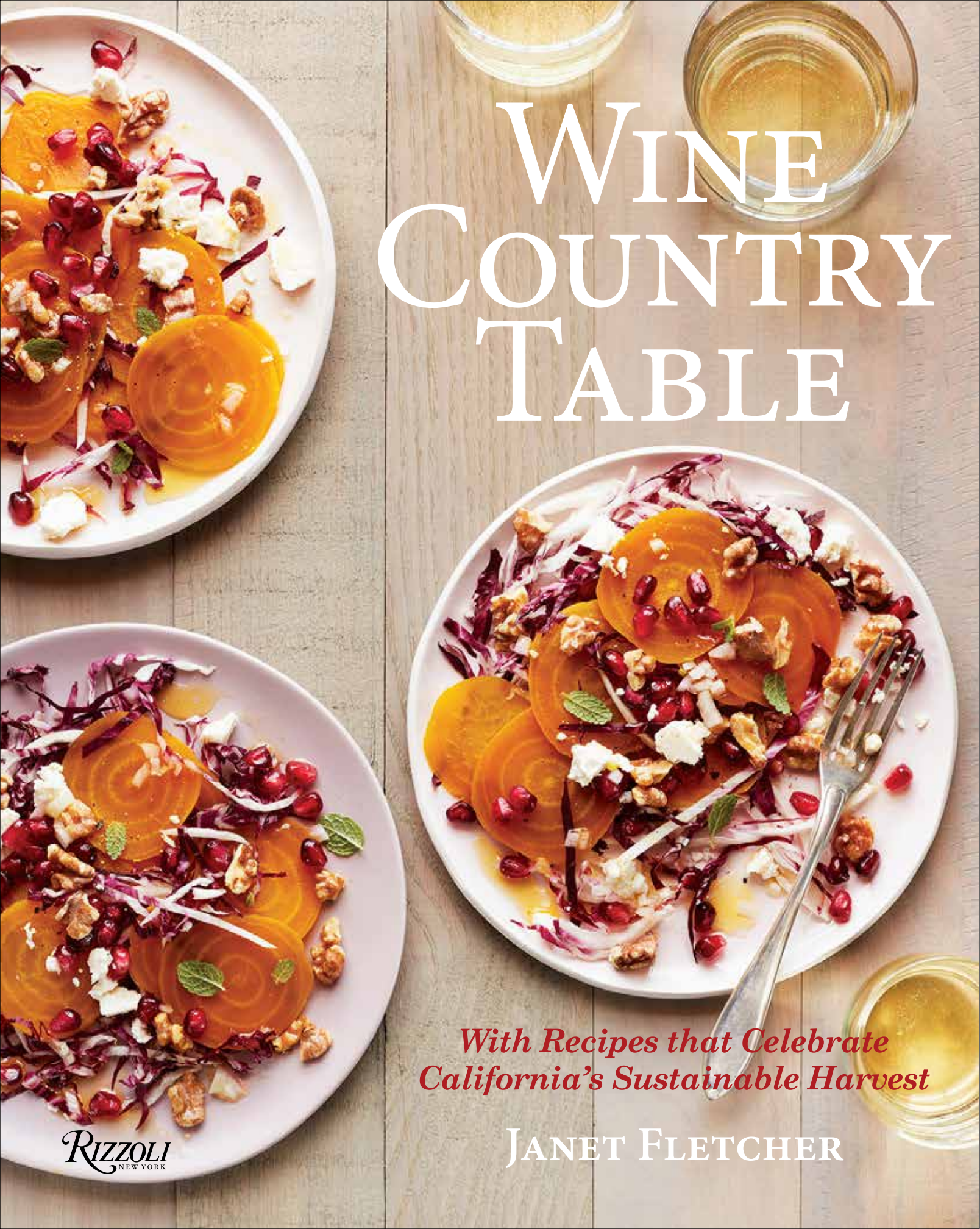

Wine Country Table

With Recipes that Celebrate California's Sustainable Harvest

Janet Fletcher

Rizzoli New York

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INTRODUCTION

Pull up a chair. It's time for dinner in Wine Country. In California, that could be just about anywhere, from rural Humboldt County, near the Oregon border, to a fancy beach house in La Jolla. Wherever you are in the Golden State, you are not far from wine grapes and the passionate people who transform them into wine.

The Pacific Ocean has blessed much of the state with a classic Mediterranean climate—the mild, wet winters and dry summers that wine grapes love. Produce likes it here, too. From the cool coastal settings where raspberries, artichokes, and apples thrive to the desert-like date farms of the Coachella Valley, there's a sweet spot for every crop. But beyond enviable weather and fertile soil, California boasts an equally powerful asset: the diverse and open-minded people who farm and cook here.

California's farmers are relentlessly entrepreneurial. They seek out fresh ideas, innovative techniques, and cutting-edge crops that just might be the next kiwi. California's many immigrant communities create demand for a huge range of fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Finger limes, anyone? The state's chefs, keen to maintain their reputation for setting national trends, embrace these edible novelties and often collaborate with farmers to develop an audience for little-known ingredients.

LEFT AND ABOVE: Friends gather for an alfresco dinner at Hilltop & Canyon Farms, a sustainable avocado grower in Carpinteria.

It's astonishing to think of the California crops that have transitioned from ethnic or rare to mainstream in a generation, among them arugula, Asian basil, baby bok choy, broccoli rabe, endive, clementines, frisée, green garlic, lemongrass, pomegranates, and radicchio. Thanks to California farms, US produce markets have never been more enticing. Fortunately, the sustainable-farming movement has flourished in tandem with this produce boom, creating a golden age for conscientious cooks.

Recognizing that their livelihoods depended on it, California's farmers and vintners were early advocates of sustainability. Today, as a whole, they are global role models for environmental stewardship. A vintner from fifty years ago would be astonished by viticulture and winemaking today: the thick stands of cover crops in place of the weed-free vineyards of the past; the solar

FROM THE

NORTH COAST

Fog-Friendly Farming

From the patchwork fields of a West Marin lettuce farm to Napa Valley's leafy vineyards, North Coast agriculture is some of the state's most picturesque. Boutique farms, many resolutely sustainable, supply Bay Area chefs with the heirloom apples and pristine Little Gem lettuces that make their menus so inspirational, influencing dining trends nationwide. From Mendocino to southern Marin County, coastal growers benefit from "nature's air-conditioning," the cool, foggy air that rises off the ocean and sweeps inland, preserving acidity in wine grapes by moderating summer's heat. The Russian River in Sonoma County, San Pablo Bay in Carneros, and Lake County's Clear

LEFT: A choice table awaits visitors at Goldeneye, a Pinot Noir producer in the Anderson Valley.

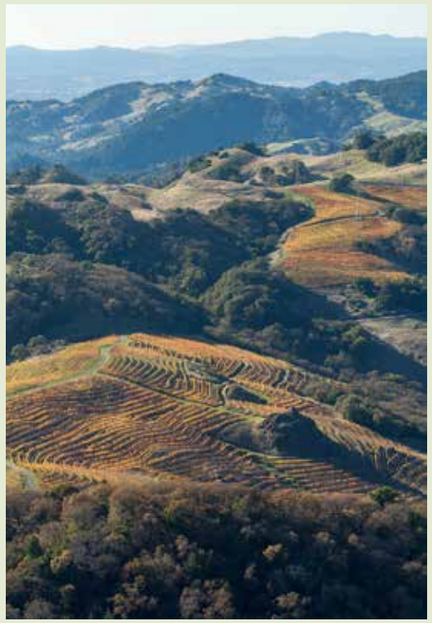
Lake also provide a cooling effect desirable for both greens and grapes.

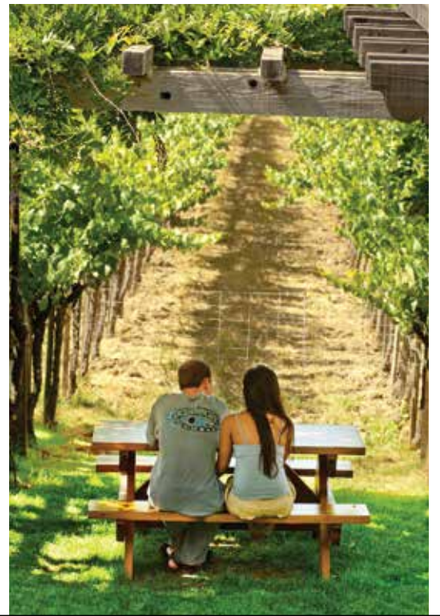
Proximity to San Francisco has helped small farms thrive in Marin and Sonoma since gold rush days. Italian and Swiss immigrants established dairies and wineries in these North Bay counties in the early 1900s, and dairy cows still graze on the lush pasture along the Point Reyes National Seashore. The average temperature rises steadily with distance from the coast, creating prime growing conditions for apples in Sebastopol; plums, peppers, and heirloom tomatoes in warmer Healdsburg and Santa Rosa; and mountain-grown pears in Lake County.

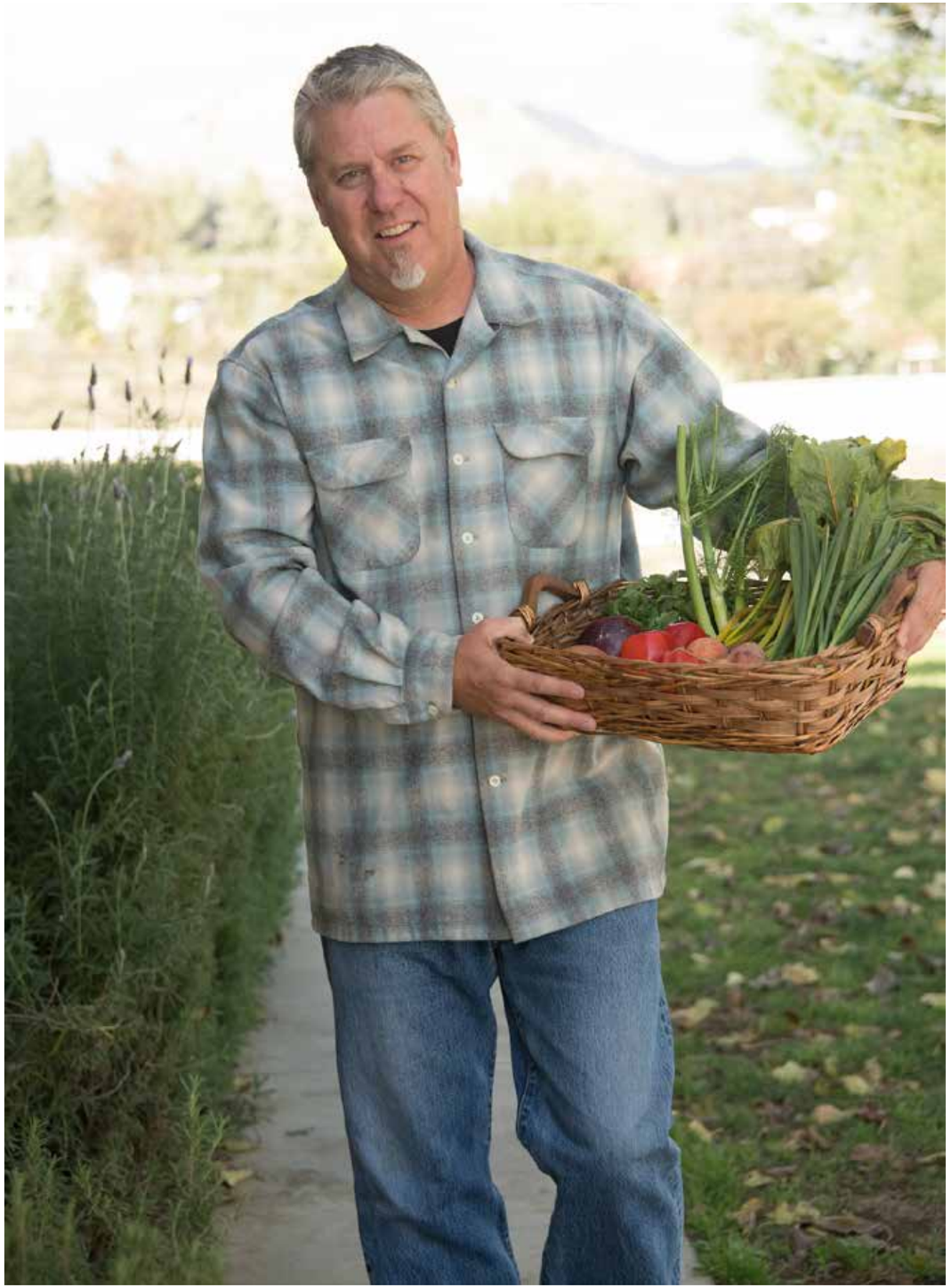
Luther Burbank, the legendary plant breeder, called Sonoma County "the chosen spot of all this earth as far as nature is concerned" and did most of his groundbreaking work in Santa Rosa and Sebastopol. The Santa Rosa plum, Burbank russet potato, and the plumcot—a plum and apricot cross—are among his storied successes. Today, small North Coast farms contribute diversity to America's shopping cart, while North Coast vintners produce some of the world's most esteemed wines.

BELOW: Napa Valley mountain vineyards; winery vegetable garden at Alexander Valley Vineyards

RIGHT: (clockwise from top) Pruning at Domaine Carneros; dinner event at Six Sigma Winery; Anderson Valley visitors; Lake County pears await harvest







TEMECULA VALLEY

PALUMBO FAMILY VINEYARDS

Before he was a vintner, Nick Palumbo was a chef, an experience he considers among his most pertinent winemaking credentials. "I make wine like I make *mole*," says Palumbo, proprietor with his wife, Cindy, of Palumbo Family Vineyards in Temecula. "I'm building layers of flavor. Most of my winemaking skills I attribute to cooking."

It was food that brought Palumbo back to Southern California, where he grew up, after several years of playing bass guitar in a band and touring college towns. Dissatisfied with that unsettled life, Palumbo enrolled in a culinary course in New York City. An internship led to a restaurant job, and another, and then, well before he felt ready, to the chef's post at a resort near Temecula.

In retrospect, Palumbo's mother had planted the seeds for this career change in childhood. "My mother was a Midwest farm girl and she never got that out of her blood," says Palumbo, who was raised in a San Diego suburb. "Other houses in our subdivision had lawns and swimming pools; we had a vegetable garden and chickens."

LIFE-CHANGING WHIM In 1998, commuting to his chef job, Palumbo pulled off the highway on a whim and discovered the Temecula Valley, a little-known, tucked-away, nascent wine region a mere hour from his home. Within six months, he lived there. Smitten with the scenic valley, he purchased a modest home on a crest with 7 acres (2.8 ha) of vineyards. "My mom was thrilled because now I was a farmer," recalls Palumbo.

LEFT AND ABOVE: Nick Palumbo, chef-turned-vintner, enjoys the harvest from his Temecula garden. Palumbo often cooks for his family in an outdoor kitchen overlooking the vineyard.

Not exactly. A local winery had a contract for the grapes and did the farming, but that arrangement gave Palumbo the chance to observe and learn. He soon bought another 5 acres (2 ha) and began working in the tasting room and cellar at Cilurzo Winery. Owner Vincenzo Cilurzo was an early believer in Temecula Valley's potential and bought Palumbo's grapes for his own wines. In 2002, when Palumbo decided to launch a brand and needed cases to sell for quick income, he asked Cilurzo if he could buy some of his wine back.

"He said, here's some chalk and a thief; go pick out what you want," says Palumbo, who was astonished by that response. A thief is a device that draws a wine sample from a barrel; the chalk was for marking his barrel of choice. Cilurzo's willingness to part with the

best in his cellar reflects the generosity of the valley's wine community, says Palumbo. "That's the Temecula Valley spirit."

Nick and Cindy converted their garage into a rustic tasting room and tiny winery, using exotic hardwood salvaged from a fancy home renovation for the bar top and alder scraps from the nearby Fender guitar company for the base.

"I had no idea then what sustainability meant," admits Palumbo. Frugality spurred his repurposing, and a desire to improve grape quality prompted him to look more critically at his vineyard practices. Data from soil-moisture probes revealed that he was overwatering and allowed him to cut water use by half and reduce vine vigor.

The original owner had let the vines sprawl, common practice in those days. Palumbo installed trellises and trained the vines upward and outward on wires, which improved airflow and lowered disease pressure. These steps helped bring the vines into better balance, yielding a smaller but higher-quality crop. "I saw that when I got the crop down, the pyrazines went away," says Palumbo, referring to the green-vegetable aromas that can plague some wines.

A self-described beach bum and goof-off in college, Palumbo became a relentless student of viticulture. And the more he learned, the more convinced he became of the promise of Temecula Valley. With proximity to millions of wine lovers in San Diego, Los Angeles, and Palm Springs, several area wineries had made hospitality a top priority. Palumbo set his sights on demonstrating the quality possible from this underappreciated appellation.

DOUBLE-COOLING EFFECT Surrounded by mountains, the Temecula Valley's vineyards occupy a sort of bowl, with the snow-capped San Jacinto and San Bernardino Mountains to the northeast, Mount Palomar with its famous observatory to the southeast, and foothills on the west providing a break for winds off the ocean. But in the afternoons, when the desert east of Temecula heats up, ocean air rushes through a gap in those western foothills and cools the grapes, preserving acidity. Cold air also flows down from the eastern mountains at night, providing a "double-cooling" effect. The dramatic granite outcroppings along the highway just south of Temecula are precursors of the decomposed granite soils that provide such good vineyard drainage.

Nick and Cindy have raised four children here, on the property that lured Nick decades ago, now landscaped with rosemary, olive trees, wisteria, and geraniums. Some wineries nearby offer more glamour, more polish, more amenities. But Palumbo's visitors get a glimpse of the rural lifestyle that the couple has chosen, a pace that allows Nick time to cook, to make sausage with the meat from pigs he has raised, and to go deep-sea fishing for fish that he turns into ceviche and *crudo*.

Winemaking, like cooking, requires impeccable ingredients and confidence in your own palate, says Palumbo. Lab results have to be heeded, he knows, but he's inclined to let taste guide him. That's a habit from his chef training, and he swears by it. Says Palumbo, "Any winemaker who's never spent time cooking is doing himself a disservice."

ABOVE: (clockwise from bottom left) Palumbo vineyards and cellar; Palumbo with son Dominick; vineyard tour; meal time for the family goat

INLAND VALLEYS HARVEST

The straight asphalt ribbon that is Interstate 5 links Redding to Bakersfield, a mesmerizing 450-mile (725 km) journey through nearly nonstop farmland. Orchards extend for miles, followed by vast seas of tomatoes or freshly disked carpets of black dirt ready for planting. The valley gets warmer from north to south and from west to east, but many fruit, vegetable, and nut crops succeed in multiple areas.

Almonds, walnuts, cherries, olives (both for oil and for the table), and canning tomatoes are among the stars of the Sacramento Valley. Asparagus thrives in the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta but performs well as far south as Kings County. Brentwood, in Contra Costa County, produces sought-after corn, apricots, and peaches in a rapidly urbanizing area. San Joaquin Valley is likewise a major producer of all of these crops in addition to such heat lovers as figs, table grapes, kiwifruits, persimmons, pistachios, pomegranates, and fresh tomatoes. Adding variety to this bounty are the many Asian and Asian American farmers in the San Joaquin Valley, growing crops such as Chinese long beans, bitter melon, baby bok choy, daikon, and lemongrass. These fertile valleys are truly America's Eden.

LEFT: (clockwise from top left) Fresh-picked olives; olive grove at Enzo Olive Oil Company; kiwifruit; Chinese broccoli (gài lán); sun-drying figs at J. Marchini Farms; olives ready for pressing

RECIPES

ASPARAGUS

The ten-week asparagus harvest at Couture Farms is highly labor-intensive, but the fields get a long rest after that. Between May and October, they receive steady drip irrigation while the plants produce their fern-like fronds, gathering and storing the sun's energy for the following season. In fall, the watering ceases and the fronds turn brown and die down. In January, the ferns are cut at soil level, chopped, and incorporated into the soil to add organic matter. A single acre (0.4 ha) of asparagus is home to thirteen thousand plants, each one producing only about ½ pound (250 g) of spears after trimming.

SELECTION: Look for spears with compact, tight tips and a rich green color from tip to butt. Thick spears tend to be more juicy and sweet; thinner ones taste more "grassy" because of the high proportion of green peel to flesh. Age has nothing to do with circumference; the same crown produces thick and thin spears. Contrary to what most shoppers think, thick spears are often more tender.

Because of the labor involved, few California farmers cultivate white asparagus, so prized in Europe. It's the same variety as green asparagus but blanched by covering it to limit sun exposure.

STORING: Treat asparagus spears like cut flowers. Trim the bases and stand the spears upright in water, then refrigerate. You don't need to cover them. They will last two to three days, but the sooner you cook them, the better the flavor.

KITCHEN TIPS: You can peel the bottom 2 to 3 inches (5 to 7.5 cm) of each spear to make it more tender, or you can snap it off. "I grew up with the snap method," says Caitlin Couture of Couture Farms. Hold a spear in both hands and bend it; it will break naturally at the point where it becomes tough. Boil, roast, or grill asparagus, but avoid overcooking. Like pasta, spears should be al dente, not limp.

CHERRIES

When plump, carmine-red cherries hit produce stands, summer can't be far behind. Along with apricots, cherries are California's first-of-the-year stone fruit, prompting home bakers to dig out their recipes for fruit pies, tarts, and crisps. The state boasts 40,000 acres (16,200 ha) of cherries, in orchards from Bakersfield to Sacramento. The area around Lodi is a prime spot. In that location, the trees get sufficient winter chill—hours below 45°F (7°C)—to break dormancy and bloom properly in the spring but typically avoid the hot weather that can make ripe cherries flabby.

HARVEST: The final two weeks of May are peak season for California's cherry harvest, although early varieties like Brooks get the season rolling in late April. With orchards extending from Sacramento to Bakersfield, growers can often keep consumers supplied with fresh cherries through June. Color is the best indicator of ripeness, so growers wait until the red varieties turn fully crimson before picking. Rainiers should have a rich custard-yellow background color with a red blush.

SELECTION AND STORAGE: Most cherry enthusiasts consider the Bing to be the choicest variety, although it's hard to resist the blushing beauty of the Rainier. A few small growers cultivate sour cherries (also called pie cherries), such as Montmorency; look for them at farmers' markets and specialty-produce markets. Choose firm, unblemished cherries with stems attached. A green stem signals the fruit was freshly picked. If you can taste before you buy, look for crispness and a refreshing balance of sweetness and acidity. Refrigerate cherries in a plastic bag; don't rinse them until you're ready to eat them.

FREAKS OF NATURE: If the temperature climbs above 95°F (36°C) during fruit formation, the fruit ovary may divide. If both halves get fertilized, a double cherry is produced. If only one gets pollinated, the result is a spur: a deformed cherry with some hardened external pit. Both occurrences are considered cosmetic flaws, although the flavor may not suffer.

RIGHT: (clockwise from upper left) Bee boxes in a Lodi cherry orchard; cherries fit for royalty; cherry harvest at Lodi Farming; farmers' market asparagus

COUTURE FARMS

ASPARAGUS

Thick or thin? Fortunately for California asparagus grower Caitlin Couture, customers clamor for every size. Caitlin and her father, Chris, cultivate 110 acres (46 ha) of organic asparagus in Kettleman City, between Fresno and Bakersfield, and they have takers for every spear. Swiss buyers prize the farm's finger-thick jumbos, while American consumers gravitate to pencil-thin spears. Caitlin has her own preference (thick, please), but freshness tops her priority list.

Between mid-February and early May, the harvest season at Couture Farms, Caitlin's farmers' market customers can experience asparagus harvested just hours before. But even with a few days of travel time, this farm's soldier-straight spears, green from tip to butt, merit a course all to themselves on the menu.

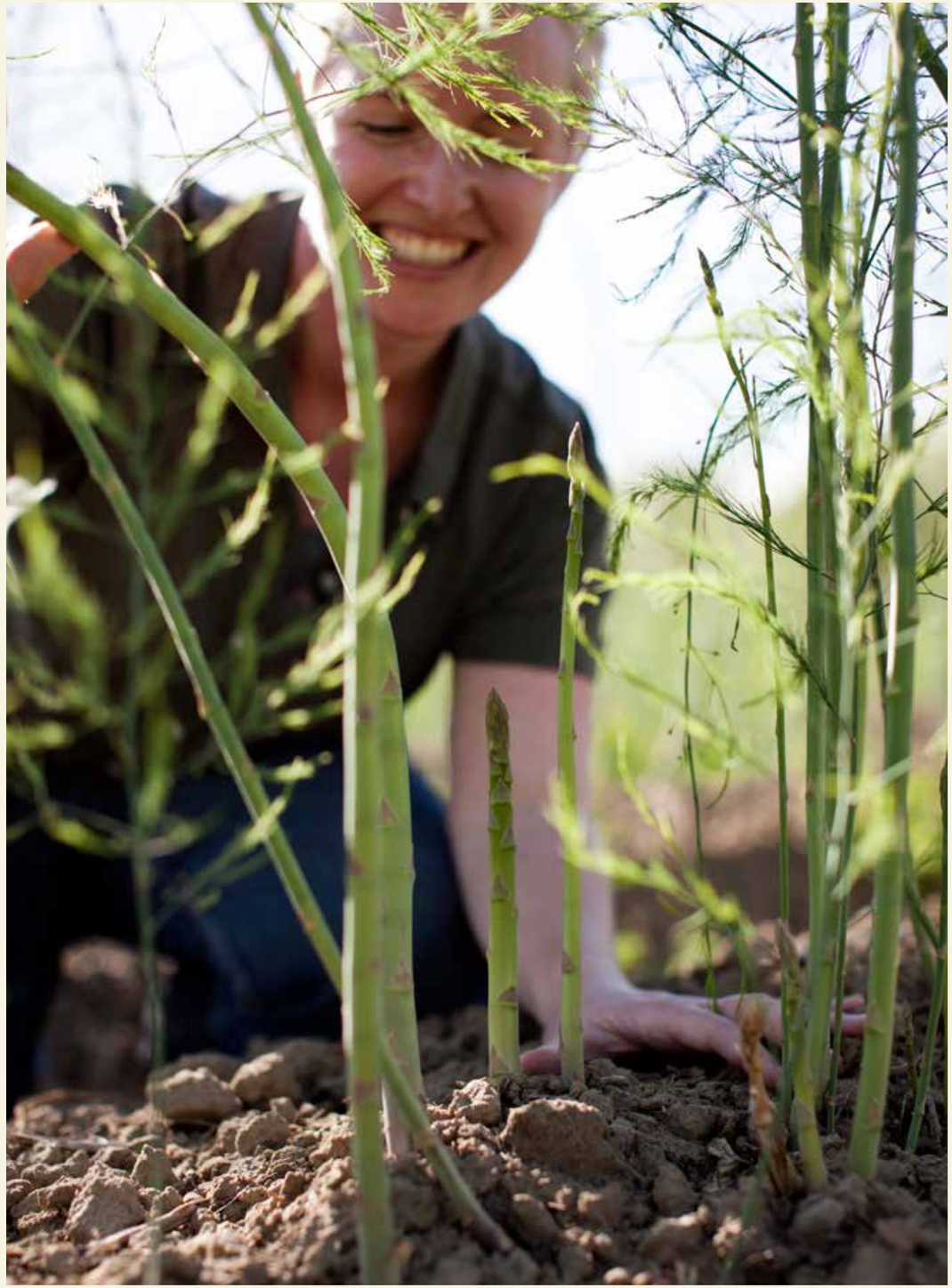
The Coutures have been farming in the Central Valley for four generations. Caitlin's great-grandfather, an immigrant from Quebec, grew table grapes in Modesto and operated one of the area's first fruit dehydrators, to produce golden raisins. During World War II, her grandfather used the equipment to dehydrate carrots for military rations. The family didn't plant their first asparagus until 1982, persuaded by a San Francisco wholesaler that the high-priced vegetable would do well in their sandy, fast-draining soil.

FROM AN UNDERGROUND FACTORY Asparagus are perennial plants that will yield spears for fifteen years if well treated. The hard-working spear "factory" is underground, the so-called crown with its many tentacle-like roots. Spears emerge from the crown, with the first ones poking through the cold ground in early February. The spears continue to push for several weeks, thick and thin from the same crown, growing as much as 6 inches (15 cm) a day in warm weather. Cold nights produce crooked spears. Hailstorms leave ruinous pockmarks. Hail- damaged spears have to be felled by hand and discarded, but replacement spears soon emerge.

The Coutures transitioned to organic production in 2006, largely for competitive advantage, but they like the changes they have noted in their ecosystem. "We've seen the roadrunners return," says Caitlin, "and I have to believe our native bee population is better off." Fertilizing with compost tea keeps soil microorganisms happy, and eliminating herbicides has improved soil health, too.

PRECEDING PAGES: Early-morning asparagus harvest at Couture Farms in Kettleman City

ABOVE AND RIGHT: Sustainable practices at Couture Farms continually renew the soil; fourth-generation Central Valley farmer Caitlin Couture



On a mild, sunny April morning, workers with bins slung around their hips patrol the long, mounded beds, armed with 30-inch (76 cm) asparagus knives. A red line on the knife's blade, 9 inches (23 cm) from the tip, indicates the ideal length of a spear ready to harvest. When workers spot a full-grown spear, they plunge the blunt-edged tool into the soil, releasing the spear without harming the crown.

ABOVE: (clockwise from top left) Father-daughter asparagus growers Chris and Caitlin Couture; after harvesting stops in May, remaining spears produce ferns, gathering energy for the following year's crop; a specialized tool detaches asparagus cleanly; Caitlin Couture's toddler son; after sorting by size, asparagus are banded for shipping

REPEATING THE HARVEST For ten weeks, the crew will return to this same field daily and retrace their steps. Every day, a crown might have three or four more spears to offer; they will weaken the crown if allowed to grow too tall. By early May, Chris and Caitlin expect each acre to have yielded about 6,000 pounds (2,720 kg) of "grass," in grower lingo. Then it's time to give the crowns a rest until the following spring.

At the packing shed, the spears are washed and mechanically cut to an exact 9 inches (23 cm). Women on either side of a conveyor belt sort them by eye, their hands deftly assembling bundles of spears of similar thickness. In the cooler, the packed boxes get an icy shower to chill the spears quickly. Slightly blemished spears are collected for a nearby senior center; packing-house trimmings return to the farm for composting.

Caitlin's toddler son, Dylan, is already an enthusiastic consumer, clutching a raw spear in his pudgy fist. Caitlin's husband, Ed Drake, is chef-owner of a Paso Robles bistro, but even so, the couple treats fresh asparagus simply at home: grilling or roasting it with olive oil and sea salt, sometimes blanketing the spears with a fried egg.

"When people don't like asparagus, I think it's because they've only had it overcooked," says Caitlin. "Just put in boiling water and wait for that electric-green color to come up. Any longer and you've lost what asparagus has to offer."

WARM SALMON SALAD WITH ASPARAGUS, FARM EGGS, AND FINGERLING POTATOES

SERVES 4

For a late-spring lunch or light dinner, make a salmon salad the centerpiece. Surround with tender hearts of butter lettuce and seasonal vegetables: California asparagus, radishes, and the first new potatoes in late spring; tomatoes, corn, and sweet red onions in summer. A vinaigrette whisked with fresh herbs and capers brings all the elements together.

WINE SUGGESTION: *California rosé, Sauvignon Blanc, or Chardonnay*

VINAIGRETTE:

3 tablespoons white wine vinegar, plus more if needed
1 tablespoon Vietnamese fish sauce
1 large shallot, finely minced
3 tablespoons minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tablespoon minced fresh tarragon
1 tablespoon salt-packed capers, rinsed and finely chopped
½ cup (125 ml) extra virgin olive oil, plus more if needed
Kosher or sea salt

1 pound (500 g) fingerling potatoes
4 large eggs
1 pound (500 g) medium asparagus, tough ends removed
Extra virgin olive oil for oiling the pan
4 skin-on wild salmon fillets, about 6 ounces (185 g) each
Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 soft butter lettuce heart, separated into leaves
12 radishes, trimmed and halved
12 ripe olives

Make the vinaigrette: In a bowl, whisk together the vinegar, fish sauce, shallot, parsley, tarragon, and capers. Whisk in the olive oil. Season to taste with salt, then adjust the balance with more oil or vinegar if needed. Set aside for 30 minutes to allow the flavor to mellow.

Put the potatoes in a saucepan and add salted water to cover by 1 inch (2.5 cm). Bring to a simmer over high heat, cover partially, adjust the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, and cook until the potatoes are tender when pierced, about 15 minutes. Drain the potatoes, let stand just until cool enough to handle, then peel. Let cool completely and slice crosswise or halve lengthwise.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Put enough water in a saucepan to cover the 4 eggs generously but do not add the eggs yet. Bring the water to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to a simmer so you can add the eggs without jostling them. While the water is heating, prepare a large bowl of ice water. With a large spoon, lower the eggs into the simmering water, working carefully so they do not crack. Adjust the heat so the eggs cook at a gentle simmer. Cook the eggs for 7 minutes exactly. (The yolk will be runny; cook for another minute or two if you prefer a firmer yolk.) Transfer the eggs to the ice water with a slotted spoon. When cool, lift them out of the water and peel.

Bring a large frying pan half full of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the asparagus and boil until just tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain and chill quickly under cold running water. Pat dry.

Lightly oil a rimmed baking sheet. Season the salmon with salt and pepper. Place skin side down on the baking sheet and bake until the flesh just flakes when probed with a fork, about 12 minutes.

While the salmon bakes, arrange a few lettuce leaves on each of four plates. Leaving room in the center for the salmon, arrange an equal amount of the potatoes slices, asparagus, radishes, and olives and 2 egg halves on each plate. With an offset spatula, lift the salmon fillets off of their skin and transfer to the plates, leaving the skin behind. Whisk the dressing and spoon it over the salads; you may not need it all. Serve immediately.

SALMON SPOTLIGHT: California's wild king (chinook) salmon is the most prized among several varieties found in West Coast waters. It has delicate flavor and lean flesh early in the season, becoming richer and fattier by late summer. To protect the stock from overfishing, fisheries experts carefully monitor populations and determine the length of the season and total size of the catch every year.

SPRING VEGETABLE TABBOULI WITH FAVA BEANS, RADISHES, AND SPRING HERBS

SERVES 4

An abundance of fresh-chopped herbs and colorful, crunchy vegetables makes this salad as refreshing as spring rain. It resembles tabbouleh, but here the vegetables play a bigger role. Serve it for lunch with a chunk of feta and ripe olives, or for dinner with grilled lamb or salmon.

WINE SUGGESTION: *California Chardonnay or Pinot Gris/Grigio*

¾ cup (125 g) extra-fine bulgur (#1 grind)
¾ cup (180 ml) water

DRESSING:

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon Vietnamese fish sauce
1 small clove garlic, grated with a rasp grater or very finely minced
Kosher or sea alt

1 pound (500 g) fava beans in the pod
½ cup (60 g) thinly sliced radishes
½ cup (60 g) thinly sliced cucumbers
⅓ cup (35 g) minced green onion
½ to ¾ cup (20 to 30 g) chopped mixed fresh herbs (flat-leaf parsley, dill, mint, cilantro)
Ground Aleppo chile or freshly ground black pepper

Shake the bulgur in a fine-mesh sieve to remove any particles as fine as dust. Transfer the bulgur to a bowl and add the water. Stir briefly, then let stand undisturbed for 15 minutes. The bulgur will absorb all or most of the water. Pour the bulgur into a sieve lined with a double thickness of cheesecloth, then gather the cheesecloth into a bag and squeeze to remove any excess moisture. The bulgur should be quite dry. Transfer it to a large bowl and fluff with a fork.

Make the dressing: In a bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, fish sauce, garlic, and a large pinch of salt.

Remove the fava beans from their fuzzy pods. Bring a small pot of water to a boil over high heat. Have ready a bowl of ice water. Plunge the fava beans into the boiling water, return to a boil, and cook until they are tender, about 1 minute if small and 2 minutes if large. (Test a few to be sure.) Drain in a sieve and immediately transfer to the ice water. When cool, drain again, then peel each bean by pinching the skin open on one end, then slipping the bean free.

Add the fava beans, radishes, cucumbers, green onion, herbs, and ¼ teaspoon Aleppo chile or black pepper to taste to the bulgur and toss gently with a fork. Add the dressing and toss well. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Serve immediately.

BULGUR VS. CRACKED WHEAT: These two grain products are the same but different. Cracked wheat is simply the whole wheat kernel (also called the berry) cracked coarsely, like steel-cut oats. To make bulgur, the wheat berries are cooked first, then dried and cracked. Bulgur has a toastier flavor than cracked wheat and is produced in a range of sizes, from #1 (extra-fine) to #4 (coarse). Look for bulgur #1 in Middle Eastern markets, where the size is usually indicated on the package. In supermarket bulk bins, the size of the bulgur may not be indicated; most likely, the bulgur is medium-fine and will need longer soaking to soften. If it doesn't soften sufficiently in cold water, add a little boiling water and let stand until al dente.

"As a chef who has had the pleasure of working with these California wineries, vineyards, and farms for decades, I value this book's sustainable lens. A must read for any California Wine Country lover!"

— Michael Mina, James Beard Award-winning chef, restaurateur, and founder of the MINA Group

"Whether you enjoy visiting the wine country, are a lover of great food and sumptuous wine, or take pleasure in leafing through a beautiful book, this one is for you. Well researched and packed with valuable information, you'll learn everything from a unique way to store asparagus to how fresh figs are dried. Beautifully written and anointed with lush photography and inspiring recipes, once again Janet Fletcher, the consummate award-winning cookbook author, has triumphed with a book that will make you want to run into the kitchen and cook. A truly lovely book!"

— Joanne Weir, chef and author of *Kitchen Gypsy,* and host of *Joanne Weir's Plates & Places* on PBS

"In the era of fast-moving social media, it's a breath of fresh air to take a leisurely trip through California's bountiful harvests in the pages of this beautiful book. Engaging stories of family-owned farms and historical wineries are brought to life with captivating images of grapevines and pear orchards, fields of flowers, and lettuce. Growing regions from north to south are showcased with mouthwatering recipes that bring wine country to your table. Grab a glass of wine and head to the kitchen to celebrate all that California has to offer."

— Leslie Sbrocco, award-winning author, wine consultant, and television host of *Check, Please! Bay Area* on PBS

For more information visit:
www.discovercaliforniawines.com

For publicity information, contact:
Carrie Bachman, carrie@carriebachman.com
646-637-6303

Roberta Klugman, rklugman@robertaklugman.com
510-928-1446