

VOLUME 7, ISSUE 6

OCTOBER 2003 \$3.95

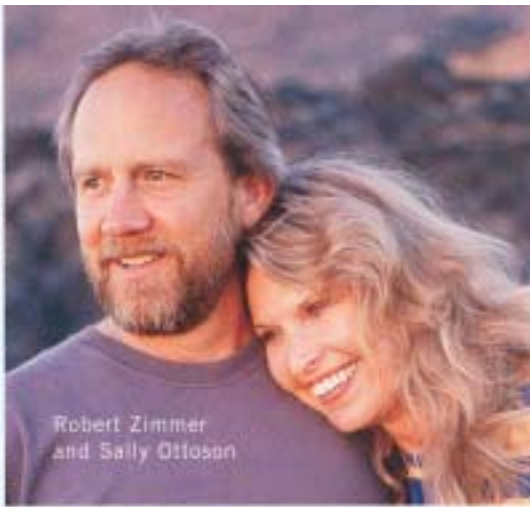
COASTAL LIVING®

THE
MAGAZINE
FOR PEOPLE
WHO LOVE
THE COAST

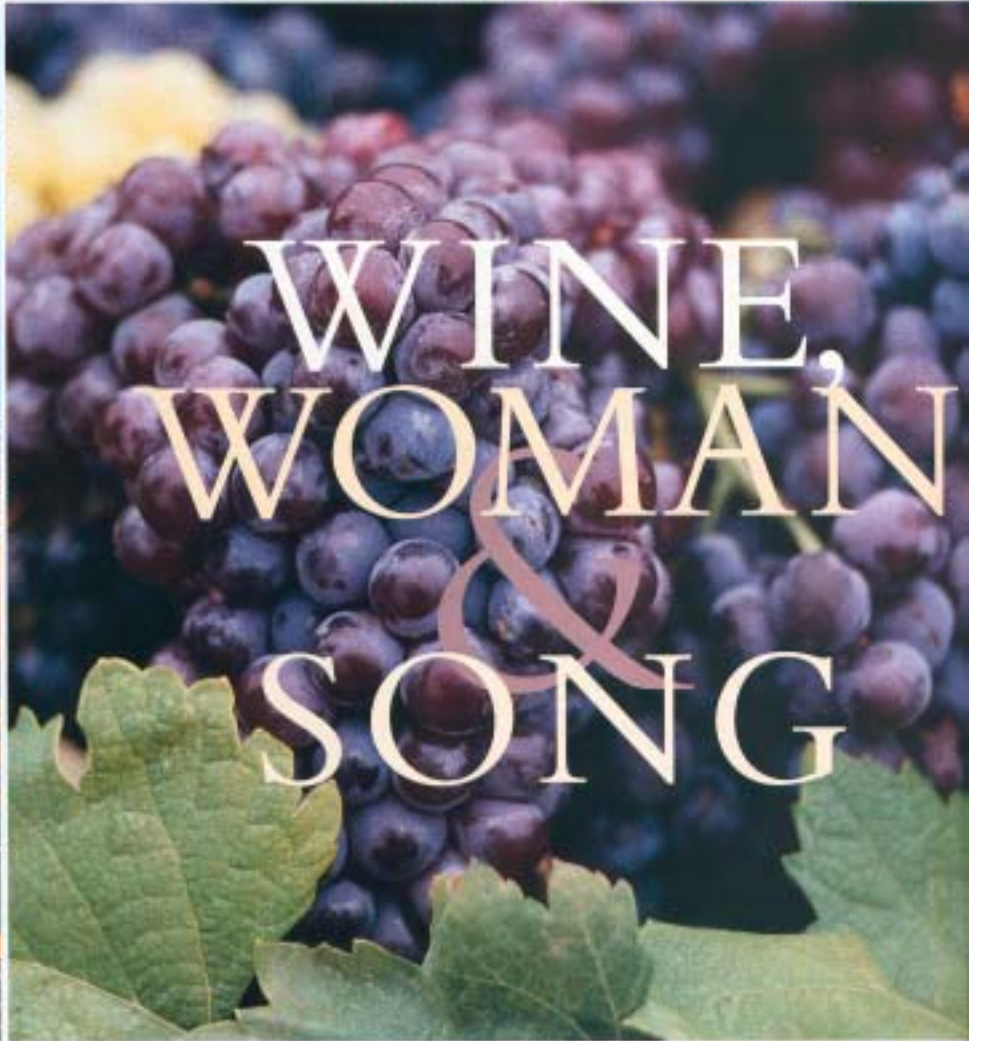
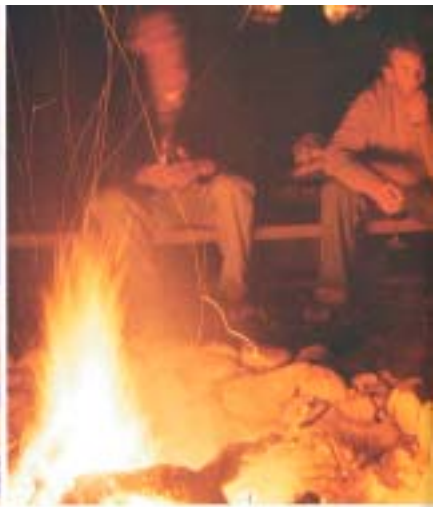
look inside our first-ever
idea condo

bring home
west indies
style

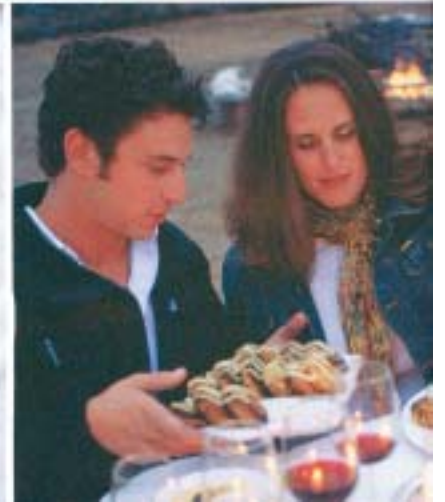
autumn
escape
to a
maine island

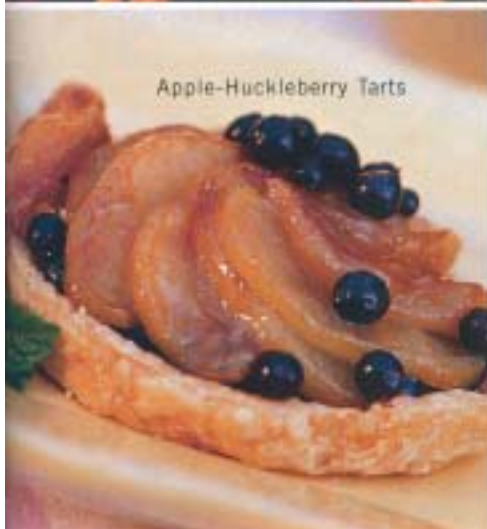


Robert Zimmer
and Sally Ottoson



Saffron
Mussel Soup





At California's only winery poised over the rowdy waters of the Pacific, vintner Sally Ottoson vividly brings to life her concept of a good time.

By day, from midsummer to November, every able hand at Pacific Star Winery gets called into action. On this 15-acre oceanside slope 12 miles north of Fort Bragg, it's harvest season. Some 14 varietals of grapes must be hauled in, crushed, and tanked for fermentation. Before bottling, the infant wine ages in oak barrels stacked in the cellar or in a commanding lineup near the sea cliff.

Contrary to its status-symbol reputation, winemaking is a grueling, messy business. "You have to get wet and dirty," says Pacific Star owner Sally Ottoson. The way Sally runs the place, though, there's always a celebration in store. "Every evening we sit down to relax and dine," she says. "We light candles. We have cloth napkins. We make the end of the day something special."

Tonight's feast holds extra promise. Sally has asked local chef Marc Dym to prepare a four-course menu, and a passion for wine and food ignites the diners, including Sally's husband, Robert Zimmer (winery operations/marketing manager); winery consultant Dennis Patton and his wine-exporting fiancée,

Andrea Silverstein; and Marian Schiavo, the winery's graphic-design consultant. Then there's Sally's 13-year-old son, Jonah. (Though not old enough to indulge, he's a budding vintner, Sally says. "He's been blending root beer and 7 Up for years.")

Winemaking assistant David Onstad appears, having transformed from a pulp- and juice-splattered field hand to a scrubbed and polished bon vivant. And a cast of five 20-somethings, here from across the country for a nine-week internship, also join the party. "These kids are learning not just about wine but also about good food," Sally says.

This evening, Abalone Cakes and Saffron Mussel Soup open the menu. Last night, intern Ben Kolber, from Lodi, California, donned wet suit and snorkel to harvest abalone, just yards from the two picnic tables now set side by side. Likewise, the mussel gathering took place at low tide on the rocks below.

As the tide again ebbs to reveal a sandstone stage aglow with purple sea urchins and shimmering mussels, Marc rolls a six-burner gas grill from the winery down to the bluff-top dinner site. In this alfresco kitchen,

BY SUSAN HAYNES
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CAROLINE KOPP
STYLING BY LYDIA DEGARIS-PURSELL

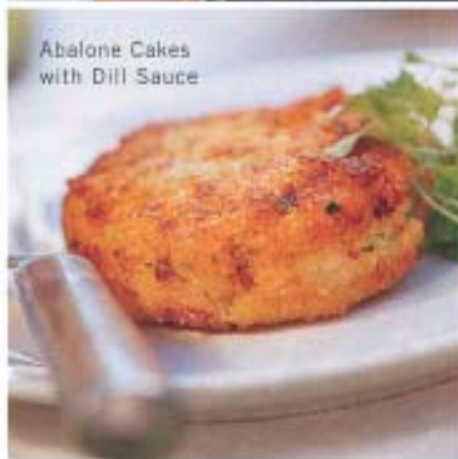
Just about right," chef Marc Dym says as he prepares the steady rollout of four courses for dinner. At this winery, "salt in the air settles on the barrels and increases the osmosis," says Sally. "That draws water out of the wine. We have to add twice as much wine to top off what's evaporated as we would if these barrels weren't exposed to ocean air. I like that concentration."

he orchestrates an array of pots and pans carted from The Restaurant at Stevenswood Lodge, where he's executive chef. Earlier prep work ensured tonight's coordination: The soup arrives piping hot, the Abalone Cakes are nicely seared, and the appetizers run out just as Pine Nut-crusted Pacific Salmon and Polenta Triangles make their way onto plates. Despite groans of wretched excess, no one declines Apple-Huckleberry Tarts.

In a round of toasts, Sally shows off Pacific Star's stars: '01 Viognier paired with the soup, '00 Chardonnay with the Abalone Cakes, '00 Pinot Noir and '97 library bottles (for sale only at the winery) of Charbono with the salmon.

"I didn't know this place existed until Robert came into the restaurant where I waited tables, in Chicago," says intern Mary Krol. Also an assistant wine buyer there, she knew the trade, "but I wanted to do the grunt work, to really *learn* wine. Even if I wasn't getting paid, I'd have come out here."

A veteran of early 1970s winemaking in the Napa Valley, Sally says, "I learned from the old guys." En route to opening Pacific Star in 1989, she owned Napa's Star Hill Winery. "Back then it was a small stone building and Sears Catalog house, where we had to chase stray barrels if they rolled downhill because we had no forklift."



she recalls. But born and raised in Fort Bragg, with strong ties to her Finnish family heritage, Sally wanted to return to her roots. "Tradition, ritual, and harmony with nature brought me back," she says. "I'm drawn to the ocean. There's no ocean near the Napa Valley."

Creating this successful winery has demanded stamina and ambition. "But I mix work and play," Sally says, "like tonight." As the party winds toward a campfire finale, a '99 Zinfandel gets poured. So does the gutsy Dad's Daily Red, named for Sally's 81-year-old father who helps around the winery.

To cap the evening, Andrea perfectly blends wine and woman with song. With David and Ben on guitars, she delivers a haunting rendition of John Prine's "Angel from Montgomery," and everyone feels heavenly. More info: page 177



WINE, WOMAN & SONG page 134:

For more on the Pacific Star Winery in Fort Bragg, California, call 707/964-1155 or visit pacificstarwinery.com. The winery sits oceanside near the 73.58 mile marker of Highway 1, 12 miles north of downtown Fort Bragg. Tasting-room hours: 11 a.m.–5 p.m. daily, year-round. Premium whites: Chardonnay and Viognier. Premium reds: Charbono, Merlot, Petite Sirah, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel, Barbera, and Syrah. The winery's signature heritage vine-blended red is Dad's Daily Red, an Italian-style blend of Carignane, Charbono, Mourvèdre, Petite Sirah, and Zinfandel. Wines range from \$12 to \$38. Enjoy executive chef Marc Dym's cuisine at The Restaurant at Stevenswood Lodge, two miles south of the village of Mendocino and about a 30-minute drive south of the winery. The serene and lovely 10-room inn provides a full breakfast daily. Nightly (except Wednesdays, July through October, and Wednesdays/Thursdays November through June), guests may choose from chef Dym's extensive dinner menu featuring fresh local fare. Pacific Star operations manager Robert Zimmer (owner/winemaker Sally Ottoson's husband) co-owns the lodge with brother

Turn to page 185.

Pine Nut-crusted Pacific Salmon with Wilted Escarole and Polenta Triangles



a slotted spoon when they open, discarding any that remain closed; set aside.

Add fish stock and next 6 ingredients to saucepan; simmer, uncovered, 15 minutes over medium heat. Strain, separately reserving both cooking liquid and vegetables. Discard bay leaf.

Add saffron to 1 tablespoon warm water; cover and steep 2 minutes.

Heat cream in a saucepan over medium heat until very warm (do not boil). Add saffron mixture to cream. Stir in reserved cooking liquid, salt, and pepper.

Remove half of mussels from shells. Spoon vegetables evenly into shallow serving bowls. Place 3 shelled mussels and 3 unshelled mussels on top of vegetables. Ladle warm broth over vegetables and mussels. Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings.

Abalone Cakes

Farmed abalone is available from select sources, but it's not commercially harvested (see page 139). For this recipe, you can substitute shrimp: Finely chop 1 pound peeled

and deveined shrimp in a food processor. Continue with the remaining procedure.

- 14 ounces abalone
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons minced red bell pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced red onion
- 2 tablespoons minced seedless cucumber
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 1 teaspoon grated lime rind
- 1½ teaspoons grated lemon rind
- 2½ teaspoons grated orange rind
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper
- 2 cups combread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh orange juice
- 2 cups panko bread crumbs*
- Canola oil
- Dill Sauce

Place abalone in a food processor, and pulse until finely chopped. Transfer abalone to a bowl; add egg and next 5 ingredients. Stir in lime rind and next 7 ingredients. Combine citrus juices. Slowly add juice until mixture is slightly wet but still holds together. Cover and chill at least 1 hour.

Form chilled mixture into 10 balls (golf ball size); lightly roll in panko bread crumbs. Flatten balls to form ½-inch-thick patties.

Pour oil into a cast-iron skillet to a depth of 1 inch; heat to 375°. Fry patties, in batches, 3 to 4 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Remove from pan, and drain on paper towels. Transfer to a baking sheet, and keep warm in a 200° oven. Repeat procedure with remaining patties. Serve with Dill Sauce. Makes 10 cakes.

*Asian food stores carry panko bread crumbs.

Dill Sauce

- 2 tablespoons egg substitute
- 2 tablespoons prepared mustard
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill weed
- 1½ teaspoons white vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- ¼ teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 cup canola oil
- 5 tablespoons water

Process egg substitute and mustard in a food processor until blended. Add sugar and next 6 ingredients; pulse until blended, stopping to scrape down sides. With processor running, pour oil and 5 tablespoons water through food chute. Makes 1½ cups.

Pine Nut-crusted Pacific Salmon

- ½ cup finely chopped pine nuts
- ¼ teaspoon salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon white pepper, divided
- 6 (7-ounce) skinless salmon fillets
- Olive oil-flavored cooking spray
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Wilted Escarole
- Basil Oil

Combine pine nuts, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon white pepper. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon nut mixture over each fillet. Coat with cooking spray.

Heat olive oil in a large heavy skillet coated with cooking spray over medium-high heat. Place half of fillets, nut side down, in skillet. Cook 3 minutes or until nuts are lightly browned. Remove from skillet. Place salmon, nut side up, in a 15- x 10-inch jelly-roll pan coated with cooking spray. Repeat with remaining fillets. Sprinkle fillets with remaining ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon white pepper. Bake at 400° for 11 minutes or until fish flakes with a fork. Serve over Wilted Escarole. Drizzle with Basil Oil. Makes 6 servings.

Wilted Escarole

If escarole is unavailable, prepare this recipe with fresh spinach instead.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 large head escarole, torn (about 10 cups)
- 2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add garlic; cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute. Add escarole; cook, stirring constantly, 3 minutes or until wilted. Add remaining ingredients, tossing gently. Makes 6 servings.

Recipes continue on page 138.