

805

LIVING

Food & Wine

Magnolia Network's
Elizabeth Poett shares
some of her favorite
recipes and a glimpse of
her life on the ranch.





The Flavor of *the* Central Coast

Elizabeth Poett meshes ranch traditions
and contemporary flair.

BY JOAN TAPPER PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARY MOSS

Rancher Elizabeth Poett enjoys a quiet moment at Rancho San Julian, her childhood home near Lompoc, where she now raises her children, runs a business selling her family's grass-fed beef, organizes dinners and events on the property, and stars in a television series about her passion for growing, cooking, and sharing food.



ask Elizabeth Poett what her normal day is like, and she just laughs. “Every day is different,” she says. “It’s one reason I love ranching. You have to be flexible!”

Flexible is an understatement. Not only does she tend cattle with her husband, Austin Campbell, on 14,000-acre Rancho San Julian, near Lompoc—which has been in her family for eight generations—she’s also an entrepreneur of a beef business, an organizer of ranch-to-table dinners and events, the subject of a new TV show, and mom to 10-year-old Jack and 7-year-old Hank.

How does she do it all? Well, she had the example of her parents, “who did a lot and loved the things they did,” Poett says. Her father, Jim Poett, was one of the first certified organic beef providers in California; he’s now the ranch CEO. Her mother, Marianne Partridge, is cofounder and editor in chief of the *Santa Barbara Independent*. Elizabeth was born and raised here, soaking up a love for the area’s heritage (including the flamenco she studied and danced at Fiesta time) and for the history embedded in the property itself.

“The heart of the ranch is The Casa,” she says of the first house that was built on the property in the early 1800s and was added onto over time. “It was a stop on the old stagecoach road.” Today it’s the headquarters of the operation and home to a century-old grape and wisteria arbor that provides shade for branding barbecues as well as dinners for four to 400.

Elizabeth went east for college and stayed in New York for a while, but the ranch exerted its pull. In 2006, she came back to work with the cattle full time. Two years later she started Rancho San Julian Beef, selling the meat at farmers’ markets, where customers’ curiosity about the animals and ranch life eventually prompted her to start hosting ranch-to-table events about five years ago.

“People could come to the ranch, learn, and have a beautiful meal,” she says. But the inspiration actually goes back further than that—to her wedding to Campbell, a local rancher whom she met at a

branding. With their large network of family and friends, the guest list for the nuptials numbered 450. How to accommodate everyone? “I said, ‘Let’s grow the food,’” Elizabeth remembers. “We planted the corn, grew the tomatoes, and saved all the trim.” Friends accumulated enough vintage china at secondhand shops to serve everyone, and the idea of festive dinners that show off the bounty and bonhomie of the ranch lifestyle was born.

Recent events have been considerably smaller, ranging from a barbecue, where she talked about cuts of meat, to a strawberry jam event, and a fundraiser for the county food bank.

Now there’s also *Ranch to Table*, a six-episode television show that began airing in August on the Magnolia Network, part of Discovery+. The segments feature Elizabeth working with her husband and the animals and also in her kitchen—she lives in a house that was moved to the property by her great-grandmother during the influenza pandemic of 1918—using her own meat and fresh local produce for appealing, accessible meals.

“Farmers and ranchers work hard,” Elizabeth says, “and a lot of ranch life is not so pretty. People forget that it’s real. I want people to see what it’s like. I’m not a professional chef,” she adds. “I’m a rancher who loves to cook. I love food and where it comes from.”

That approach is obvious even in the barbecue meal she serves Campbell and their kids for an easygoing Sunday dinner at the site of The Ranch Table events. Simple—but perfectly grilled—rib-eye steaks anchor the menu, which she rounds out with a side dish of potatoes grown on the ranch and flavored with leeks and fresh dill, a seasonal citrus salad made with local farmers’ market finds, a bottle of neighboring Tyler Winery’s 2019 Mae Estate Sta. Rita Hills pinot noir for her and Campbell to share, and dessert—individual hand pies filled with pears from the ranch orchard.

Sharing such dinners with her family is a joy; extending that hospitality to others, in person or virtually, is enriching for all involved. “I feel very lucky,” Poett says.

Poett and her husband, Austin Campbell, (opposite) sip local wine by the grill.





Potatoes With Leeks and Fresh Dill

"There's nothing better than new potatoes," Poett says, "and fall is the perfect time to cook them up." For this flavorful side dish, Poett partners tender boiled potatoes grown on the ranch with sautéed leeks and dresses them up with parsley and dill.

Serves 4 to 10

- 3 pounds new red and gold potatoes**
- ½ cup (1 stick) salted butter**
- ½ cup olive oil, divided**
- 2 leeks, finely sliced**
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley**
- 1 cup chopped fresh dill**
- Kosher salt to taste**
- Freshly cracked black pepper to taste**

Boil potatoes until fork tender, about 20 minutes, depending on size.

Meanwhile, in a separate pan, warm butter and ¼ cup olive oil over low heat. When butter is melted, add leeks, and cook over low heat until golden and tender. Remove from heat and add parsley. Mix well.

Drain potatoes and toss in a large bowl with remaining olive oil. Pour in butter mixture and toss well. Add dill and salt and pepper and toss again.



Poett carries a bowl of flowers (left) to brighten a table for the family meal (below) outside The Casa, where she hosts The Ranch Table events.



Citrus Salad With Lemon-Mustard Dressing

Farmers' market citrus fruit inspired Poett to create this refreshing salad. "We cannot grow citrus on the ranch, because our winters are too cold," she says. "So when I go to the market I am always in search of these beauties." The dish can serve as a showcase for whatever varieties are in season. Poett makes the dressing with honey produced on the ranch.

Serves 4

LEMON-MUSTARD DRESSING

- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

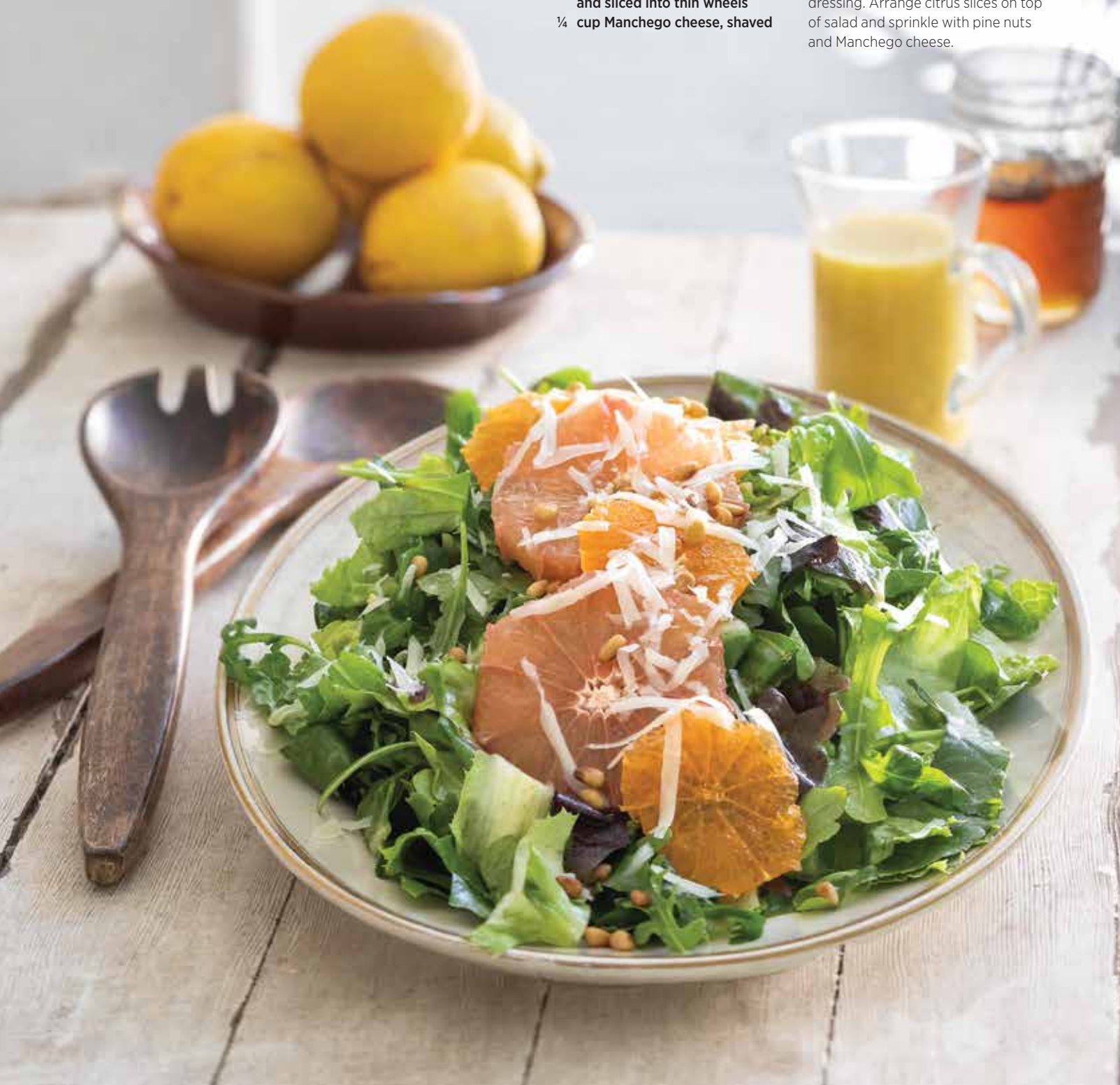
SALAD

- ¼ cup pine nuts
- 1 head romaine lettuce, chopped
- ½ pound arugula
- 1 head red butter lettuce
- 2 gold nugget mandarins, peeled and sliced into thin wheels
- 1 ruby red grapefruit, peeled and sliced into thin wheels
- ¼ cup Manchego cheese, shaved

To make Lemon-Mustard Dressing:

Combine all dressing ingredients in a mason jar and shake until well mixed.

To assemble salad: Toast pine nuts in a small, dry skillet over medium-low heat, stirring constantly for three minutes or so, until golden brown. In a large salad bowl, combine romaine, arugula, and butter lettuce leaves and toss with dressing. Arrange citrus slices on top of salad and sprinkle with pine nuts and Manchego cheese.





An herbaceous rub enhances the flavor of the beef.



The fire blazes (above) in the Santa Maria-style grill; the height of the grate can be adjusted via pulleys (below, right). Mason jars serve as wine glasses for the casual meal (below).

Bone-In Rib Eye With Fresh Rub

For this recipe, Elizabeth Poett flavors bone-in rib eyes with a pasty rub, fragrant with crushed thyme and fennel seeds. Although it may not look like enough to cover two steaks at first, a little goes a long way. Poett usually pulls them off at medium-rare because the meat continues to cook even after it's off the grill.

Serves 4 to 6

2 bone-in rib-eye steaks,
1½ inches thick

FRESH RUB

7-10 sprigs of thyme

5 small (or 2-3 large) sage
leaves, roughly chopped

3 cloves of garlic, peeled and
finely chopped

½ teaspoon whole fennel seeds

½ teaspoon whole black
peppercorns

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 tablespoon extra-virgin
olive oil

Lay steaks on a tray and set aside.

To make Fresh Rub: Use your fingers to strip leaves off of thyme stems. Put leaves in a mortar with sage, garlic, fennel seeds, and peppercorns. Crush everything together with a pestle until the mixture begins to form a paste. Be

sure to crush the fennel and black peppercorns well—you should hear the peppercorns pop. Add salt and mash into a thick paste. Add olive oil and continue mashing the mixture until combined. Taste the rub and adjust the flavors to your liking. (The pepper might be strong.)

Spread rub onto steaks with the back of a spoon or your fingers, pressing it gently into the meat and taking care to cover as much surface area as possible. Wrap steaks in plastic wrap to hold the seasonings against the meat, then put them on a plate in the refrigerator for 15 minutes to 2 hours. Take them out of the refrigerator about an hour before you plan to start cooking.

Make sure steaks are at room temperature. Preheat grill to medium and grease grates to prevent steaks from sticking. Grill steaks, turning only once (about 7 to 10 minutes on each side) until steaks reach 125°F or the temperature of the doneness you desire on an instant-read thermometer. Remove steaks from grill, cover with aluminum foil, and let rest for about 15 minutes. Slice against the grain at an angle and serve.



Cinnamon Pear Hand Pies With Bourbon Cream

"I love a hand pie," Poett says. "They are so easy to make and even easier to eat. They are a great way to celebrate your favorite fruit of the season." In autumn, she enjoys flavoring them with cinnamon and nutmeg, the traditional warm spices used to enhance the pear filling in this recipe. Her hand pies are a classic Ranch Table dessert.



Poett forgoes an electric mixer for a hand-crank egg beater (above) to whip cream for her Cinnamon Pear Hand Pies (opposite).

Makes 10 pies

CRUST

- 3 cups all-purpose flour**
- ¼ cup granulated sugar**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into cubes and kept very cold**
- ¼ cup ice water**
- 2 egg yolks**
- 2 tablespoons raw sugar, for dusting**
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon, for dusting**

FILLING

- 2 Anjou or Bartlett pears, cut into small cubes**
- ½ cup sugar**
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon**
- Dash of nutmeg**

BOURBON-WHIPPED CREAM

- 2 cups whipping cream**
- ½ cup granulated sugar**
- 2 teaspoons bourbon**

To make the crust: Combine flour, sugar, salt, and butter in the bowl of a food processor and pulse mixture until butter pieces are the size of peas. Drizzle in ice water, pulsing mixture occasionally, and stopping when it is just moist enough to hold together when you pinch it.

Turn dough out onto a clean counter and press it together to form two disks, about 1-inch thick. Wrap disks in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

To make the filling: Place pear and sugar in a stockpot over low heat and stir until sugar dissolves. Add lemon juice and cook over medium heat, stirring, for 15 minutes until mixture begins to thicken. Add cinnamon and nutmeg. Set aside and let cool. (You can speed up the cooling process by placing filling in

a container in the refrigerator for a few hours.)

When ready to bake, preheat oven to 375°F and remove dough from refrigerator. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Beat egg yolks in a small bowl and set aside.

On a floured cutting board, roll out dough disks into 2 rounds, about ⅞-inch thick. Using a 4-inch biscuit cutter, cut 4 circles from each round. Roll out the dough circles just a bit more to enlarge them slightly.

Spoon 2 tablespoons of filling onto the center of 4 dough circles. Brush a small amount of yolk around the edge of each filled crust. Place one of the remaining 4 dough circles on top of each mound of filling, patting the edge around the filling to connect the upper and lower crusts. Using a fork, crimp the edges to seal. Poke the fork into the center of each pie top to allow steam to escape. Brush pies with beaten egg yolk and sprinkle with raw sugar and cinnamon. Transfer hand pies to prepared parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes or until lightly golden brown. Remove pies from oven and set aside to cool slightly.

To make the Bourbon Whipped Cream: Add cream to a medium bowl and whip with an electric mixer on high speed for 5 minutes. Add sugar and bourbon and whip until cream holds a peak when you raise the beater.

Serve pies warm with a generous dollop of Bourbon Whipped Cream. ♦

