



Simple Pleasures to the North

Eat, drink, and sit back at Pat Kuleto's new Tomales Bay hangout.

BY MICHAELA JARVIS

NICK'S COVE and Cottages feels as much like an upscale midwestern fishing camp as a Northern California retreat. Hugging the shore of placid Tomales Bay, the wood-paneled cabins and restaurant evoke a slower pace than the one we're used to in the urban, or even suburban, Bay Area.

But, don't be fooled by the stuffed moose heads in the restaurant or the rustic oil paintings on the walls. The restored roadhouse and cabins, reopened in 2007 by San Francisco restaurateur Pat Kuleto, dole out the comforts where they count—soft, fluffy linens and featherbeds on the beds, spalike bathrooms in the cabins, a refrigerator full of no-charge goodies such as high-end wine and chocolate. The restaurant will remind you that you're in the heart of a coastal gourmet paradise of exquisite seafood, fruits, vegetables, and farmstead cheeses. >>>



THE VIEW

The cabins and restaurant at Nick's look out over the water, and that alone is a good reason to go there. Early evening should find you on the back deck of your cabin, a glass of wine in hand and your eyes resting on the sparkling water. Watch the sun set from the restaurant. Then, after an ultracozy night, wake up to morning mist over the water, obscuring everything just enough to keep you in a meditative mood early in the day.

THE FOOD

Four different kinds of local oysters and sweet, fresh, ultraplump grilled shrimp got our meal started. A bright dressing of gold-standard olive oil and white balsamic vinegar made for the best heirloom tomato salad of the season. The grilled halibut arrived golden on the outside and soft and tender within. The dish, served alongside rich, flavorful, and wholesome farro and romano beans, came alive with tiny red cherry tomatoes and a vibrant pesto. The grilled wild king salmon entrée was an equally exciting orchestration of fish, chickpeas, baby spinach, yogurt, cucumber, and delicately fried onion laces.

THE WINE

If you're having fish, even a rich fish, try Kuleto's own Pinot Grigio. If you often find



PREVIOUS PAGE: Getting some sun outside a cabin. THIS PAGE: (clockwise from top left) Something's fishy down at the pier; a plush bed inside one of the cabins; diners at Nick's Cove enjoy succulent seafood and a view of Tomales Bay.

Pinot Grigio too thin, consider that this wine has "big shoulders," as our server pointed out. It's full-bodied, mineral, and complex. The other wines at Nick's are also interesting and food friendly; quite a few come in magnums, and a magnum of wine with dinner at the casual restaurant would be lots of fun with a group.

THE PLACE TO RELAX

Should you lie down on your cabin's leather sofa with a book, Tomales Bay stretching out from the front deck, you may not see any reason to move from there for the duration of your stay. This is not Club Med but a quiet

spot in what feels like an intimate landscape meant for slowing down.

Nick's Cove, 23240 State Route 1, Marshall, (415) 663-1033, www.nickscope.com.

THE SURROUNDING AREA

Point Reyes Vineyards, with its surprisingly good still and sparkling wines served in its tasting room, is just up the road. Point Reyes Station—home to such awesome picnic food purveyors as Cowgirl Creamery and Marin Sun Farms, as well as browser's heaven Point Reyes Books—is about six miles away. The stunning Point Reyes National Seashore, with its wide



beaches and 1870 lighthouse, is within easy driving distance. Five Brooks Stable, just 10 miles away, offers trail rides through Point Reyes National Seashore. When you head for home, don't forget to leave time to stop at the roadside organic produce stands on Tomales-Petaluma Road.

Point Reyes Vineyards, 12700 State Route 1, Point Reyes Station, (415) 663-1011, www.ptreyesvineyardinn.com/winery.htm.

Cowgirl Creamery, 80 Fourth Street, Point Reyes Station, (415) 663-9335, www.cowgirlcreamery.com.

Marin Sun Farms, 10905 State Route 1, Point Reyes Station, (415) 663-8997, www.marinsunfarms.com.

Point Reyes Books, 11315 State Route 1, Point Reyes Station, (415) 663-1542, www.ptreyesbooks.com.

Point Reyes National Seashore, 1 Bear Valley Road, Point Reyes Station, (415) 464-5100, www.nps.gov/pore.

Five Brooks Stable, State Route 1, about 3.5 miles south of Olema, (415) 663-1570, www.fivebrooks.com. ■