

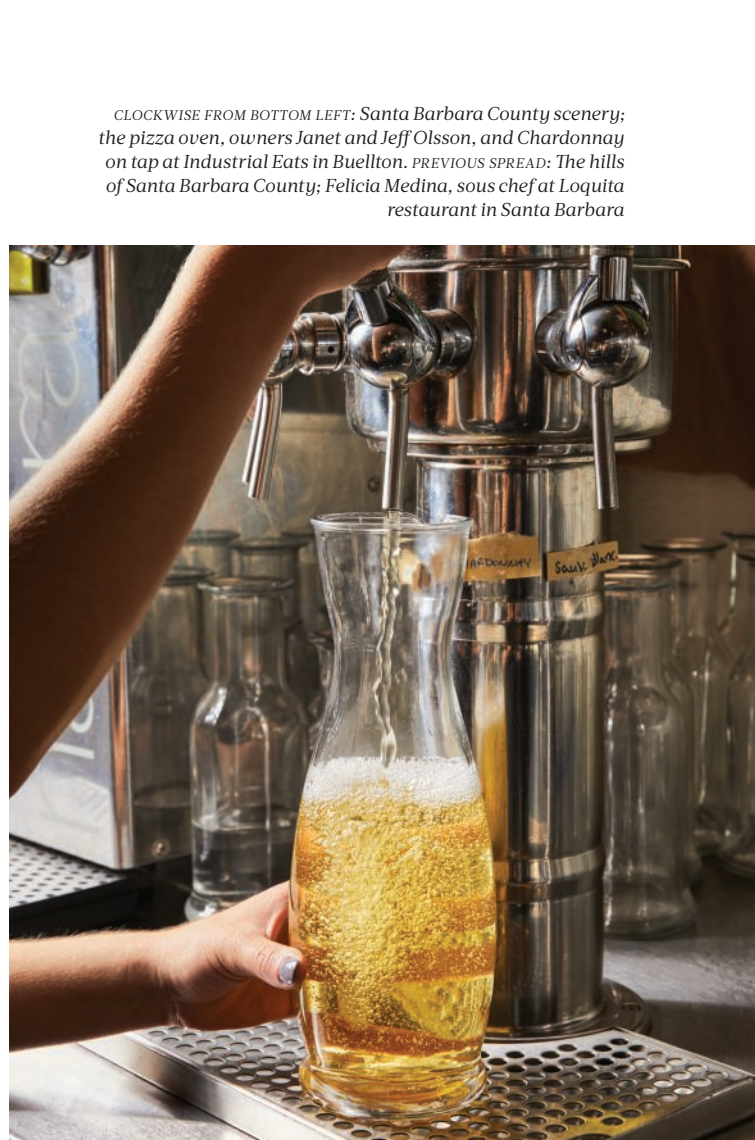


SANTA
BARBARA
RISING

CALIFORNIA'S YOUNG,
EXPERIMENTAL WINE
COUNTRY GROWS UP.

BY GEORGIA FREEDMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUBRIE PICK





CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: Santa Barbara County scenery; the pizza oven, owners Janet and Jeff Olsson, and Chardonnay on tap at Industrial Eats in Buellton. PREVIOUS SPREAD: The hills of Santa Barbara County; Felicia Medina, sous chef at Loquita restaurant in Santa Barbara

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: A toast, and Pan Bagnat (recipe p. 120) at Industrial Eats; S.Y. Kitchen in Santa Ynez; Pico, a restaurant and wine bar in the Los Alamos General Store; Saffron Spaghetti with Santa Barbara Spot Prawns at S.Y. Kitchen (recipe p. 122)



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T A SMALL, warehouse-like building off a nondescript road in Buellton, California, a couple dozen people are lined up in front of a restaurant called

Industrial Eats. The crowd is a mix of ranchers in dusty cowboy boots and Carhartt jackets, local families, and tourists in fancy sneakers and hipster-style felted hats who have driven the two hours up the coast from Los Angeles.

The inside of Eats (as locals call the place) is casual, with counter service and shared high tables. The menu, written on rolls of butcher paper, seems to encapsulate all of the best elements of the Central Coast's food scene: There are local mussels steamed with Thai curry, oysters loaded with fresh uni or sliced avocado, rabbit braised in white wine with olives, and a variety of inventive salads and sandwiches. My meal—a spicy Caesar salad and plump shrimp in a garlic-butter sauce—is one of the best I've eaten anywhere in California. If I lived within driving distance of this place, I would be making weekend trips for these meals, too.

This isn't the kind of food—or the kind of crowd—I expected to find in Buellton. I spent my childhood and teenage years in

the nearby city of Santa Barbara, and to me, Buellton was the place you'd go to buy farming equipment and animal feed. The town's culinary claim to fame used to be Pea Soup Andersen's, a kitschy restaurant in a faux Danish-style building that has been serving its namesake soup since 1924.

But these days, Buellton is in the heart of Santa Barbara County's wine country. And while the town itself still feels like a pretty rural, working-class place, the area around it is changing fast. It's emblematic of a broader evolution in the region. In the past 16 years, since the movie *Sideways* put this young wine region on the map, the area has grown tremendously: It now contains nearly 100 wineries. In the past few years, it's turned a corner as an influx of high-quality restaurants and upscale hotels have taken this area from a place where dedicated wine enthusiasts came for unique bottles to a legitimate destination for a long weekend. Santa Barbara's wine country is growing up.

DOUG MARGERUM HAS BEEN INVOLVED in the wine industry here for decades, originally as the owner of the Wine Cask, a restaurant and wine store in downtown Santa Barbara that was the first place to champion the region's up-and-coming wineries in their nascency, and now as a winemaker. His winery, Margerum

AN INFLUX OF HIGH-QUALITY LOCALLY OWNED RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS HAS TURNED SANTA BARBARA WINE COUNTRY INTO A LEGITIMATE DESTINATION.

Wine Company, is just down the road from Eats. Wine tourism has transformed the economy here, Margerum tells me, most visibly in the city of Santa Barbara itself, where wineries have opened dozens of tasting rooms in the downtown area, just blocks from the volleyball nets, palm trees, and golden sands of some of the country's most famous beaches. But that energy, and the tourist traffic, have also reached the more rural parts of the county. "There was a tipping point where suddenly people understood that this area is one of the most perfect places in all of California to be making wine," Margerum explains.

Santa Barbara County's west-east-running coastal valleys funnel cool air inland from the Pacific Coast, shaping the distinctive climates of its six official American Viticultural Areas (AVAs). The northernmost winegrowing area, the chilly Santa Maria Valley AVA, is one of coldest and driest in California, with conditions that yield lower-alcohol, higher-acid wines. To the

southeast, a few miles away, the Santa Ynez Valley has four sub-AVAs, which get progressively warmer as you move inland—Sta. Rita Hills, Ballard Canyon, Los Olivos District, and Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara.

The Sta. Rita Hills is the best-known of Santa Barbara County's wine regions. This cool strip of land about 10 miles from the coast is famous for its elegant, structured Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays. Driving there through the golden, rolling landscape, I see hillsides speckled with bright wildflowers and gnarled oak trees dotting grassy fields where horses and cattle graze. It's a visual reminder that Santa Barbara County is cattle country. It has been ever since the turn of the 18th century, when the first ranches were established here by the Spanish. The current wine industry is a relative newcomer—the first modern commercial vineyards were established in the 1960s, and while today the county is planted with more than 20,000 acres of wine grapes, small, family-run ranches still dominate the landscape.

"There's a critical mass of great wine coming out of the Sta. Rita Hills," Bryan Babcock, of Babcock Winery, tells me in his enormous tasting room, which is decked out with vintage



FROM LEFT: A long-fermented loaf at Bob's Well Bread Bakery; Bryan Babcock and Lisa Boisset Babcock with their dog, Dakota, at Babcock Winery. FACING PAGE: The Mixed Vegetable Paella at Loquita (recipe p. 122)

furniture and framed album covers. Babcock has been making wine in the Sta. Rita Hills since the 1980s and has seen the growth and change firsthand. Although the AVA has emerged as one of the leading areas for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay (attracting big names like sommelier Rajat Parr, who moved here to open Domaine de la Côte with Sashi Moorman), local winemakers continue to take an experimental approach, Babcock says. "It still has sort of this feeling of the Wild West—Santa Barbara County is maverick. It's kind of 'anything goes' down here."

Because the area is still so rural, it can be difficult for wineries to open large tasting rooms in their vineyards. Many county roads are not built to accommodate an increase in traffic, and locals sometimes block development. For smaller outfits, a tasting room in a nearby town center is an easier and more profitable option. For a chance to sample a broad cross section of wines produced in the county, I head to Los Olivos, a small town full of Old West-style buildings that has been completely transformed by wine tourism: The downtown, just three blocks long and two blocks wide, is home to some 30 tasting rooms.

I check into the small Fess Parker Wine Country Inn. The inn is an outpost of the Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard, a family-run operation that has been making wines here since 1988. "There's

this string of little towns and villages in Santa Barbara County that gives the area a distinct character," says Tim Snider, winery president. Snider compares the region—a rural place with lots of distinct growing areas and increasing tourist traffic—to Sonoma 20 years ago.

The Fess Parker wines offer a good overview of what the county produces, from Grenache Blanc to light Pinot Noirs to sparkling brut rosé. The other wineries in town round out the picture: Just down the street is the tasting room for Stolpman, where I find Grenache, Sangiovese, and a blend called La Cuadrilla, which was made by and for the vineyard's field workers and was designed, I'm told, to pair well with carne asada. In between the tasting rooms, there are high-end boutiques and art galleries—evidence that the influx of well-heeled tourists is bringing a boom in more than just wine. (I'm happy to see, however, that not all of the local businesses have been displaced; Jedlicka's, the county's favorite spot for cowboy boots and Wranglers, is still in business outfitting local ranchers and farmers.)

This economic activity is lifting the local restaurant scene, too. A few miles away, in the tiny town of Los Alamos, I find a great meal at Bob's Well Bread Bakery. The restaurant, in a converted gas station, offers breakfast items like an "Egg-in-a-Jar," which





FROM LEFT: Presqu'ile Winery's 200-acre property includes an expansive outdoor patio, a perfect setting for wine tasting; at Jonata Winery, winemaker Matt Dees walks among the vines.



“THIS IS A YOUNG REGION, AND NO REAL RULES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN,” SAYS MATT DEES, OF JONATA WINERY. “AND THAT’S THE EXCITEMENT FOR US.”

combines purple potato puree, Gruyère cheese, and a poached egg, alongside flaky, flavorful pastries. Their slow-fermented breads are also on the menu at Bell's, a French bistro up the street opened by Per Se alums Daisy and Greg Ryan. In Solvang—a town known for its half-timbered Danish-style houses and shops full of tchotchkes—James Beard Award winner David Cecchini serves charred and chewy wood-fired pizzas at Cecco Ristorante. One town over, in Santa Ynez, chef Luca Crestanelli of S.Y. Kitchen prepares modern Italian dishes like handmade gigli (a cone-shaped pasta with ruffled edges) dressed with sausage, pancetta, tomato, and enough roasted bell pepper to lift the dish's flavor and make it feel bright and summery.

AS MORE MONEY POURS INTO THE AREA, the wine tourism model continues to change, and some newcomers are managing to build much more elaborate tasting rooms at their vineyards.

Presqu'ile Winery, near the city of Santa Maria, is a stunning, modern stone-and-glass structure. On a Saturday afternoon, it's packed with dozens of people enjoying glasses of small-lot Pinot Noirs, Syrahs, and Chardonnays. The atmosphere feels more

like an upscale bar than a traditional tasting room, and everyone just seems to be hanging out and enjoying the day on the enormous patio overlooking the fields. Half an hour south, Jonata Winery is opening an equally gorgeous tasting room early next year to showcase their coveted wines and the wines from their other labels, The Hilt and The Paring. Set on the edge of the Sta. Rita Hills, the space is designed to look like an old barn updated with glass walls—an elegant but rural aesthetic.

Jonata has the same owners as Screaming Eagle in Napa Valley, and early on there was much speculation that they hoped to produce another cult-status wine here. But winemaker Matt Dees is embracing Santa Barbara's upstart aesthetic. “This is a young region; the concrete hasn't dried here, and no real rules have been written,” he says. “And that's the excitement for us: being part of this first wave with all these great young wineries, helping to build a beginning of a definition of a region.”

Santa Barbara and Beyond

For a quick and easy introduction to the area's wine and food scene, start in the city of Santa Barbara, where dozens of tasting rooms and new restaurants have transformed the downtown area into an epicurean paradise. Explore the **Funk Zone**, a redeveloped industrial area just blocks from the beach, where wineries and restaurants sit next to surf shops and art galleries—or check out former resident Julia Child's favorite spots, including local taco stands, cafés, and markets. For an interactive map, visit the website of the **Santa Barbara Culinary Experience** at sbce.events/julia-child-map.

WHERE TO TASTE

BABCOCK WINERY

At one of the oldest wineries in the area, Bryan Babcock and his wife, Lisa Boisset Babcock, offer tastings in a barn converted to an eclectic store and tasting room. babcockwinery.com

JAFFURS WINE CELLARS

Stop by their small tasting room off the beaten path downtown in an area still filled with auto parts shops to enjoy aromatic Viogniers and lush Pinot Noirs. jaffurswine.com

JONATA WINERY

A gorgeous new tasting room is in the works from this celebrated winery; the expected opening is early 2021. jonata.com

MARGERUM WINE COMPANY

Doug Margerum recently opened this elegant tasting room on the ground floor of the new Hotel Californian—a boutique property in a Spanish Revival building two blocks from the beach. margerumwines.com

PRESQU'ILE WINERY

Taste winemaker Dieter Cronje's small-lot Pinots in a modern, airy tasting room just south of Santa Maria. presquilewine.com

SANGUIS

There's no sign for this tasting room; most locals don't know it's there. But owner and winemaker Matthias Pippig's dark Grenache and Syrah blends and Rhône-style whites are gaining cult status. sanguiswine.com

SANTA BARBARA WINE COLLECTIVE

This Funk Zone tasting room features wineries from across the county and allows you to design your own flights: Focus on a single varietal, go deep with one winery, or delve into one of the county's sub-AVAs. santabarbarawinecollective.com

WHERE TO EAT

BELL'S

Daisy Ryan's unfussy but elevated bistro menu (think savory crêpe cake with crème fraîche, uni, and caviar) and locally driven wine list are reason enough to visit Los Alamos. bellsrestaurant.com

BOB'S WELL BREAD BAKERY

There's a line out the door for this bakery—a beloved breakfast and lunch spot—in a converted gas station in Los Alamos. bobswellbread.com

INDUSTRIAL EATS

Try the perennially popular sautéed shrimp with loads of garlic at this Buellton favorite. industrialeats.com

THE LARK

This dinner-only spot anchors the Funk Zone with dishes like chicken skin cracklings with smoked onion dip. thelarksb.com

LOQUITA

The Lark's sister property, Loquita, serves reinvented Spanish classics—with a list of gin and tonics to match. loquitasb.com

S.Y. KITCHEN

At chef Luca Crestanelli's Italian restaurant in Santa Ynez, the handmade saffron spaghetti with spot prawns is not to be missed. sykitchen.com

WHERE TO STAY

Definitely, the coolest place to stay in the region is the **Skyview Los Alamos**. This 1950s-era roadside motel-turned-boutique property has firepits, Linus bikes you can ride into town, and excellent cocktails at its restaurant, Norman—after Norman Bates from *Psycho*. But don't worry; the vibe is chill, not scary (From \$159, skyviewlosalamos.com). In Los Olivos, the **Fess Parker Wine Country Inn** is steps away from 30 tasting rooms (From \$404, fessparkerinn.com).



At The Lark (ABOVE), the first restaurant to open in Santa Barbara's Funk Zone, a guest (BELOW) enjoys a glass of wine on the patio.



MAP: WINSLOW TAFT

softened, about 10 minutes total. Let garlic cloves cool 10 minutes; peel and set aside.

3. Bring 1 quart water to a boil in a small saucepan over medium-high. Add toasted chiles, and boil, stirring occasionally, until chiles are softened, about 10 minutes. Drain, reserving 1½ cups cooking liquid.

4. Combine tomatoes, onion, garlic, chiles, oregano, salt, reserved cooking liquid, and 1 cup cilantro stems in a blender. (Reserve any remaining cilantro stems for another use.) Process until smooth, about 20 seconds. Pour mixture through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a bowl; discard solids. Set red chile sauce aside.

5. Heat oil in a large (12-inch) nonstick skillet over medium. Crack eggs into skillet, leaving 1 inch between them. Cook until edges are set and starting to brown, about 2 minutes. Cover skillet, and cook until whites are set and yolks reach desired degree of doneness, 2 to 3 minutes for runny yolks. Transfer eggs to a plate; tent with aluminum foil to keep warm. Add red chile sauce to skillet over medium. Bring to a simmer. Pour red chile sauce over chips in a large bowl; toss to coat. Divide chip mixture evenly among 4 plates. Top evenly with eggs, avocado slices, queso fresco, crema, and desired amount of cilantro leaves. Serve immediately.

MAKE AHEAD Red chile sauce can be chilled in an airtight container up to 3 days.

WINE Brambly, rich Zinfandel: 2017 Ridge Vineyards East Bench

Cinnamon-Sugar Churros with Cajeta

PHOTO P. 101

ACTIVE 30 MIN; TOTAL 1 HR 30 MIN; MAKES 14

Zepeda's make-ahead cinnamon-sugar churros are the best we've ever had, and we love them dipped in cajeta, Mexican dulce de leche made with goat's milk. The churro batter—made with cultured butter for extra depth of flavor—is relatively stiff, so be sure to double-line the pastry bags for the best control while piping.

2¼ cups water

6 Tbsp. unsalted cultured butter (3 oz.)

1 vanilla bean pod, seeds scraped (pod reserved for another use), or 1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 Tbsp. grated orange zest

½ tsp. kosher salt

1 Tbsp. plus ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon, divided

2¼ cups all-purpose flour (about 9½ oz.)

1 large egg

2 cups granulated sugar

Grapeseed oil, for frying

Cajeta or sweetened condensed milk, for serving

1. Combine 2¼ cups water, butter, vanilla bean seeds, orange zest, salt, and ¼ teaspoon cinnamon in a large saucepan over medium; bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. As soon as the mixture begins to simmer, add flour all at once, and quickly stir with a heatproof spatula or wooden spoon until completely incorporated, about 20 seconds.

2. Immediately transfer mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Beat on medium speed 3 minutes. Add egg, and beat on medium speed until completely incorporated, about 20 seconds. Transfer batter to a double-lined pastry bag (place 1 bag inside another) fitted with a ½-inch open star tip.

3. Pipe 14 (15-inch-long) straight ropes of batter onto 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Let dry until a skin forms and batter is no longer sticky around top and sides of rope, about 30 minutes. Bring ends of 1 rope together to form a teardrop shape, lightly pressing ends together to secure. Repeat with remaining ropes. Chill teardrop shapes at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours. (Alternatively, freeze on baking sheets until hardened. Transfer to a large ziplock plastic freezer bag, and freeze up to 1 month.)

4. Stir together sugar and remaining 1 tablespoon cinnamon in a large bowl; set aside. Pour oil to a depth of 2½ inches in a large Dutch oven. Heat over medium-high to 375°F. Working in batches, fry chilled or frozen churros, turning occasionally, until light golden brown with a crispy outside and custardy center, 2 minutes and 30 seconds to 3 minutes and 30 seconds. Toss hot churros in cinnamon-sugar, and serve immediately with cajeta or sweetened condensed milk for dipping.

MAKE AHEAD Piped churros can be chilled, uncovered, up to 2 hours or frozen on a sheet tray, transferred to a large ziplock plastic freezer bag, and frozen up to 1 month. Fry straight from the refrigerator or frozen (cook time is the same from frozen).



Pan Bagnat

PHOTO P. 113

ACTIVE 35 MIN; TOTAL 2 HR 35 MIN
SERVES 4

Pressing this sandwich, packed with olive oil-cured white tuna belly, sun-dried tomatoes, and peppery arugula, allows the vinaigrette to season the entire sandwich and soften the crusty bread. It's best when allowed to rest for the full two hours before serving, making it perfect picnic fare.

4 large eggs

Kosher salt, to taste

Black pepper, to taste

⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil

⅓ cup rice bran oil or other neutral oil

¼ cup seasoned rice vinegar

¼ cup chopped fresh thyme

2 Tbsp. finely chopped shallot

¾ tsp. granulated sugar

2 (3.88-oz.) cans white tuna belly fillets in olive oil (such as Conservas Ortiz Ventresca), drained and flaked

4 oz. boquerones (marinated white anchovy fillets) (such as Fruits de Mer)

⅔ cup drained sun-dried tomatoes in oil (about 4 oz.)

3 cups packed arugula

1 (12-oz.) crusty baguette, split lengthwise

1. Bring a large saucepan filled with water to a boil over high. Gently lower eggs into water; boil 8 minutes. Remove eggs from water, and plunge into a bowl filled with ice water; let stand 5 minutes. Drain and peel eggs. Slice lengthwise into thirds; season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

2. Whisk together olive oil, rice bran oil, rice vinegar, thyme, shallot, and sugar in a small bowl until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste; set aside.

3. Layer tuna, boquerones, sun-dried tomatoes, eggs, and arugula on bottom baguette half. Spoon vinaigrette over cut side of top baguette half; place top baguette half on sandwich.

4. Cut sandwich in half crosswise; arrange halves side by side on a baking sheet. Place a second baking sheet on top of sandwiches; weight with a cast-iron skillet or several canned goods. Let stand at room

temperature 2 hours. Cut each sandwich in half, and serve. —JEFF AND JANET OLSSON, *INDUSTRIAL EATS, BUELLTON*

MAKE AHEAD Vinaigrette may be stored in an airtight container in refrigerator up to 5 days.

WINE Vibrant, citrusy sparkling; 2017 Riverbench Blanc de Blancs Sparkling

Saffron Spaghetti with Santa Barbara Spot Prawns

PHOTO P. 113

TOTAL 40 MIN; SERVES 4 TO 6

Spot prawns are incredibly sweet, with plump, tender tails reminiscent of lobster. Be sure to remove the prawns from the pan before finishing the sauce to keep them from overcooking.

- 1/8 tsp. saffron threads
- 2 Tbsp. hot water
- Kosher salt
- 1 lb. fresh asparagus, cut into 4-inch spears
- 1 lb. uncooked spaghetti
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped shallot
- 1 tsp. finely chopped garlic
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 1 lb. unpeeled head-on, tail-on raw Santa Barbara spot prawns (about 12 prawns)
- 1 cup (8 oz.) dry vermouth or dry white wine
- 1/4 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh tarragon
- 1 Tbsp. thinly sliced fresh chives

1. Place saffron threads in a small skillet; cook over low, swirling skillet constantly, until threads are dry and toasted, about 1 minute and 30 seconds. Crumble toasted saffron into a small bowl; add 2 tablespoons hot water, and stir to combine. Let steep 10 minutes.
2. Bring a large pot filled with salted water to a boil over high. Add asparagus; cook, stirring often, until vibrant green, about 1 minute. Using a spider, remove asparagus, and plunge into a bowl filled with ice water; let stand 3 minutes. Drain and set aside. Add spaghetti to boiling water in pot; cook, stirring occasionally, until just al dente (about 2 minutes less than cook time specified in package directions). Drain and reserve 1 cup pasta cooking liquid.
3. While spaghetti cooks, heat oil in a large, deep skillet over medium until shimmering. Add shallot, garlic, and crushed red pepper; cook, stirring constantly, until slightly softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add asparagus, prawns, and saffron-water mixture; cook, gently turning prawns occasionally, until

light pink in spots, about 2 minutes. Add vermouth; bring to a boil. Transfer prawns to a plate using a slotted spoon; continue boiling mixture in skillet, undisturbed, until liquid is slightly reduced and alcohol flavor cooks off, 3 to 4 minutes.

4. Add cooked spaghetti to asparagus mixture in skillet; toss to coat using tongs. Return prawns to skillet; add butter, parsley, tarragon, and chives. Increase heat to medium-high; cook, stirring and swirling skillet constantly, adding reserved cooking liquid as needed (1/4 cup at a time) until a creamy sauce forms and coats noodles, about 3 minutes. Season with salt to taste. Serve immediately. —LUCA CRESTANELLI, S.Y. KITCHEN, SANTA YNEZ

WINE Bright, minerally Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay; 2017 The Hilt

NOTE Spot prawn season runs from February through October. Spot prawns are available online from catalinaop.com or from your local fishmonger. If unavailable, substitute jumbo sweet white shrimp from the Gulf Coast.

Mixed Vegetable Paella

PHOTO P. 115

ACTIVE 1 HR 10 MIN; TOTAL 1 HR 30 MIN
SERVES 4

To develop the socarrat, the crispy crust of rice that's so integral to classic paella, check the edges with a spoon or offset spatula as it cooks. Once the stock is almost fully absorbed by the rice, begin checking more frequently; it can quickly go from golden brown to scorched. Take a cue from chef Peter Lee and serve the paella with grilled lemon wedges and on-the-vine cherry tomatoes.

- 5 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 12 oz. squash (such as yellow squash or zucchini), quartered lengthwise and cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 1 cup stemmed fresh hen-of-the-woods mushrooms
- 1 cup chopped yellow onion
- 1 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 2 medium garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup undrained canned diced tomatoes, or chopped very ripe tomatoes
- 2 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 qt. vegetable stock or water
- Pinch of saffron threads
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced Swiss chard
- 1 cup uncooked Bomba rice (such as Santo Tomas) (see Note)
- Hot water, as needed
- 1/2 medium lemon
- 1/4 cup Lemon Aioli (recipe follows)

1. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a 15-inch carbon steel paella pan over high until shimmering. Add squash and mushrooms; cook, undisturbed, until browned on 1 side, about 3 minutes. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until browned in all over, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl; set aside.

2. Reduce heat to medium-low; add onion, bell pepper, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and remaining 3 tablespoons oil. Cook, stirring often, until onion darkens around edges, about 15 minutes, stirring in garlic during final 1 minute of cook time.

3. Stir diced tomatoes and tomato paste into mixture, scraping up browned bits on bottom of pan with a wooden spoon. Cook, stirring often, until liquid in pan evaporates and tomato paste sizzles, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in vegetable stock, saffron, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Increase heat to high, and bring to a boil. Stir in chard and squash mixture. Sprinkle rice over mixture, stirring gently to disperse evenly.

4. Return mixture to a boil over medium-high. Boil until rice grains are just above top of stock, about 10 minutes.

5. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, repositioning pan over heat every few minutes by turning pan about 90 degrees to redistribute heat, until rice is tender, has absorbed all liquid, and begins to brown on bottom, about 20 minutes. (Use a small spoon to gently lift rice from bottom of pan to check for brownness on crust.) If the liquid is cooking off quickly and rice is still al dente, add hot water as needed (1/4 cup at a time) until rice is tender.

6. Remove pan from heat; loosely cover with aluminum foil or a clean kitchen towel, and let stand 10 minutes. Uncover and squeeze juice from lemon half over paella; top with dollops of lemon aioli. —PETER LEE, LOQUITA, SANTA BARBARA

WINE Robust, stone-fruited, Chenin Blanc; 2017 Foxen Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard

NOTE Bomba rice is a short-grain rice that can absorb a large amount of liquid without bursting or becoming mushy. Find it at specialty stores or on amazon.com.

Lemon Aioli

TOTAL 5 MIN; MAKES 1/2 CUP

The ideal balance of creamy and tart, this quick lemon-and-garlic-spiked aioli rounds out savory paella.

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 tsp. lemon zest plus 1/4 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp. grated garlic

Stir together all ingredients in a small bowl. Store in an airtight container in refrigerator up to 1 week. —PETER LEE, LOQUITA, SANTA BARBARA