

805

LIVING

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THE 805



MADE *in the* 805

If you feel good about buying American-made products, you'll feel great about some of the best things that are produced right here in the 805. Some are from established local institutions; others come from exciting up-and-comers, but every one of these local favorites represents life on the Central Coast in very personal ways.

BY **ELIZABETH TURNER** PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY MOSS





FUN IN THE SUN

Boards That Rip

Roberts Surfboards, Ventura
robertssurf.com

Master surfboard-shaper Robert Weiner is famous for making high-performance short-boards with names like the Dreamcatcher, the Meat Cleaver, and the Metamorph. He makes longboards, too.

“We make boards for surfers of every level and every type of surf,” says Weiner, who still surfs most days of the week. “All the boards are shaped right here in Ventura. My factory is only three minutes from my home, and it’s five minutes from my favorite surf break.”

Weiner began shaping boards at age 12 and worked for Oxnard-based McCrystal Surfboards before launching Roberts Surfboards in 1994. “I started doing everything myself and slowly but surely employed a lot more people,” he says.

Things kicked into high gear after a number of big-name surfers, including Dane Reynolds, Tom Curren, Timmy Curran, and Jordy Smith, took a shine to the Roberts White Diamond, a short, wide board with a diamond tail. Buzz quickly grew online via surfboard design forums, and in 2011 *Surfing* magazine recognized Roberts as Shaper of the Year.



Dani Stone (left) and Jules Allen pay homage to rock bands with their one-of-a-kind blazers at The Tribute Project studio.

COASTAL STYLE

Rocker Couture

Tribute Project, Santa Barbara *tributeproject.net*

It all started with a pair of structured black-wool blazers that Santa Barbara designers Jules Allen and Dani Stone reinvented as sartorial tributes to the rock group Guns N’ Roses, complete with riffs on song lyrics, military details, original artwork, and custom linings.

Next came an epic birthday gift for a Duran Duran-loving mutual girlfriend, unwrapped to partygoers’ oohs and aahs. As last year’s October date approached for the Desert Trip music festival (aka Oldchella), Allen and Stone’s

phones started ringing. “Everybody was calling us, saying, ‘I want a Stones!’ ‘I want a Pink Floyd!’” Allen says. “We made a bunch of jackets.”

The Tribute Project’s online boutique officially launched in January. The collection of one-of-a-kind blazers, bombers, jackets, and coats are Allen and Stone’s exquisite odes to rockers. “First it was almost making something for ourselves that just wasn’t out there in the marketplace,” says Allen, who made her name in fashion with her Allen Allen line of women’s wear. “What can I say? I’m a music and fashion girl.”

LOCAL FLAVORS

Luscious, Organic EVOO

Ojai Olive Oil Company *ojaioliveoil.com*

Situated on the 50-acre Asquith Ranch in the eastern end of Ojai Valley, this boutique producer of award-winning olive oils has been family owned and operated since 1998. “My father started this up in the ’90s when he retired from his job,” says CEO Philip J.P. Asquith.

When his father purchased the property in 1998, the big draw was a heritage grove of 500-plus Spanish Lechin de Sevilla olive trees and stunning views of the valley. “My father started making one type of bottled olive oil from this grove of 150-year-old trees and selling it at the Ojai Certified Farmers’ Market,” says Asquith.

“It went very well and he enjoyed it. Bit by bit over the two or so decades since, we just kept expanding it.” These days, the 100-percent-organic farm also employs permaculture and biodynamic farming techniques.

Over the years, they planted additional olive varieties, mostly Columella and Nocellara del Belice, says Asquith, who favors the Columella for its sweet, mild, and fruity oil. “It’s everyone’s favorite around here,” he says. Judges like it, too: The company’s Provençal Extra-Virgin Olive Oil, a blend of Columella and Picholine olive oils, won a gold medal at last year’s New York International Olive Oil Competition.



CRAFTED BY HAND

Holy Grail Guitars

Parsons Guitars, Ventura
parsonsguitars.com

An American luthier, whose client list includes Jack White and Peter Dinklage, Randy Parsons uses hand tools, traditional methods, and endless imagination to create guitars that qualify as works of art. He lives in his 7,500-square-foot upstairs workshop next door to the Ventura Theater.

In January, Parsons debuted his latest limited-edition guitar, The Bat, at the National Association of Music Merchants' industry trade show. The Bat's body is constructed of 800-year-old cedar, and the ebony fingerboard is inlaid with aged copper.

Even fancier are Parsons' Wonderland Guitars, which start at \$50,000 apiece. "There's the Red Rabbit, the Red King, the Red Queen," says Parsons. "Part of the guitar is an elaborate inlay. We hand-cut all these pieces of jewels and shells, about 50,000 pieces. And that makes up this cool artwork up and down the neck."

Led Zeppelin founder Jimmy Page bought the White Mare.



Randy Parsons works on an inlaid guitar neck.

FUN IN THE SUN

Iconic Surf Wax

Mr. Zogs Sex Wax, Carpinteria *sexwax.com*

In the early 1970s, Frederick Charles Herzog III was running a small Goleta surf shop next door to the building where chemist Nate Skinner worked. The two started talking and decided to pool their expertise to create the perfect surfboard wax. The result was Mr. Zogs Original Sex Wax, an iconic brand of biodegradable surfboard, snowboard, and hockey stick wax.

Herzog credits Hank Pitcher, an artist friend who designed the logo, with creating the memorable brand name. "I was Zog, right?" says Herzog. "Hank came up with Mr. Zogs and the other stuff, and put that all together for me. I looked at it when he was done, and it took me a while to get used to it, but then I decided, well, what the heck?" Today, at 72, Herzog still produces his industry-leading products from his Carpinteria headquarters.



CRAFTED BY HAND

Artful Lighting

Rowan Chase Studio, Morro Bay

rowanchasestudio.com

"I liked the idea of illuminating my abstract work," says artist Rowan Chase, who in 2010 launched a line of table, floor, and pendant lamps featuring designs from his stylized landscape and fluid abstract paintings.



Raised on a ranch in North San Luis Obispo County, Chase now toggles between traditional painting and hand-building lamps in his Morro Bay studio. "I get orders from around the country, and I also wholesale my lighting now," he says. "It's pretty exciting."

Still, he's trying to keep it personal. Local cabinetmaker and friend Ryan Blackburn mills the walnut, ash, and birch pieces for the lamps' bases. "I assemble the bases and sand and finish them," Chase says. "I build every lamp. I figure if I keep making them and in some ways they're made by people I have relationships with, then they're still art."



FUN IN THE SUN

Bespoke Bicycles

Stinner Frameworks, Goleta
stinnerframeworks.com

Aaron Stinner once managed Bicycle Bob's bike shop. Now he's a disrupter in the bike-manufacturing business, building custom steel and titanium bicycles and selling them directly to consumers and specialty retailers all over the world.

"It all started with wanting to build a bike for myself," Stinner says. "I'm on the taller side, and I never had a frame that fit me perfectly. Once people found out I could build frames from scratch, I started getting a lot of people knocking on my door."

Known for their clean, straightforward design, every Stinner bicycle is cut, welded, painted, and assembled with the individual customer in mind by specialists in Stinner's Goleta workshop.



Aaron Stinner builds bicycle frames to fit his customers.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Crafty Drinks

Ventura Spirits venturaspirits.com

This 3-year-old California micro-distillery specializes in craft spirits inspired by the flavors of the Central Coast. Its neutral-flavored California Vodka is distilled from strawberry wine made with Oxnard and Santa Maria strawberries. Its top-selling bottle, Wilder Gin, is characterized by local aromatic botanicals foraged by the company's four founders, Anthony and Andrew Caspary, Henry Tarmy, and James Greenspun.

"We go out and we forage for California bay leaves, yerba santa, purple sage, and sagebrush, and we also get Pixie tangerines grown in Ojai. We dehydrate the peels and store them in the distillery," says Anthony Caspary. "We have a good variety of riparian ecosystems around here. We don't have to go far to find a hillside covered in various sages and a ravine filled with bay trees."



BIKE: NICOLE DATLEN/STINNER FRAMEWORKS

LOCAL FLAVORS

The Ultimate Tortilla Chip

Taco Works, San Luis Obispo

tacoworks.net

When a Mexican fast-food place called Taco Works opened in San Luis Obispo in 1976, founder Ty Bayly had no idea the chips would become the main attraction. Aiming to distinguish his restaurant from Taco Bell, they served a free basket of fresh tortilla chips at every table.

Customers loved the thin chips with the delicate crunch and distinct seasoning. “We basically came up with a kind of a season salt recipe, nothing dramatic, it was just a different kind of salt,” Bayly says. “But people started saying, ‘Wow, you should put these out in the stores!’”

In 1978, Bayly did just that, and the rest is history. He eventually closed the restaurant to focus on chips. These days, Taco Works chips are ubiquitous in grocery stores and sandwich and deli shops throughout San Luis Obispo County. They can also be found in Costco, Smart & Final, and Food 4 Less stores in other parts of the state.



Janine Stone at work in her San Luis Obispo woodshop.

CRAFTED BY HAND

Built to Impress

If You Give a Girl a Saw, San Luis Obispo *ifyougiveagirlasaw.com*

Janine Stone didn’t know she was a woodworker until she needed an outdoor shoe rack and decided to build it herself. She borrowed a saw and discovered her true vocation.

“Since opening my business, I have been flying by the seat of my pants every step of the way,” says Stone. Whether it’s reclaimed wood furnishings, geometric inlaid accessories, or custom builds for area businesses, she approaches each new design with curiosity and pure enthusiasm. “As a result, the aesthetic of my work is constantly evolving as I learn new ways to create and build,” she says.

It seems to be working for her. Stone runs a thriving online shop and recently opened a 1,200-square-foot workshop in San Luis Obispo. *USA Today* readers voted her America’s Best Home and Garden Maker of 2016.

LOCAL FLAVORS

Ice Cream for Purists

McConnell’s Fine Ice Creams, Santa Barbara

mcconnells.com

Founded in 1949 by Gordon “Mac” and Ernesteen McConnell, McConnell’s ice creams have been produced in the same downtown Santa Barbara dairy and creamery since the very beginning. Now owned by husband-and-wife team Michael Palmer and Eva Ein (he makes wine, she’s a chef), McConnell’s continues to make ice cream the old-fashioned way.

“Long before using local ingredients became a thing, businesses like ours used ingredients from the immediate area because that’s what you did,” says Palmer. “The Central Coast is home to some of the best



ingredients in the country: The finest dairy, from cows that have the opportunity to graze on grass throughout the year. From organic, cage-free eggs to great, organic fruit and nuts, and so many other things, some of which are grown here and nowhere else in the continental U.S.”

LOCAL FLAVORS

Singular Citrus

Ojai Pixie Tangerines

Pixie isn't a trade name. It's a hybrid mandarin variety that has achieved cult status in California. Seedless and perfectly sweet, the late-season tangerine ripens in March and April.

Because Pixies require patience and extended exposure to heat and sun, the Ojai Valley has become the world capital for the kid-friendly fruit. Nearly 40 local family farms produce Pixies that are sold at California farmers' markets

and distributed worldwide by Melissa's Produce in Los Angeles.

"The Ojai microclimate is really great for late-season citrus—any late season citrus, not just Pixies," explains Emily T. Ayala, vice president of Friend's Ranches (friendsranches.com), where Ayala's grandfather, Elmer Friend, planted his first Pixie trees in 1970. "If you grow Pixies in an area that doesn't have the right climate, the fruit just tastes flat. It tastes very watery and uninteresting."



COASTAL STYLE

Menswear That Works (and Plays)

Saltura, Santa Barbara saltura.co

A collaboration between two surf-loving New York designers who headed west when they started having families, Saltura is sustainably made menswear inspired by the California lifestyle.

"Back in New York, we were weekend warriors. You work hard all week long, and on the weekend you do all the fun stuff," says cofounder David Malina. "Here we notice people are really deliberate about weaving their fun stuff and family life into their everyday. That's the person we want to cater to with Saltura. We want to create comfortable clothing that's elegant enough that you can go into a work space, but it also provides flexibility and technical performance that would allow you to do these outdoor activities."

Sustainability and keeping it local are big priorities, says Addison Proctor, also a cofounder. "The majority of the fabric is knitted in Los Angeles. The cut and sew work is done in Ventura," Proctor says. The design work and screen printing all happen in Santa Barbara.



CRAFTED BY HAND

Fine Leather Accessories

Make Smith Leather, Santa Barbara makesmith.com
Steven D. Soria grew up with leather-crafting. His father and great-uncle taught him the trade at the family leather shop in Santa Barbara. Seven years ago, Soria launched Make Smith Leather, his own line of minimalist bags, belts, wallets, and other accessories that let the quality leather and workmanship shine through. The goods are sold direct to customers online and in boutiques.

“We’ve grown so quickly that we ship stuff all over the world,” Soria says. “We have a big presence in Japan and also New York.” The company’s creations are the star attraction at Make Smith-curated lobby shops at Shelter Social Club hotels in Santa Barbara, Ojai, and Los Alamos.

Make Smith’s most popular designs are definitely the tote bags, says Soria. “I can’t walk down the street in the Central Coast without seeing one,” he says, adding that friends text him photos of women rocking their Make Smith totes on the streets of Brooklyn.

Steven D. Soria creates Make Smith Leather’s beautifully tooled accessories entirely by hand.

COASTAL STYLE

Hippie-Chic Perfection

Love Tanjane, Ojai lovetanjane.com

With its hand-dyed natural fabrics and easy styling, Sonia Erneux’s Love Tanjane line of relaxed sundresses, sexy caftans, and other breezy pieces channel the groovy Ojai lifestyle.

“Each piece is hand-dyed in Ojai and superpersonal,” says Erneux, who counts Kate Hudson, Jennifer Lopez, Gwen Stefani, and Nicole Richie among her clients.

Originally a lingerie designer, Erneux grew up in Brussels and has lived in Paris, New York, and Los Angeles. But a visit to Ojai changed her life and her design approach. “I found Ojai supermagical, and I felt at home here immediately,” she says. “There was no way I was not going to live here.”

After relocating to Ojai, she switched from lingerie to Love Tanjane. “I got really influenced by my life and the environment here to be less restricted, more gauzy and bohemian,” Erneux says. “Being in the country, I’ve become more creative, I think.” ♦

