

Sunset

Bountiful bay

In Tomales Bay, north of San Francisco, savor the beauty of the coast and sample succulent oysters, cheese, and more

BY MARGO TRUE PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS J. STORY

WE'VE BEEN HIKING FOR HOURS along the Inverness Ridge Trail, above the shining blue ribbon of Tomales Bay, and we're ravenous. Maybe it's all the gazing at the water that leads my boyfriend, Peter, and me to look at each other and mouth the same word: "oysters." Twenty minutes later, we're sitting at a picnic table at Hog Island Oyster Co., shucking and slurping cold, firm, plump Pacifics harvested a few hundred feet away.

You can find good local food in any number of beautiful places, but in Tomales Bay, on California's North Coast, there's a special kind of seamless between the act of eating and just being in nature. The loveliness of this landscape, which flanks the Point Reyes National Seashore, is in fact shaped largely by food and the raising of it. The grassy hills on the bay's eastern shore—as tawny and shiny now, in late summer, as a Siamese cat's fur—are pastures for dairy cows and beef cattle. Fruit and vegetable farmers cultivate this land too, and grapevines stipple the hills with bright patches of green. In the bay, halibut, sturgeon, perch, and herring thrive in water shared by the thousands of oysters growing there, busily filtering plankton. The briny sweetness you taste in the water when you swim in the bay is in the oysters too.

We're here to savor all this local bounty as well as

The Boat Shack is one of many historic buildings at Nick's Cove & Cottages, a resort being reinvented by San Francisco restaurateur Pat Kuleto. **OPPOSITE, TOP ROW** A grass-fed cow; trio of Cowgirl Creamery cheeses; Toby's Feed Barn owner Chris Giacomini (standing) with son Nicholas. **OPPOSITE, MIDDLE ROW** Barbecued oysters; Inverness Ridge. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM ROW** Tomales Bakery owner Cameron Ryan; a cottage at Nick's Cove; Munka's sign.

