

FOOD & DRINK

SPRING 2013





LUCY'S CALIFORNIA RESTAURANT TOUR

AFTER SAMPLING HER WAY THROUGH ARTISANAL FOOD SHOPS, STYLISH RESTAURANTS AND URBAN WINERIES IN CALIFORNIA, LUCY WAVERMAN SHARES HER PICKS FOR STANDOUT CULINARY EXPERIENCES IN THE GOLDEN STATE.

BY LUCY WAVERMAN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY STACEY BRANDFORD

I recently experienced a five-day dream adventure to San Francisco, Marin County, Sonoma and Napa packed full of food, wine and cultural experiences. San Francisco is an exciting food city but it was its next-door neighbour, Oakland, that really fulfilled my food desires.

Often compared to Brooklyn, Oakland has recently been named the fifth best food city in the U.S. Originally a run-down, drug-infested area, it is becoming gentrified. Named after writer Jack London, the large main square, which runs down to the water, is a food-shopper's paradise. Small artisanal food shops surround the area while stylish restaurants and urban wineries (a big trend on the West Coast) are scattered around the neighbourhood.

Driving over the luminous Golden Gate bridge, we meandered up the wild coastline through Point Reyes, eating cheese, drinking mead and devouring the famous Hog Island Oysters. Turning east through Sonoma's farming and wine country—where we ate and drank very well—we finally arrived in Napa at the tiny, picturesque town of Yountville. This is home to several restaurants created by superstar chef Thomas Keller, from the world-renowned French Laundry to his fried-chicken takeout place. Napa is mainstream but it was Sonoma that won my heart.

Here are my picks for six great culinary experiences and six restaurants that were a cut above the rest.

Best Modern Tavern

BURRITT ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO

Since the early 20th century, San Francisco has been home to taverns where workers could meet, mingle, have a steak and a cigar while enjoying privacy in curtained booths. Some originals still exist in the area, but today Charlie Palmer, chef extraordinaire on both the east and west coasts, has created the Burritt Room and Tavern in the Mystic Hotel with an atmosphere similar to these old saloons. The dark room, complete with curtained booths, tables and vintage pictures of San Francisco, echoes that speakeasy feel. Steaks are a major part of the menu but Chef Ashley Weaver's talents can also be much more imaginative. To give his dishes pizzazz, he uses local, seasonal and sustainable products such as Dungeness crab, oysters and cheeses from Sonoma Coast. All pasta is house-made, as are the charcuterie items. The inventive menu changes frequently to accommodate seasonal products. Desserts are eclectic—for example, a Meyer lemon panna cotta with huckleberry compote, lavender meringue and honey ricotta ice cream, which the sommelier paired with Tazo Black Tea! Creative cocktails are served in the adjacent bar to get you into the spirit of dining.



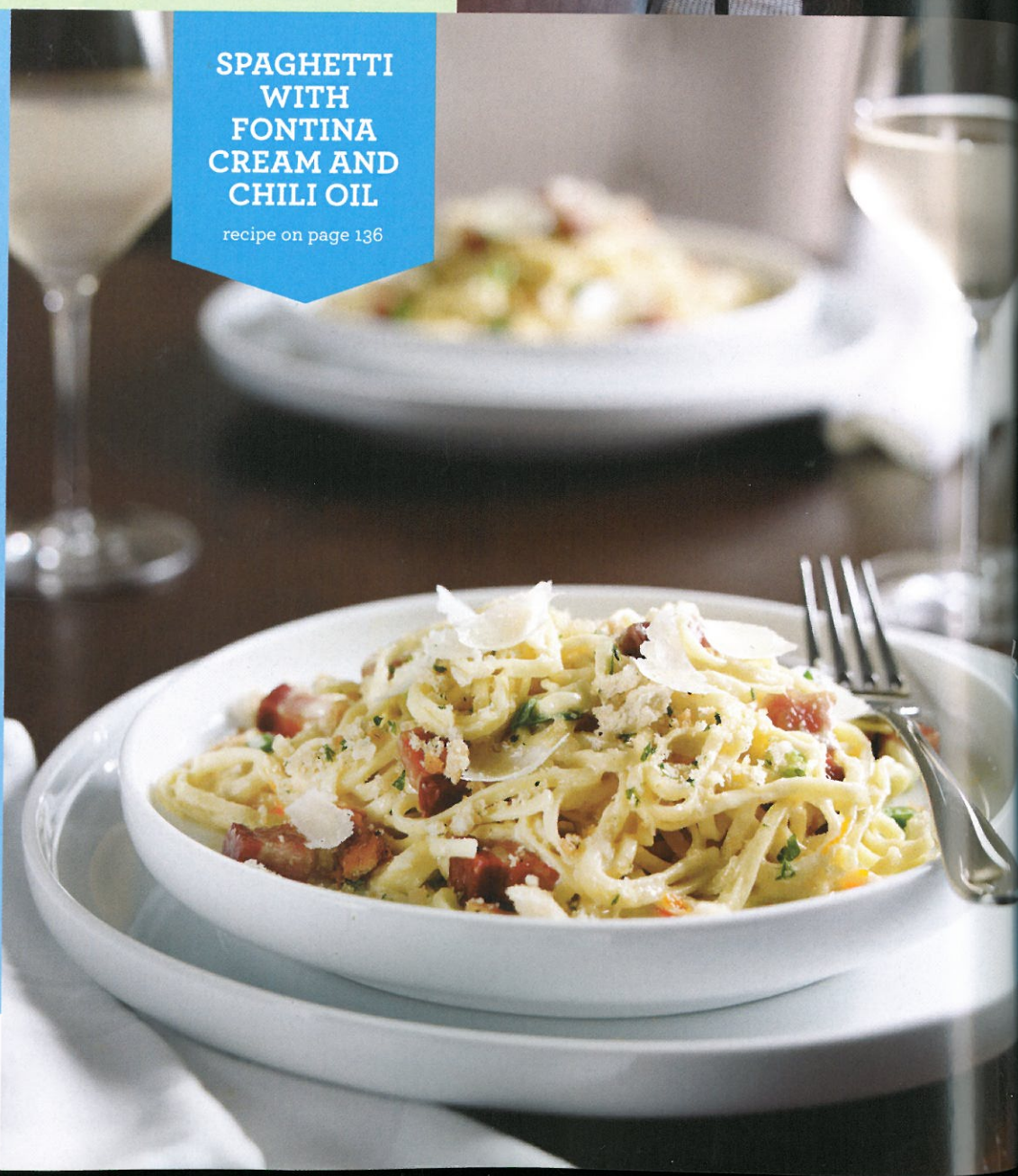
BEST BAKING

TARTINE BAKERY

When you bite into a croissant and the butter fills your mouth, you know you've hit paradise. Tartine makes both simple and fancy baked goods and breads. Lineups start very early, and this bakery is conveniently on the way to the San Francisco airport for a last-minute feast.

SPAGHETTI WITH FONTINA CREAM AND CHILI OIL

recipe on page 136



**SAUERKRAUT
PANCAKE
WITH
PECORINO &
RICOTTA**

recipe on page 136



Best New Restaurant

STATE BIRD PROVISIONS, SAN FRANCISCO

State Bird Provisions is the brainchild of husband and wife team Stuart Briozza & Nicole Krasinski. Opened only 10 months ago, it has been receiving accolades ever since.

Although the menu is typically small plates, the owners have adopted a dim sum approach to certain dishes. Trolleys move gingerly through the small room with non-menu items that range from little salads to fresh seafood to whatever strikes the fancy of the kitchen. There is also a menu with more substantial dishes but the trolleys are irresistible.

The food is clean, tasty and full-flavoured. It's also fun, with the originality and passion that goes into creating each dish perfectly evident. The restaurant's signature dish is the California state bird itself—quail—deep-fried and totally mind-blowing. Other dishes may include Malaysian beef cheek curry, sweet-bread polpettas, and several different kinds of pancakes, which are a staple on the menu. Reservations are next to impossible but counter seating is offered every night if you are prepared to line up and wait. Definitely worth it.



BEST BAGELS

BEAUTY'S BAGEL SHOP

Blake Joffee's Beauty's Bagel Shop in Oakland pays homage to his Montreal roots. His shop is named after the iconic Beauty's in Montreal. They make fantastic sweet-salty bagels baked in a wood-fired oven and served with mouth-watering toppings. Don't miss the horseradish-scented egg salad version.





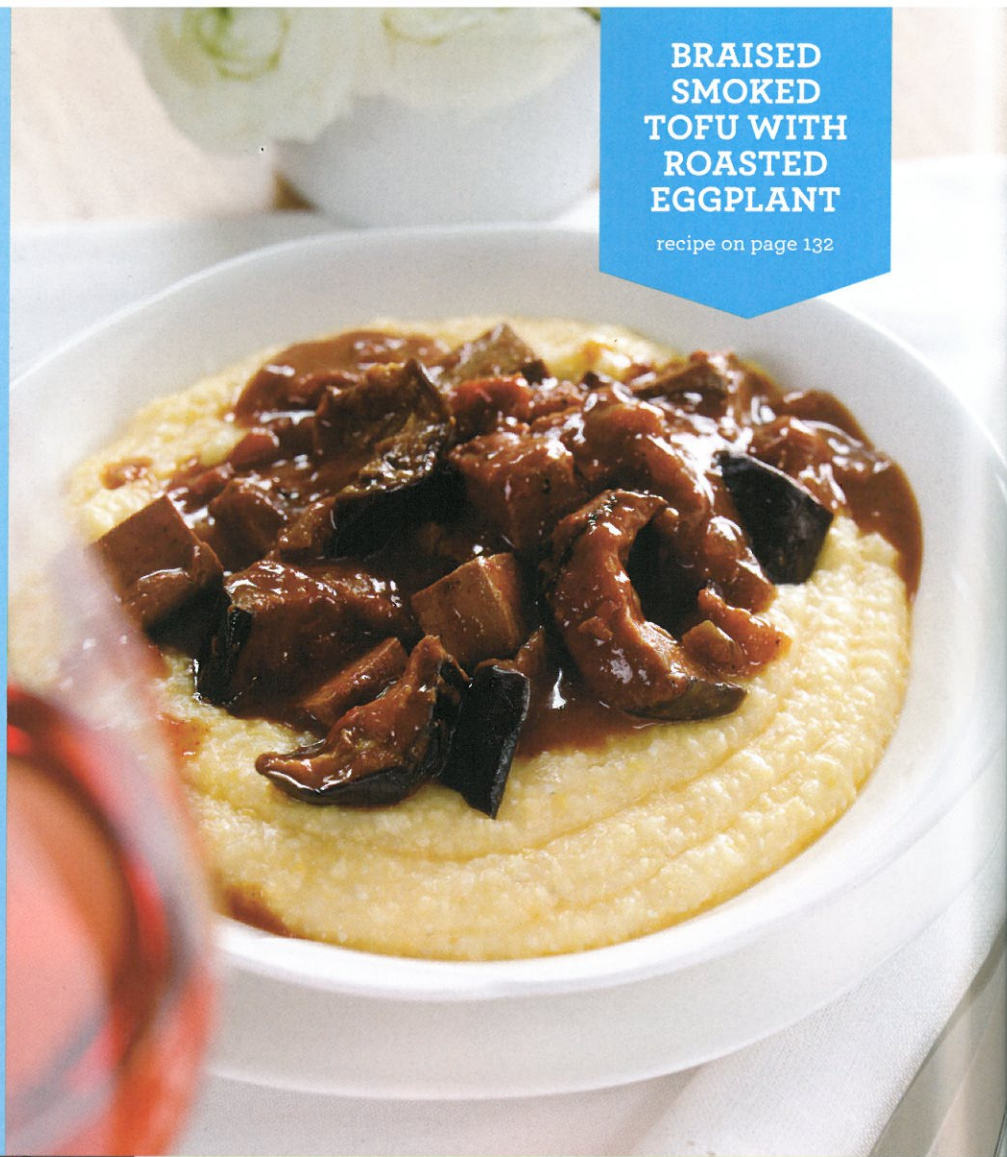
BEST COFFEE

BLUE BOTTLE
COFFEE COMPANY

Artisanal, organic small-batch coffee served within 48 hours of roasting on 1950s-era roasters—it all makes for decidedly superior coffee. At this Oakland café there are no fancy top-ups or additions, just plain great cups of joe. And they bake cookies too. There are several locations in the Bay area and one in New York City too.

BRAISED SMOKED TOFU WITH ROASTED EGGPLANT

recipe on page 132



Best Barbecue

B SIDE BBQ, OAKLAND

Tanya Holland is a force. She moved to West Oakland four years ago to open her first restaurant, Brown Sugar Kitchen, in a fairly desolate area. It was a huge success and now the neighbourhood is improving. Empowered by her experience, Holland then opened B Side BBQ in another non-gentrified district. It was recently voted one of the top five barbecue houses in the U.S.

Holland is a master of her art. French-trained at La Varenne, she worked in various mainstream restaurants before appearing on her own TV show and writing a book. But she found that she missed the restaurant business. Using her big outdoor smoker she prepares ribs three different ways (my favourite ones are the full-flavoured, spicy “Dark and stormy” ribs), brisket and pork, all with juicy results. All her meat, fruit and vegetables are organic and Holland’s vegetarian dishes have a loyal following. Her strawberry lemonade is to die for. Larger than life and everywhere at once, she greets people, tells you what to order and is completely in charge. This is the most fun restaurant of all!



Best Tacos Ever

C CASA KITCHEN, NAPA

C Casa Kitchen, a taco stand in Oxbow market in the town of Napa, recently received a huge honour. It is the only restaurant without seats to receive the coveted Michelin Bib award. This honour is given to high-quality but affordable restaurants throughout the world. Catherine Bergen, the owner, is ecstatic: “We strive for excellence and it is good to be recognized.”

Her taco stand is one of a kind. Using only sustainable, local, organic products and gluten-free white corn tortillas, she and her staff whip up innovative tacos. The C in C Casa stands for cultural—her tacos take inspiration from all cuisines. A little lemon grass here or Indian spicing as part of the chicken taco... Her creativity is endless. Inspired by the season, she serves a duck taco (she roasts her own ducks) with blood oranges, goat cheese, avocado and a Meyer lemon serrano salsa. Her salads are worth the wait, too. And, because this is California, there is wine and beer to match.

CHILORIO TACO

recipe on page 132



BEST CANADIAN CONNECTION

LA CREMA WINERY

Canadian Elizabeth Grant-Douglas graduated from Brock University in Niagara, moved to California and is now head winemaker at La Crema in both the Russian River Valley and Oregon. She makes cool-climate Chardonnays and distinctive award-winning Pinot Noirs.

Perfect Sonoma Food Experience

ARISTA WINERY

Arista is a family-owned winery near Healdsburg in the Russian River Valley, where they make elegant, well received Pinot Noir. While the winery does not have a restaurant, it does do superb food experiences. These wine-and-food-pairing lunches are a new initiative helping people better understand the synergy between food and wine. Young chef Tim Kaulfers is talented and inventive and is also the gardener, sourcing much of his produce from his gardens. The maximum group size is 10, which allows Kaulfers to spend time on out-of-the-ordinary dishes. Along with the duck featured here, I had a pattypan squash stuffed with sausage meat with a perfect egg sitting on top bathed in a wine bouillon, paired with Arista's 2011 Russian River Pinot. A dessert of Manjari Chocolate Crème Brûlée with Bacon Powder, matched with Arista's Zinfandel, finished a delectable meal. With its Japanese gardens and magnificent views of valleys and mountains, Arista is the perfect Sonoma experience. You can take your own picnic and enjoy the gardens, too.



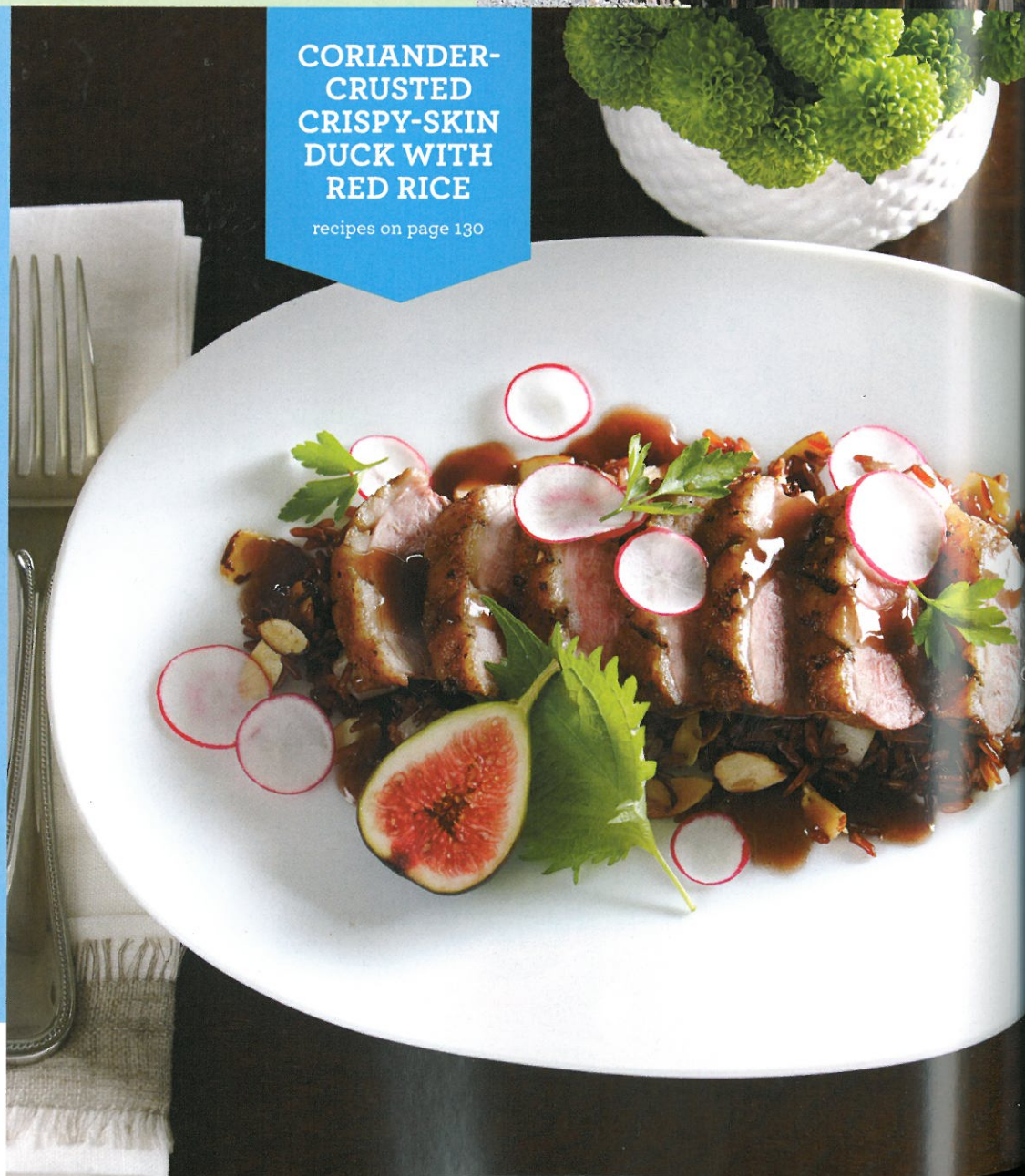
BEST OYSTER EXPERIENCE AND PICNIC

HOG ISLAND OYSTERS

On the wild Sonoma Coast, Hog Island grows, harvests and sells pristine oysters. Picnic there and they will shuck oysters for you. They (or you) can also barbecue the oysters and top them with their tongue-tingling, fiery-sweet chipotle barbecue sauce.

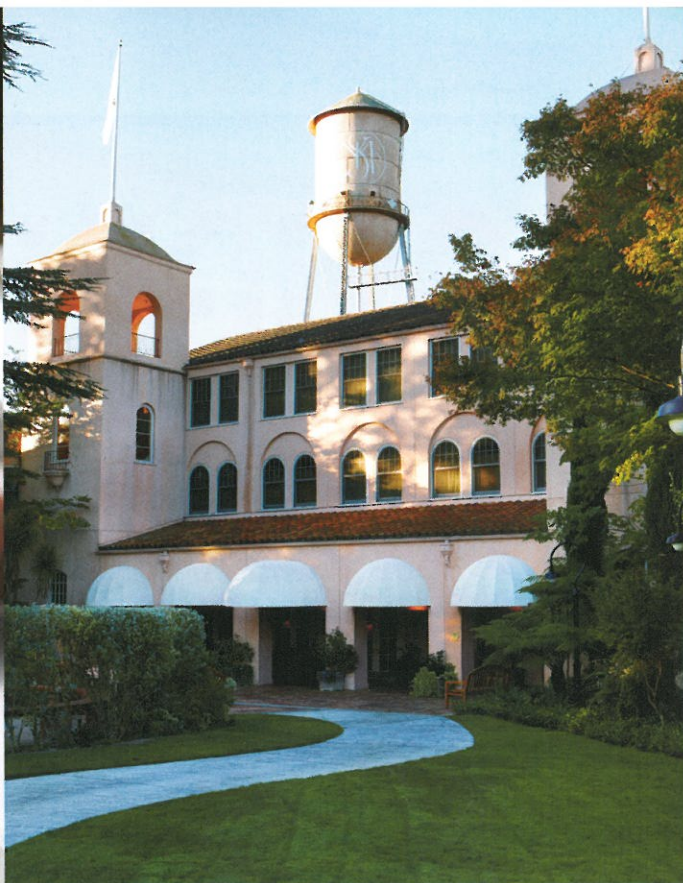
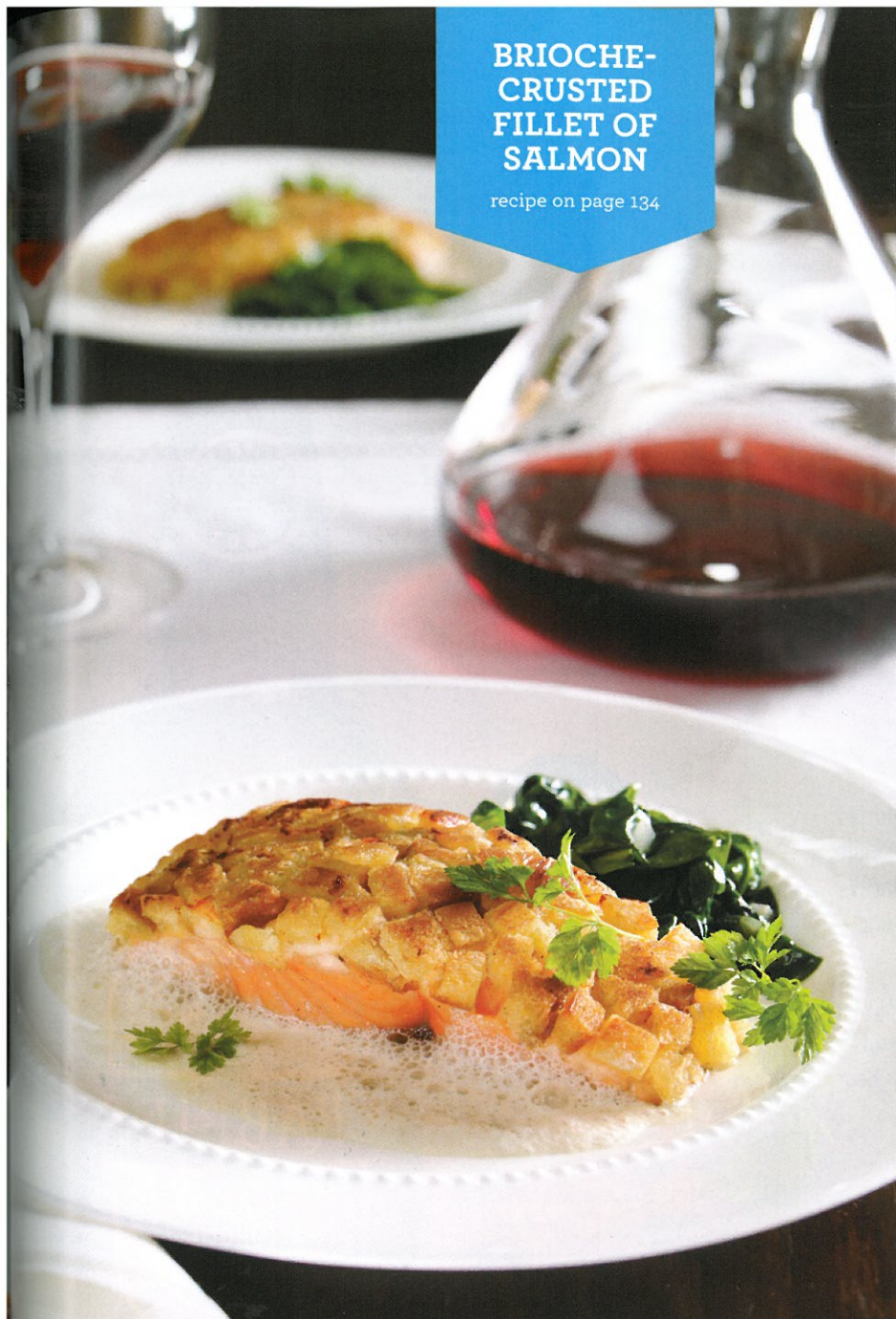
CORIANDER-CRUSTED CRISPY-SKIN DUCK WITH RED RICE

recipes on page 130



BRIOCHE-CRUSTED FILLET OF SALMON

recipe on page 134



Perfect Inn

FAIRMONT MISSION INN

The Fairmont Mission Inn is a tranquil property near Sonoma, famous for its spa and food and as a getaway for people who want to take a little time out. Sante, the inn's one-Michelin-star signature restaurant, is elegant and peaceful. With the bounty of Sonoma available, the chef makes delicious dishes that appear simple but take work to achieve the superb flavours. The wine list wins perennial *Wine Spectator* Gold Awards while the menu is California-French, fusing modernist techniques with good old-fashioned tastes. Our amuse was an eggshell filled with cauliflower cream with a pinch of caviar on top—a modern interpretation of a famous French recipe of the 1980s. If the restaurant has a signature dish, it is the lobster mac and cheese, a superb if rich interpretation of a dish often badly made. Forget calories, just order it. Service is seamless—as you would expect from the beauty of the room and the elegance of the food. Check the bourbon list for an after-dinner drink.

BEST CHEESE

COWGIRL CREAMERY

Sue Conley and Peg Smith cooked together at Chez Panisse before they realized they wanted to start a creamery on the Sonoma Coast where farmers were famous for their organic milk. They make superior handmade fresh cheese and now some aged forms, too. Try their triple crème Mount Tam or prizewinning Red Hawk.

