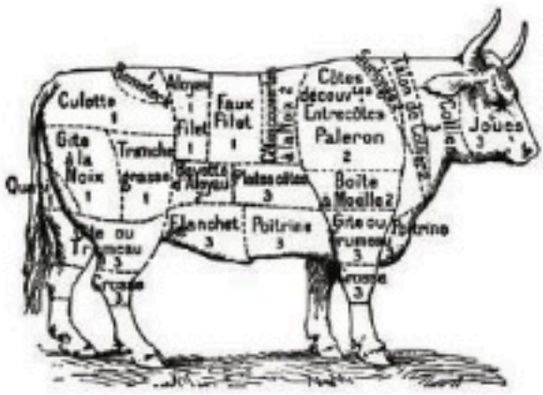

WHAT'S HOT

The Nose-to-Tail Trend

MANY CHEFS ARE EMBRACING THE CONSCIENTIOUS USE OF THE WHOLE BEAST.

Offal (rhymes with "waffle") is the word used for the entrails and organ meats of animals—anything except the skeletal muscle. A return to putting them on menus has become trendy and for good reasons: They make for a more sustainable use of the animal, they cut down on waste, and they cost less than standard cuts. Chefs claim that offal offers more versatility in taste and texture as well, and these restaurants are proving it.

Toma Restaurant

Down by the harbor in Santa Barbara in a small historic building that oozes charm, Toma Restaurant (tomarestaurant.com) is one of the new darlings of Santa Barbara dining. For his handcrafted dishes, chef Nat Ely sources from local fishermen, farmers, foragers, and food artisans. Try the roasted marrow in split shanks, which comes with savory beef cheek, marmalade, radish, blood orange segments, and grilled crostini. Toma also serves a house-smoked *guanciale* (pork cheek) with fresh *burrata*, balsamic caramelized onion, a soft egg, arugula, and olive oil.

The Lark

Transforming Santa Barbara's Funk Zone into an even more hip zone, The Lark is attracting diners in droves. The restaurant's trendy recycled industrial style permeates its variety of seating configurations: indoor and out, communal and secluded. The beehive of chefs in the open kitchen is mesmerizing. Its inventive menu offers bone marrow–crusted beef cheeks with caramelized oyster mushrooms, grilled leeks, picked shallots, and horseradish.

Industrial Eats

Industrial Eats (industrialeats.com) in Buellton is a restaurant with a craft butcher shop that offers hog-butchering workshops. Patrons can take home items from the shop to prepare at home or choose from a menu of pizzas, sandwiches, and savory plates. Owners Jeff and Janet Olsson, of the esteemed New West Catering, source their food from the Central Coast, and everything is cooked in a wood-fired oven—even the eggs. Their house-made beef tongue pastrami Reuben sandwich comes with sauerkraut, rémoulade, Gruyère cheese, and fresh rye bread from the Baker's Table (thebakers-table.com), an artisan bakery in Santa Ynez.

The Black Sheep

Open less than a year in Santa Barbara, The Black Sheep (theblacksheepsb.com) is a small, hip gastropub with a vaulted ceiling and cool décor. The sister restaurant to Seagrass, also in Santa Barbara, serves a slow-roasted bone marrow bruschetta that comes with hearty whole-grain mustard and bordelaise sauce, along with a palate cleanser of Italian parsley, shallots, and fresh lemon dressing—a satisfying and savory small-plate pleasure. Another small plate with a big wallop: sautéed whole chicken livers in sherry cream sauce with bacon, raisins, arugula, and a grilled baguette.

Olio Pizzeria

Located in Victoria Court in Santa Barbara, Olio Pizzeria (oliopizzeria.com) is the most casual of Alberto and Elaine Morello's trio of great Italian dining experiences (Olio e Limone Ristorante and Olio Crudo Bar are the other two). Although the pizzas here draw diners like ducks to water, appetizers are notable as well. Try the Trippa Romana (Roman-style tripe), which comes with tomato sauce and pecorino cheese. Many ethnic cuisines put a high value on tripe (the lining of the cow's stomach), including high-end Chinese and French, and of course, Italian. It doesn't get more authentic than this.

Julienne

At Julienne (restaurantjulienne.com), chef and owner Justin West is known as a "nose to tail" kind of guy. "My father was a chef, and that's the way he operated," he says. "I think it's also a more interesting way to cook." He makes a texture-heavy appetizer of pig ears, julienned and deep fried to a crisp and served with soft scrambled eggs, carrot, kimchi, and tofu.