



At the helm of **THE LARK**, 805-284-0370, thelarksb.com—the latest hot spot to open in the Funk Zone—are executive chef Jason Paluska and executive sous/pastry chef Nick Flores, the dynamic duo that creates fresh food with a modern twist. Here are a few off-the-beaten-path places they hit up on their (occasional) days off. —GINA Z. TERLINDEN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Lark; Paluska and Flores; The Shop Cafe and its Just-In-Yo Face; Island's Paradise Pale Ale.

THE TOP 5

At **The Shop Cafe**, 805-845-1696, shopcafesb.com, on Milpas Street, you find good people and good breakfast, especially the Tugboat (\$12)—a Shop biscuit Benedict with honey ham and smoked-tomato hollandaise. • **Handlebar Coffee Roasters**, handlebarcoffee.com, on East Canon Perdido Street is warm, welcoming, and makes you feel like you're part of the community. Aaron Olson and Kim Anderson are wonderful. • **Island Brewing Company**, 805-745-8272, islandbrewingcompany.com, in Carpinteria is just a quick hop from Santa Barbara and a great micro-brewery with numerous selections such as the American-style Paradise Pale Ale. • **Santa Cruz Market**, 805-966-2121, santacruzmarkets.com, is a go-to for all the Latin products you can imagine, want, or need. • Tucked away downtown is **Elsie's Tavern**, 805-963-4503—a mellow bar with a great patio, good beer, and PacMan.



A KCHEN Project supper. RIGHT: Moules à la crème.

SIMMERING SUCCESS

Mix a cup of creativity with a dollop of donations (thanks to its Kickstarter campaign) and you have the latest culinary startup: **KCHEN Project**. Chef Kevin Clark Harris and partner Emily Nordee (when combined, their initials sound like “kitchen,” resulting in the eponymous name) are the dynamic duo behind this supper club with a twist. Themed dinners (from \$60)—multiple-course meals of locally grown ingredients paired with complementary cocktails—are held at various locations around town. “Our recent Don't Miss the Boat dinner was awesome from a decor perspective—we even dressed our staff as sailors,” says Nordee, whose dream “would be to have a brick-and-mortar space of our own, and to continue with our philosophy.” —CARLY BATES



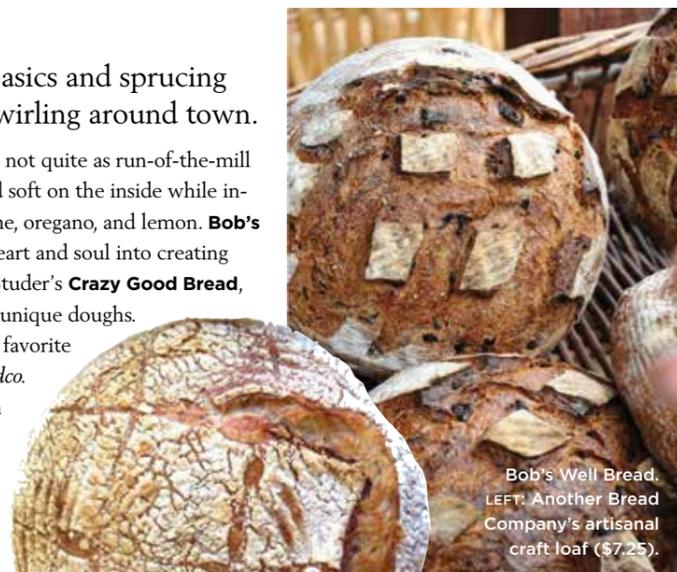
KCHEN PROJECT 805-324-4563, kchenproject.com.

LET THEM EAT BREAD

Local baking connoisseurs are going back to the basics and sprucing up our daily bread with a wave of new bakeries swirling around town.

Another Bread Company, 877-327-2656, anotherbreadcompany.com, is not quite as run-of-the-mill as it sounds. James Sparks keeps his loaves crunchy on the outside and soft on the inside while incorporating tantalizing flavors like kalamata olive with rosemary, thyme, oregano, and lemon. **Bob's Well Bread Bakery**, bobswellbread.com, owner Bob Oswaks puts his heart and soul into creating luscious loaves such as garlic-rosemary and chocolate-cherry. Rossell Studer's **Crazy Good Bread**, crazygoodbread.com, incorporates our town's changing seasons into its unique doughs.

Flavors such as chocolate black pepper, pumpkin spice pecan, and fan favorite fig masala are sure to surprise taste buds. **Genuine Bread**, genuinebreadco.com, visionaries Andrew Elia, Jeff Appareti, and Geoff Jensen focus on making bread the star of the show with their fun varieties, including cranberry walnut and French country sourdough. Look out for a possible new addition to their menu—loaves made with local beer. —G.Z.T.



Bob's Well Bread. LEFT: Another Bread Company's artisanal craft loaf (\$7.25).

PHOTOGRAPHS: JASON PALUSKA AND NICK FLORES; MIEKE STRAND

FOOD for THOUGHT

SNACK MASTERS Connie Lukas and chef Mattias Blom are the minds behind

Lukas & Blom, 805-364-3044, lukasandblom.com, a recently

launched line of artisanal snack

foods, chocolates, salts, and more. Gourmet gifts such as the strawberry and 25-year-old balsamic bar

(\$7.99, pictured), saffron Marcona almonds mixed with dried black and white mulberries (\$10.99/bag), and porcini salt (\$7.99/pouch) are a few of the out-of-the-ordinary sweet and savory staples the duo has created.

Available at **Isabella Gourmet Foods**, 805-585-5257, isabellagourmetfoods.com.



FARM-FRESH FROMAGE

Sara Hoekstra's Cuyama-based **Santa Barbara Cheese Company**, tsbcc.com, is churning out a gouda-style Montecito (\$14.75/lb.), a Buellton blue cheese (\$17.50/lb.), a Santa Ynez white cheddar (from \$13.75/lb.); chicken, duck, quail, and goose eggs; and more. Check out the website, which also offers wine pairing suggestions, a Care for a Calf program, cheese club, and other informative tips. Available at **Tri-County Produce**, 805-965-4558, tricityproduce.com.

A SUPER FOOD

The perfect stocking stuffer for the chef in your life: heirloom **Christmas limas** (\$5/bag) from Butterbean Studios, butterbeanstudios.com.

Boasting a nutty flavor and rich, creamy texture when cooked, the beans are packed with nutrition and can easily be made into cozy comforting soups and stews. Available at etsy.com/shop/erinpata. —G.Z.T.

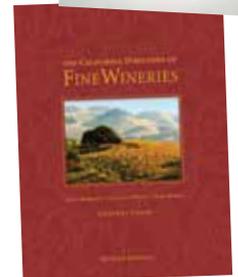
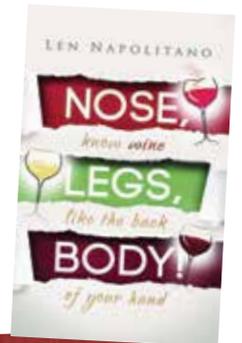


GOURMAND GUIDES

DELIGHT YOUR PALATE with home-cooked dishes that highlight the flavors of our environs. Brigit Binns's ***The New Wine Country Cookbook: Recipes from California's Central Coast*** (\$35, Andrews McMeel Publishing) contains quick, savory recipes featuring local produce, livestock, and seafood. Mindful of our illustrious wine industry, Binns intersperses her rustic recipes with vineyard vignettes and pairs each dish with a local wine—Corsican lamb and olives with a glass of Palmina Nebbiolo, anyone?

Central Coast oenophile Len Napolitano demystifies wine culture in his latest book, ***Nose, Legs, Body! Know Wine like the Back of Your Hand*** (\$14.99, Wineology), in which he details how to navigate restaurant wine lists, answers 50 popular wine questions, and provides at-home wine exercises to help one become a well-versed connoisseur.

Eager for a taste of the rustic charm of California's flourishing Central Coast wine country, but don't know where to begin? California natives and professional travel writers K. Reka Badger and Cheryl Crabtree have released an updated ***The California Directory of Fine Wineries, Second Edition*** (\$19.95, Wine House Press), which effectively navigates more than 50 of the top wineries in the Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Paso Robles areas. Photographs by world-renowned travel photographer Robert Holmes capture the spirit and candid essence of each winery. Sleek, lightweight, and full of helpful tips, this book is a wonderful travel companion for your California wine expedition. *All books available at Chaucer's Bookstore, 805-682-6787, chaucersbooks.com.*



-CHRISTINA LAVINGIA AND MAIYA RODDICK-FULLER