewarded with a complimentary breakfast at Petros along with free wine tastings at BIN 2860 Wine Shop, Epiphany Cellars Tasting Room, and Fess Parker Winery.

Every table receives an amuse-bouche of tiny warm pita triangles with two dips: a strong *skordalia* made with roasted garlic and potatoes, and a low-fat red pepper concoction. Another pleasant way to kick-start the appetite is with the Nikos Saganaki (\$10), named after Benekos' brother. The feta is crusted in sesame seeds, tenderly warmed in a *saganaki* (Greek frying pan), and drizzled

with sublime Greek honey. The fluffy *keftethes* are available as an appetizer (\$12) or a main course (\$23). Either way, the herb-rich meatballs in a light tomato sauce are plated with creamy mashed potatoes and stewed *horta* greens. More of those vitamin-rich *horta* greens appear on the Feta Giant Shrimp Pasta (\$28) with a tomato, white wine, and *manouri* cheese sauce.

For the Bougatsa dessert (\$8), Benekos makes the phyllo dough in-house. Then he fills it with a vanilla-semolina custard to nice effect. Without the accompanying ice cream, it's neither too filling nor too sweet.

If it's time for a new era in Greek dining, then Petros, with its modern look and memorably fresh cuisine, just might change the way Greek restaurants in America (or at least California) do business. It's time to step away from the burnt-out flaming cheese and the tired belly dancing. As Benekos says, "It was okay in the fifties and sixties, but not in 2010." ■

## DIALED IN

Healthy dishes to try in the 805.

For more dining news, visit our blog, "Angie Eats," at [blog.805living.com](http://blog.805living.com).

*In the spirit of this Health and Wellness issue, I ate more veggies than usual this month while abstaining from meat for a few meals each week. All this is good for my body and the environment. Here are my favorite vegetarian finds.*

**The Counter** in Westlake Village ([thecounterburger.com](http://thecounterburger.com)) makes its own unique veggie patty for building a **Veggie Burger** (\$9). It's chock-full of carrots, corn, and dried cranberries. I had it topped with organic mixed greens, tomatoes, and sliced cucumbers. The honey-mustard sauce worked well on this wholesome creation. I chose the whole-wheat bun for even more virtue (and flavor).

**Plate** along PCH next to Pacific Coast Greens in Malibu ([platemalibu.com](http://platemalibu.com)) bills itself as "earthy." It uses organic and locally grown vegetables, sustainably raised meats, eggs from cage-free chickens, and healthful oils. The organic **Vegetable Napoleon** (\$19) is a beautiful way to go meatless: Slices of eggplant, zucchini, yellow squash, and roasted red peppers are stacked on top of a square of polenta. A moat of delicate tomato-saffron sauce surrounds the tower, which is crowned with portobello mushrooms. Stalks of asparagus lie like fallen trees across the bowl.

Indian restaurants often have plenty of vegetarian options. The recently opened **Bollywood Indian Restaurant #3** ([bollywood3.net](http://bollywood3.net)) in the Water Court office complex in Westlake Village is no exception. The first two Bollywood restaurants, both in Studio City, are doing well thanks to their popular chicken tikka masala and *sag paneer* (spiced spinach and onions with mild, chewy paneer cheese cubes). The **Vegetable Korma** (\$10) is a nice mix of squash, beans, peas, carrots, and garbanzo beans swimming in a delightful yellow curry made with cream, ground almonds, garlic, ginger, turmeric, and coriander. I actually prefer to eat it slathered on naan rather than over rice. Truth be told, it's best on its own without any carbs at all.

**Hugo's** ([hugosrestaurant.com](http://hugosrestaurant.com)) is coming to the Whizin's Center in Agoura Hills (taking Bamboom's old space) in December or January. The two LA locations (Studio City and West Hollywood) are beloved for their long list of specialty teas, hamburgers made with grass-fed beef, and vegan dishes like the Tofu Scramble. The **Very Green Pasta** (\$14) is a tasty, protein-rich vegetarian entrée made with zucchini, broccoli, spinach, and asparagus over house-made fusilli pasta. It's sauced with a puree of spinach and basil and then given a dollop of herbed goat cheese. Even greener than the pasta is the astonishingly good spinach lemonade, somewhat sweet and very refreshing.

Most red wines are made with sulfites to preserve them and a bit of egg white or fish protein to bind with and remove the sediment from grape skins. Consequently, vegetarians and vegans tend to avoid red wines. The **Arts & Crafts Red Wine** (\$20 per bottle for the 2007 vintage) from **Casa Barranca** in Ojai ([casabarranca.com](http://casabarranca.com)) is made old-school style from organic grapes. It's not filtered or fined or given any sulfites. The result is a sultry, fruity, smooth drink with low alcohol content. It's a pleasure to sip. ■

*Have a tip for our restaurant news pages? Email our dining editor at [angela@805living.com](mailto:angela@805living.com).*

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

### KEY TO SYMBOLS:

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

**LOOK** Indicates an update to an existing listing.

Restaurant information is subject to change without notice.

*We will be adding new listings to the Dining Guide each month. Please send any comments and suggestions to [angela@805living.com](mailto: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](http://71palm.com)  
French-American  
Entrées \$8–\$28

#### Romantic

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

#### BOCCACCIO'S

32123 Lindero Canyon Road  
Westlake Village, 818-889-8300

Continental  
Entrées \$12–\$27

#### Saturday & Sunday Brunch, Great View

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

#### BOUCHON

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

#### Romantic

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

#### CA' DARIO

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

#### Italian

Entrées \$15-\$28

#### Romantic

Chef and owner Dario Furlati features dishes from his native northern Italy at this popular trattoria that gets high marks for service from regulars. His menu features some unusual choices like fusilli pasta with artichokes, 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.

#### COAST RESTAURANT & BAR

31 W. Carillo St.  
Santa Barbara, 805-879-9100  
canarysantabarbara.com  
California Bistro  
Entrées \$13-\$28

#### Romantic, Sunday Brunch

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

#### ELEMENTS

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

Entrées \$19-\$36

#### Romantic, Great View

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



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## 805 DINING GUIDE

### ENOTECA TOSCANA WINE BISTRO

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

### LOOK FOUR SEASONS HOTEL WESTLAKE VILLAGE

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

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

### GEOFFREY'S MALIBU

27400 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, 310-457-1519  
geoffreysmalibu.com  
Cal-Eclectic  
Entrées \$25-\$77  
*Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch*

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

### GIANNFRANCO'S TRATTORIA

666 Linden Ave.  
Carpinteria, 805-684-0720  
Italian  
Entrées \$13-\$28  
*Great Patio*

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

### THE GRILL ON THE ALLEY

120 E. Promenade Way  
Westlake Village, 805-418-1760  
thegrill.com  
American  
Entrées \$19-\$42  
*Sunday Brunch*

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

### HOLDREN'S STEAKS & SEAFOOD

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

American

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

*Romantic*

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

### MASTRO'S STEAKHOUSE

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

American

Entrées \$26-\$76

*Live Music*

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

### MEDITERRANEO

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

Mediterranean

Entrées \$14-\$33

*Kid-Friendly, Great View, Sunday Brunch*

A marble bar, wrought-iron 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 orzechiette (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*

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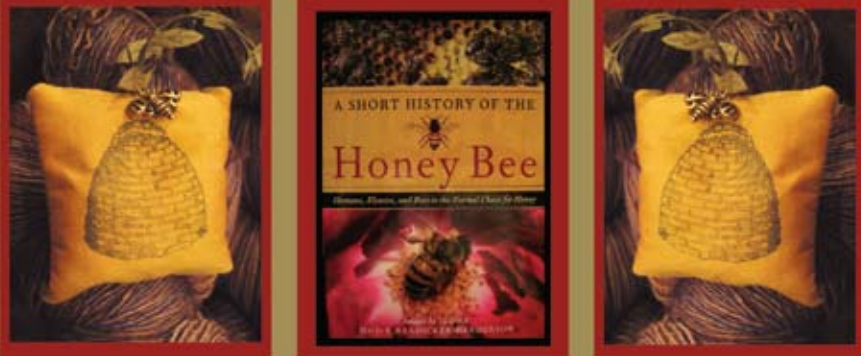
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The crowds come for the cover-free live music in the lounge, but the large plates of pan-Asian cuisine hold their own in the dining room. Tiger prawns are tossed with *yakisoba* noodles and a ginger-garlic sauce; mahimahi comes with coconut rice and 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.

**LOOK PADRI RESTAURANT & MARTINI BAR**  
29008 Agoura Road

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

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

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

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

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

**SPARK WOODFIRE GRILL**  
1555 Simi Town Center Way  
Simi Valley, 805-823-4756  
sparkredfish.com  
Seafood  
Entrées \$14–\$28

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

**SUZANNE'S CUISINE**  
502 W. Ojai Ave.  
Ojai, 805-640-1961  
suzannescuisine.com  
Cal-Med  
Entrées \$15–\$28

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

**TIERRA SUR RESTAURANT AT HERZOG WINE CELLARS**  
3201 Camino Del Sol  
Oxnard, 805-983-1560  
herzogwinecellars.com  
Kosher Californian  
Entrées \$25–\$44

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

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

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

**TUSCANY IL RISTORANTE**  
968 S. Westlake Blvd.  
Westlake Village, 805-495-2768  
Italian  
Entrées \$18–\$32

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

**VINEYARD HOUSE**  
3631 Sagunto St.  
Santa Ynez, 805-688-2886  
thevineyardhouse.com  
Eclectic  
Entrées \$11–\$28

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

**LOOK VIVOLI CAFÉ & TRATTORIA**

3825 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.  
Westlake Village, 805-373-6060  
vivolicafe.com

Italian

Entrées \$11-\$29

*Romantic*

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

**LOOK WATERMARK**

598 Main St.  
Ventura, 805-643-6800  
watermarkonmain.com

New American

Entrées \$15-\$44

*Romantic*

Downstairs is posh and formal with stylish vintage decor and a large deco-style bar serving classic drinks. The menu at brunch and dinner is hearty sit-down fare from chef Peter Edwards. Top-notch musical acts play Tuesday through Saturday nights. Upstairs on the roof, accessed by elevator, the mood is lighter and the dress more casual. The ocean motif includes fish tanks and wavy glass; the menu is more about small plates and new drink concoctions. Wherever you sit, you won't be disappointed with the views.

**ZIN BISTRO AMERICANA**

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

American

Entrées \$15-\$35

*Great View, Romantic*

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

**FOODIE**

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

**NEW ARTISAN**

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

New American

Entrées \$21-\$28

*Romantic, Sunday Brunch*

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

**BROOKS**

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

New American

Entrées \$17-\$28

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

### CAFÉ 14

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

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

### DOWNEY'S

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

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

### THE HUNGRY CAT

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

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

### KANDA SUSHI

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

Serene and beautiful with comfy white leather chairs, this Japanese restaurant is perfect for a date. The small plates and sushi rolls are high-quality and delicious. Service at the

tables from kimono-clad girls is very sweet. Note: If you sit at the sushi bar, be prepared to follow proper sushi etiquette.

### LEILA'S RESTAURANT & WINE BAR

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

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

### MARAVILLA

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

#### *Romantic & Great View*

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



changing average into  
**extraordinary**

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.

#### **LOOK SADDLE PEAK LODGE**

419 Cold Canyon Road  
Calabasas, 818-222-3888  
saddlepeaklodge.com  
New American  
Entrées \$16–\$54

#### *Romantic, Sunday Brunch*

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

#### **SAFIRE**

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

#### *Romantic*

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

#### **SLY'S**

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

#### *Saturday & Sunday Brunch*

Sort of casual, sort of stylish, this Carpinteria gem is a must-visit. With its Vespa hanging over the bar, glass-wall wine room, and polished wood accents, it's great for formal occasions. But the service is super-friendly and most of the patrons are comfortably dressed, so there's nothing stuffy about an evening here, either. Chef and owner James Sly has been cooking for more than 40 years, and his cuisine tastes like it. You really can't go wrong with anything on this American menu of steaks and seafood, but the abalone is a real treat. Unlike most 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  
bodees.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.

#### **C-STREET RESTAURANT**

450 E. Harbor Blvd.  
Ventura, 805-652-5151  
cpventura.com/dining.html  
Californian  
Entrées \$15–\$45

#### *Kid-Friendly*

If you sit close to the windows of this dining room in the Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach hotel, you can just make out the surfers riding the waves here where the ocean meets California Street. Chef Nic Manocchio honors the sea and its bounty along with the local farmers in his seasonal cooking. The fish tacos taste as fresh as Baja. The lobster—in a club sandwich layered with flatbread and bacon at lunchtime or simply served with drawn butter and asparagus at dinner—is perfectly cooked. Entrée salads are



before

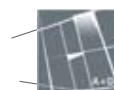


after

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

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 balsamic reduction. Lamb chops get a pistachio crust and cherry compote. Desserts are presented to you on a tray for optimum choosing conditions.

### LOOK CAFÉ FIRENZE

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

Italian  
Entrées \$13–\$40

#### Romantic

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

### CHOLADA THAI CUISINE

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

Thai  
Entrées \$9–\$17

#### Kid-Friendly

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

### CIGALE CAFÉ

702 Lindero Canyon Road  
Oak Park, 818-991-2442  
cigalecafe.com

Cal-French  
Entrées \$14–\$32

Chef and owner Denis Rion named his café after a cicada, the symbol of hospitality in southern France. He creates some classic French dishes like onion soup, steamed mussels, frog legs, and *boeuf bourguignon* for dinner, but he also offers some Mediterranean and Californian fare. At lunch a wide range of salads is on offer including one with the grain quinoa and some grilled veggies. There's also paella, pasta dishes, and a bouillabaisse for both lunch and dinner. The surroundings are great for a business meeting.

### COSMOS GRILL

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

Eclectic  
Entrées \$9–\$20

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

### THE COUNTER

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

American  
Entrées \$7–\$14

#### Kid-Friendly

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

### DARBAND GRILL

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

Middle Eastern  
Entrées \$10–\$19

#### Live Music

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

### ELADIO'S

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

Italian  
Entrées \$10–\$20

#### Great View, Sunday Brunch

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

### EXOTIC THAI CAFÉ

29045 W. Agoura Road  
Agoura Hills, 818-991-8147  
and at 1145 Lindero Canyon Road  
Westlake Village, 818-575-3248  
and at 2705 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.  
Thousand Oaks, 805-373-9231

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

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

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

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

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

Thai  
Entrées \$10–\$16

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

### FEAST BISTRO

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

New American  
Entrées \$12–\$20

#### Romantic

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

### GINO'S BISTRO

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

Italian  
Entrées \$13–\$29

#### Kid-Friendly

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

### KING'S FISH HOUSE

4798 Commons Way  
Calabasas, 818-225-1979  
Seafood

Entrées \$10–\$39  
(and up to \$72 for a 3-pound lobster)

#### Kid-Friendly

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

### KUMO SUSHI

860 Hampshire Road  
Westlake Village, 805-494-5250  
Japanese

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

#### Kid-Friendly

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

### THE LANDING GRILL AND SUSHI BAR

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

Californian/Sushi

Entrées \$8–\$21; Sushi \$3–\$11 per roll  
*Great View, Kid-Friendly*

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

### MANDARIN EXPRESS

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

Chinese Fusion

Entrées \$10–\$27

It’s not much to look at (think Formica tables and mirrored walls) but the owners of this tiny storefront are dedicated to keeping Chinese food interesting, fresh, and as organic as possible. Chef Dan Chang creates fusion dishes like filet mignon in a bourbon, basil, and black bean sauce and shrimp with nuts and balsamic vinegar over rice. The food isn’t cheap by any stretch, but you’ve never had Chinese takeout like this before. The choices are almost endless considering the chef will pair just about any sauce you like with any meat, fish, vegetable, or mock meat (made of tofu or seitan) you want. He’ll also adjust the heat (as in spice) level to your liking. When you want something different and delicious and delivered, this is definitely the place to get it.

### MI PIACE ITALIAN KITCHEN

4799 Commons Way  
Calabasas, 818-591-8822

Italian

Entrées \$8–\$20

*Sunday Brunch, Kid-Friendly*

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

### PIERRE LAFOND WINE BISTRO

516 State St.  
Santa Barbara, 805-962-1455

pierrelafond.com

Californian

Entrées \$13–\$21

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

### POOKIE'S THAI CUISINE

900 Hampshire Road  
Westlake Village, 805-381-0094

Thai

Entrées \$7–\$13

*Kid-Friendly*

Downstairs in the Water Court Plaza office complex, owner Pookie creates delicious Thai dishes for lunch and dinner daily. Lunch specials are a steal at \$7 to \$8 each. She also has a wide selection of interesting salads like the Outrageous Beef Salad with a spicy lime dressing and the protein-rich Yam Yai salad with shrimp, chicken, egg, and peanuts in a sweet-and-sour dressing. Noodle dishes are

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generously sized and include the classic pad thai and the interesting Hi Yo Silver with fried noodles, shrimp, and bean sprouts. Curries, vegetarian options, and fish dishes (such as the crispy sole with tamarind and chili sauce) give diners lots of great choices not found elsewhere.

## STELLA'S RESTAURANT

2385 Michael Drive  
Newbury Park, 805-498-0989

American

Entrées \$10–\$21

*Kid-Friendly*

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

## STONEFIRE GRILL

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

stonefiregrill.com

American

Entrées \$7–\$15

*Kid-Friendly*

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

## THE SUNSET RESTAURANT

6800 Westward Beach Road  
Malibu, 310-589-1007

thesunsetrestaurant.com

New American

Entrées \$12–\$30

*Great View, Saturday & Sunday Brunch*

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

## TERRI'S CAFÉ

30135 Agoura Road  
Agoura Hills, 818-707-1934

American-Italian

Entrées \$8–\$15

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

## TRA DI NOI

3835 Cross Creek Road  
Malibu, 310-456-0169

tradinoimalibu.com

Italian

Entrées \$14–\$34

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

## TUTTI'S OFF MAIN

34 N. Palm St.  
Ventura, 805-643-0880

tuttisoffmain.com

Mediterranean

Entrées \$13–\$33

*Kid-Friendly, Saturday & Sunday Brunch*

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

Savor Santa Barbara all month with festivities like winemaker dinners, food festivals, cookbook signings, and restaurant specials. (epicuresb.com)

## 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 yourtable 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.

## NEW JOHNNY ROCKETS

322 W. Hillcrest Drive  
Thousand Oaks, 805-778-0780

and 5015 Cornell Road

Agoura Hills, 818-879-9933

and at The Commons at Calabasas  
4799 Commons Way  
Calabasas, 818-222-3460  
and at The Promenade at Camarillo  
640 E. Ventura Blvd.  
Camarillo, 805-383-1888  
johnnyrockets.com

American  
Entrées \$7-\$10  
*Kid-Friendly*

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

#### LOOK P.F. CHANG'S CHINA BISTRO

2250 Thousand Oaks Blvd.  
Thousand Oaks, 805-277-5915  
and 21821 Oxnard St.  
Woodland Hills, 818-340-0491  
pfchangs.com  
Chinese  
Entrées \$8-\$24

*Kid-Friendly*

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

#### 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 achote pork fajitas, crab enchiladas, shrimp in a tequila-cream sauce, fish tacos, or even baby back ribs or a pulled-pork plate.

#### ALOHA STEAKHOUSE

5800 Santa Rosa Road  
Camarillo, 805-484-1422

and at 364 S. California St.  
Ventura, 805-652-1799  
alohasteakhouse.com

Steakhouse  
Entrées \$20-\$50

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

#### AZU

457 E. Ojai Ave.  
Ojai, 805-640-7987  
azuojai.com  
Mediterranean

Tapas \$6-\$17; Entrées \$24-\$31

A long, dark-wooden bar is the focal point of this popular lunch, dinner, and tapas spot. Happy hour stretches from 4 to 7 p.m. nightly. A long list of cold and hot tapas are offered, like olives, a cheese plate, stuffed dates, lamb kebabs, and fried calamari. Larger entrées cast a wider Mediterranean net and might include Moroccan chicken cooked in a tagine, veggie paella, or filet mignon with a cabernet reduction sauce. Eat in the lounge area or at one of the many tables inside or on the sidewalk out front. Cocktails and homemade gelato help keep everyone happy.

#### BANDITS' GRILL & BAR

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

American  
Entrées \$10-\$20

*Kid-Friendly*

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

#### THE BEACHCOMBER MALIBU PIER

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

American  
Entrées \$19-\$45

*Great View, Kid-Friendly*

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

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## NEW BOGART'S BAR & GRILL

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

Ordering at the walk-up counter at Bogart's and then taking your meal into the Muvico theaters is great fun. Obviously, finger foods work best while enjoying a meal in the dark, but fork-friendly dishes like chopped salad or the spicy mac and cheese are good, too. Bacon-wrapped dates are a refreshing upgrade from nachos. Marinated steak skewers are accompanied by a *chimichurri* sauce. The sliders come in three different varieties: steak, battered cod, and ground chuck. Instead of candy, there are desserts like a bag of cookies for sweet movie-snacking.

## BOGIES NIGHTCLUB AND LOUNGE

32001 Agoura Road  
Westlake Village, 818-889-2394  
bogies-bar.com  
American  
Small plates \$8–\$15  
*Live Music*

This mostly outdoor bar is a beautiful place to relax—what with all the surrounding greenery and water. Grab a cabana or a spot on one of the couches near the outside fireplace. Entertainment in the form of bands or DJs happens Thursday through Saturday nights. On Friday and Saturday nights there is a cover charge. Nibble on small bites of food like chicken lettuce cups, flatbread pizzas, Southern fried chicken, or a cheese plate.

## BROPHY BROS. CLAM BAR & RESTAURANT

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

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

## CAFÉ FIORE RESTAURANT & MARTINI LOUNGE

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

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

chocolate. Live music plays in the lounge area Tuesday through Saturday nights.

## NEW CAFÉ HABANA

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

Café Habana isn't limited to Cuban food or cocktails. Dishes represent all of Latin culture, from South American ceviches to Mexican grilled corn and huevos rancheros to Cuban pulled-pork sandwiches. Owner Sean Meenan is an eco-warrior while partner Rande Gerber brings in the celebs and keeps the nightlife hopping. The food is good, the cocktails are great, and the coconut flan is out of this world.

## CHAR FASL

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

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

## DON CUCO MEXICAN RESTAURANT

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

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

## DUKE'S MALIBU

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

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

## EL REY CANTINA

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

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

## 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  
galletto.brandgrill.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

Five Guys Burgers and Fries has opened in Thousand Oaks (fiveguys.com). The first of these red-and-white-tiled burger joints opened in Arlington, Virginia, in 1986; now there are more than 550. The simple menu is trans-fat free, the fries are crisped in peanut oil, and boxes of bulk peanuts are around for free snacking.

with *chimichurri* sauce, (parsley, lemon, and olive oil); *chimichurri* sauce also tops a breaded, pounded chicken breast in a dish called *Milanesa 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 piccata, fettuccine Bolognese, pizza, and Caprese salad. Don't miss the gelato truffles for dessert.

#### NEW THE HIDEAWAY AT LINDERO COUNTRY CLUB

5719 Lake Lindero Drive  
Agoura Hills, 818-735-3530  
linderoc.com  
American  
Entrées \$11–\$24  
*Romantic*

Between the ninth hole and the driving range, The Hideaway at the Lindero Country Club beckons hungry visitors and club members. At lunchtime, tables in the poolside cabanas are available upon request. In the afternoon, the stylish bar inside fills up with golfers toasting their games. Couples looking for a romantic dinner will do well inside at the polished wood tables or outside on the lovely flagstone patio under the ivy-covered pergola. String lights above a fountain add to the festive mood. Chef Robert Grenner pulls crispy, thin-crust pizzas out of the wood-burning pizza oven on the patio. He also creates lovely salads, hearty steaks, and nice seafood including crispy crab cakes with a sweet-and-sour pickled tomato relish. Desserts are fun and worth the calories.

#### 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.

#### THE MELTING POT

3685 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd.  
Thousand Oaks, 805-370-8802  
meltingpot.com

#### Fondue

Entrées \$18–\$23 individually or \$59 for two  
*Kid-Friendly*

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

#### OLD PLACE RESTAURANT

29983 Mulholland Hwy.  
Agoura Hills, 818-706-9001  
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.

#### SHECK & SHAY'S ROCKIN' DINER

3907 Cochran St.  
Simi Valley, 805-306-9566  
simidiner.com

#### American

Entrées \$7–\$12

#### *Kid-Friendly*

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

#### SHEILA'S PLACE WINE BAR & RESTAURANT

330 N. Lantana St.  
Camarillo, 805-987-9800  
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 Kursaris 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,

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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  
tupelojunction.com  
Southern  
Entrées \$14–\$33

### Kid-Friendly, Live Music

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

As part of its commitment to its Food With Integrity program, Chipotle in Woodland Hills (chipotle.com) now uses naturally raised beef for its steak and *barbacoa* menu items. About 80 percent of the chicken is sustainably raised and all of the pork has been naturally raised since 2000. Plus, the company uses local, organic produce and cheese made with hormone-free milk.

## 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.

## NEW BLUE TABLE

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

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

## CHAMPAGNE FRENCH BAKERY CAF 

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

A quaint bakery that harks back to France with chalkboard menus and large mirrors, this outpost of the chain is a welcoming place. Nice sandwiches, quiches, 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 CHIPOTLE

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

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

## CHOCOLATINE

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

A chocolate 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.

## NEW FIVE GUYS BURGERS AND FRIES

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

Bulk peanuts in the shell are man-pleasers at this burger joint with self-serve fountain drinks. Little burgers have one patty while the regular burgers sport two—all are cooked well done. All toppings—including grilled onions, jalape os, tomatoes, pickles, and grilled mushrooms—are free. Fries, dunked in peanut oil, are thick-cut with skins on; the Cajun-style are dusted with heat.

## NEW FRESH & FABULOUS BAKERY

401 S. A St.  
Oxnard, 805-486-4547  
myfreshandfabulous.com  
American  
Entr es \$5–\$11  
Kid-Friendly

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

## NEW ITALIA DELI & BAKERY

5657 Kanan Road  
Agoura Hills, 818-991-4838  
italiadeli.com  
Italian  
Entr es \$7–\$11

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

## NEW MAIN COURSE CALIFORNIA

1363 Donlon St.  
Ventura, 805-658-8900  
maincourseca.com  
American  
Entr es \$8–\$13

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

## MARMALADE CAFE

4783 Commons Way  
Calabasas, 818-225-9092  
and 3894 Cross Creek Road  
Malibu, 310-317-4242  
and 3825 State St.  
Santa Barbara, 805-682-5246  
and 140 Promenade Way  
Westlake Village, 805-370-1331  
marmaladecafe.com



American  
Entrées \$8–\$24

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

**LOOK MY FLORIST CAFÉ & BAKERY**

76 S. Oak St.  
Ventura, 805-653-0003  
myfloristcafe.com  
American  
Entrées \$7–\$18

*Live Music*

My favorite part of this restaurant is the bakery in the back with its own separate entrance; I drop in to pick up pastries and breads fresh from the oven. A table in the café is the perfect spot to enjoy a sandwich made with that freshly baked bread. Tall windows lend a nice, bright ambience during the day. A large lunch menu offers plenty of salads, sandwiches, wraps, bruschetta, and a couple of hot dishes. Breakfast is served until 2 p.m. on weekends. The dinner menu looks a lot like the lunch menu with the addition of cheese selections and desserts. Wednesday through Saturday nights, there are live performances on the baby grand piano in the dining room.

**THE NATURAL CAFE**

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

Healthy  
Entrées \$5–\$9  
*Kid-Friendly*

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

**NEW THE NEON CARROT**

3536 S. Higuera St.  
San Luis Obispo, 805-545-0000  
theneoncarrot.com  
American  
Entrées \$6–\$9  
*Kid-Friendly*

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

**NEW NM CAFÉ INSIDE NEIMAN MARCUS**

6550 Topanga Canyon Blvd.  
Canoga Park, 818-316-7040  
American  
Entrées \$13–\$27

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

**NEW PANERA BREAD**

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

American  
Entrées \$6–\$9  
*Kid-Friendly*

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

**NEW PIZZASALAD**

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

Entrées \$6–\$12

*Kid-Friendly*

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

**NEW PIZZA NOSH**

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

Entrées \$5–\$11

*Kid-Friendly*

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

**LOOK THE RANCH CATERING**

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

American  
Entrées \$4–\$10  
*Kid-Friendly*

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

**NEW SILVERGREENS**

791 Chapala St.  
Santa Barbara, 805-962-8500  
silvergreens.com  
Californian  
Entrées \$5–\$9

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



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## MEET JACK LALANNE

If anyone can be called the pioneer of physical fitness, it's Jack LaLanne. Anyone who's set foot in a gym (he opened the first health club in 1936), used standard exercise equipment (he invented most of it), or worked out in front of a television (*The Jack LaLanne Show* ran from 1951 to 1985), can thank this beloved expert. The Morro Bay resident recently celebrated his 96th birthday and still has plenty to say about the benefits of staying in shape.

I don't sit on my butt doing nothing. When I was 14, I nearly died. I was a junk-food junkie. One day I went to a lecture by nutritionist Paul Bragg. That day, I became a vegetarian and went to the YMCA to work out. I did research. I had to prove to myself that this way of living was right. And my life was saved.

Want to lose weight? It's easy. Get a calorie counter, and put yourself on 1,500 calories a day; 1,000 calories would be better. Eat natural foods: fruits, vegetables, egg whites, I eat three or four hard-boiled egg whites a day. That's the best protein known to man. Here's some good advice: If man makes it, don't eat it. If it tastes good, spit it out.

I hate working out. It's a pain in the butt. Ask an athlete if he likes to train. *No!* But he likes the results. Every day, I get up at 5 and weight train or swim.

My wife Elaine and I live in Morro Bay. We love it. In LA, every place you go, people bother you. If you don't like Morro Bay, you don't like sex or money.

People who can't get motivated are lazy. *Lazy!* They have no pride, they've lost their discipline. Without pride and discipline you're going to have a lousy life. Anything is possible. I didn't get to be 96 years old doing nothing. ■

The Jack LaLanne Show *will air again on DirectTV in the fall. For more information on the Jack LaLanne Company visit [jacklalanne.com](http://jacklalanne.com).*



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