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'Sustainable' foodies break bread together at La Jolla garden party



Catharine Kaufman

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“To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art.” —La Rochefoucauld

Last week's locavore summer soiree, “A Berry Good Night,” hosted at Michelle Lerach's jaw-dropping La Jolla estate and organic garden with sweeping views of the Pacific, had a guest list that read like a Who's Who of sustainable foodies.

The area's organic farmers, purveyors, winemakers, brewers, restaurateurs, chefs and mixologists contributed their edibles and cooking skills to create a 12-course Romanesque food, wine and cocktail orgy.



The theme, “berries,” was incorporated in both sweet and savory dishes and drinks, while lyrics by “Barry” Manilow and “Barry” Gibb rolled in the background. Here are some tidbits gleaned from this sustainably enchanting evening.

San Diego has been blessed with a bounty of organic farmers who offer their delectables at farmers markets and natural food stores, including Jimbo's and Whole Foods. When you buy these labels, you are supporting these farms and treating yourself to fruits and veggies (along with pampered beef and chicken) that pass both a taste test and drug test.

Keep your eyes peeled for:

1) Be Wise Ranch, in the Rancho Bernardo/Escondido neighborhoods; Bill Brammer, a pioneer organic farmer growing pesticide-free foods since 1977, offers 50 varieties of produce, including strawberries; apricots; pluots and cherries so sweet they could impersonate candy; Technicolor heirloom tomatoes; a smorgasbord of crucifers; and herbs. Be Wise is also a member of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement, which delivers pre-ordered baskets of organic produce weekly to pick-up points throughout San Diego.

- 2) Chino Farms in Rancho Santa Fe, the glitterati of farmers markets, attracts both celebrity chefs and home-on-the-range cooks. Its bountiful beauties include squash blossoms, Jerusalem artichokes, strawberry figs, summer tree fruits, sweet corn and signature strawberries, heirloom tomatoes and decorative miniature veggies.
- 3) Suzie's Farm, Stehly Farms and Seabreeze Organic Farm are others, the latter in south Carmel Valley has been growing organically since 1988 — from avocados to zucchini, coffee, edible flowers and raw honey, and also does CSA deliveries.
- 4) SonRise Ranch, with locations throughout the coast, is a health-conscious carnivore's bliss, producing humanely raised livestock, including grass-fed cattle and free-range chickens and pigs untainted by hormones and antibiotics. "More important than buying organic beef is to make sure the cows were grass-fed," said owner, Douglas Lindamood. "Organic cows could still be grain-fed, that raises the acidic levels in their rumens (stomachs), producing an environment where dangerous, acid-resistant E. coli can flourish." SonRise sells its products at farmers markets in Leucadia, La Jolla, and Del Mar's Flower Hill.
- 5) Pescavores will appreciate San Diego-based Catalina Offshore Products. This fine fishmonger distributes sea treasures from southern California and Baja fishermen, such as jumbo scallops, lobster, masago and stone crab.
- 6) If your druthers are to be an armchair gardener or cook for a day, then check out Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center in National City, a sprawling farm donated to the International Community Foundation by John Walton, son of Sam "Wal-Mart" Walton. Guests can weed, compost, tend crops, harvest and learn to cook from creative local chefs at Olivewood kitchens.

Back at the party, the 12-course menu prepared by celebrated chefs who volunteered their talents, included a porcini mushroom flan with "berry sauce" (by Chef Jesus Gonzalez from Michelle Lerach's Cups Culinary, La Jolla), artichoke tamales with "mixed berry salsa fresca" (by Chef Isabel Cruz, Barrio Star), smoked beef tongue, "boysenberries" and olive pie (by Whisknadle's Chef Ryan Johnston), and prosciutto-wrapped sea bass with "raspberry-pickled fennel salad" (by Chef Trey Foshee, George's at the Cove).

Libations and kitschy cocktails, like Joy Houston's molecular mojita, were shown off by local, sustainable wineries, brewers and mixologists.

A princess cake with fresh berries and whipped cream blanketed in marzipan came from Girard Gourmet. Our hostess' generosity went overboard with a take-home party favor: a "Summer Berry Splash" cupcake, brushed with raspberry syrup, frosted with lemon cream cheese and garnished with berries from Michelle's garden. The Kitchen Shrink and Company maintain a food blog at FreeRangeClub.com.

Raspberry-Pickled Fennel Salad (From Chef Trey Foshee)

Ingredients: 1 cup Champagne vinegar; 1/3-cup fresh, organic raspberries; 1 fennel bulb.

Directions: Combine the berries and vinegar, and infuse for one week. Strain, reserving the vinegar. Pour raspberries over raw, shaved fennel. Refrigerate reserved vinegar for making vinaigrette of your choice.

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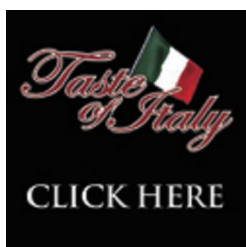
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- [Marines rescued after jet crashes off Mexico](#)

Two Miramar-based Marines who were aboard an F/A-18 Hornet fighter jet that crashed in the Pacific Ocean off Mexico were rescued early Thursday after spending some four hours in the water, a Coast Guard spokesman said. [...]

- [Top 10 reasons why La Jolla Youth Baseball is cool](#)

The bats bags, gloves and cleats are finally put away and the 2011 baseball season is officially over for La Jolla Youth Baseball. Before we head off into the fall sports season, let's reflect for a moment and with the help of David Letterman's "Top Ten" crew, what are some of the things that makes LJYB such a great youth sports program. [...]

- [Our View: Las Patronas represents La Jolla well](#)

Every August, La Jollans turn out for the Las Patronas Jewel Ball, which was held on Saturday. It's a sign of summer and a great representation of the good work that all of La Jolla's charities do for our community and other parts of San Diego County. [...]

RANCHO SANTA FE NEWS

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- [Families need to host student football team members from Japan](#)

Ed Burke, retired football coach from Torrey Pines High School, is hosting a high school football team from Kyoto, Japan, and is looking for a few host family volunteers. [...]

- [Local residents help bring clean water to African village](#)

A vision by NIKA Water company to use its profits to bring clean water to parts of the world living without the vital necessity has spawned a global initiative. Together with the organizations Free the Children and Me to We, NIKA co-founders Jeff Church, a Rancho Santa Fe resident, and Mike Stone assembled a crew of 50 family members, friends and business di [...]

- ['Book & Bake' event to be held for Rancho Santa Fe Library](#)

The 2017 class of the National Charity League Del Norte Chapter, is hosting a "Book & Bake" for the Rancho Santa Fe Library on Saturday, Aug. 13, from 10 a.m. to noon in front of the library, which is located at 17040 Avenida de Acacias in the RSF Village area. [...]

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