

▶ Bay Area Gems

Yes, [San Francisco](#) is a foodie paradise. But it has delicious competition nearby. By Tom Sietsema

Nick's Cove is about an hour removed from the Golden Gate Bridge, a drive up Highway 1 that is by turns lulling (ah, redwoods) and terrifying (yikes, cliffs!). But once visitors reach the roadhouse, set on the shores of Tomales Bay, they could be forgiven for thinking they traveled back in time. Outside the entrance is a vintage Willy Jeep with the restaurant's name emblazoned on its doors. Inside the eatery are stuffed animal heads, a stone fireplace, a rope-decorated mahogany bar and captain's chairs. Cell phones ... won't work.

Welcome to the 1930s.

That's the era Pat Kuleto, an esteemed California designer, hoped to capture when he bought the property,

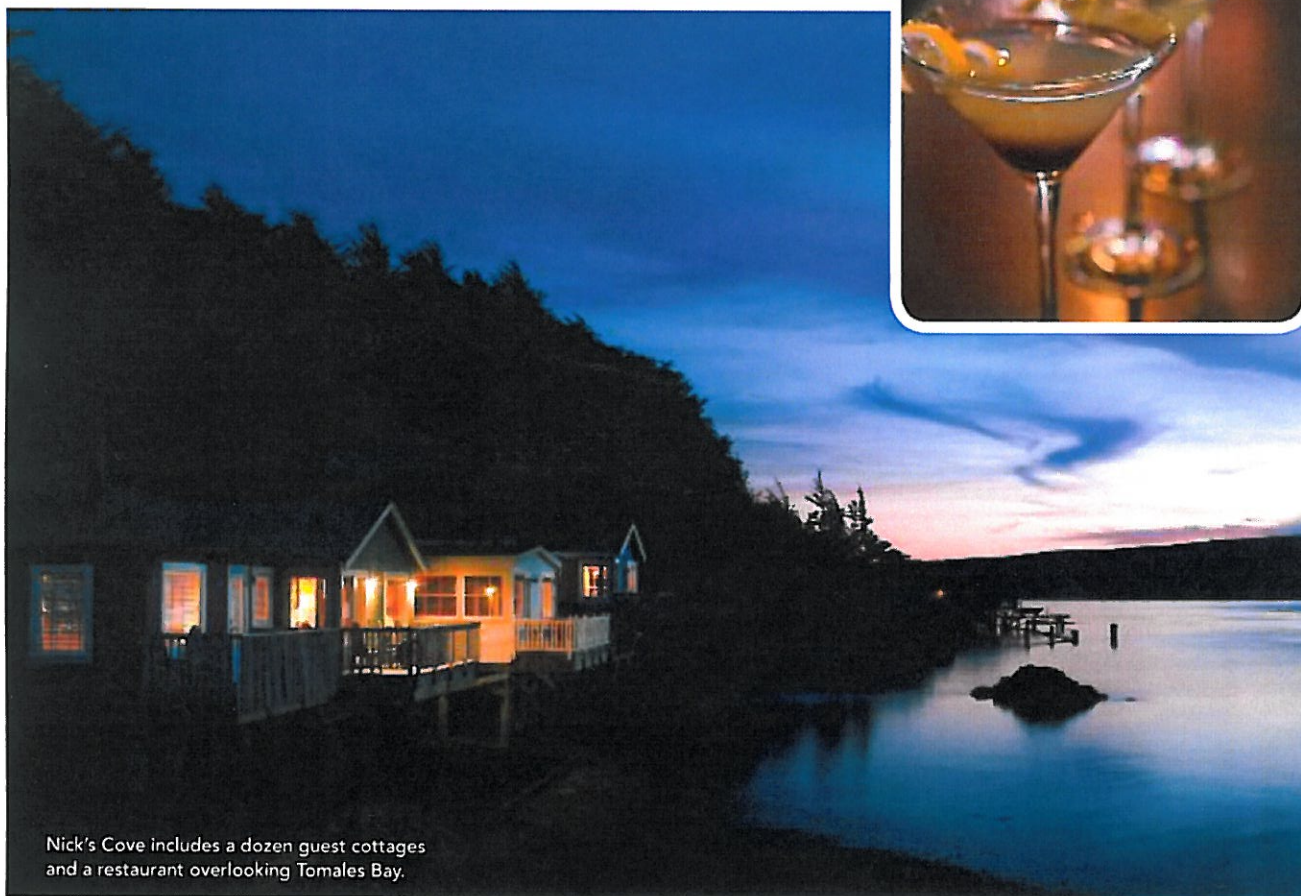
which includes a dozen guest cottages, and set about restoring everything. It took him nine years and about \$12 million, but the time and money were well spent.

Look to the water for help in ordering—literally in the case of the oysters, some varieties of which are plucked from Tomales Bay, which doubles as your view from the rear windows. I'm particularly fond of the bivalves warmed on the grill and enriched with herbed butter and tangy barbecue sauce, although there's also the option of raw and fried oysters. The latter are featured in a po' boy sandwich along with pork belly, a lusty marriage of surf and turf. "Anything with oysters" is a top seller,

says executive chef Adam Mali, who handles them with the respect they deserve.

Dungeness crab is another lure. Nick's Classic Louie—a salad of frilly butter lettuce, buttery avocado, cucumber, radishes and sweet crab—is terrific. The seasonal treasure also stars in enchiladas ignited with tomatillo salsa, jack cheese and a crunchy, lime-jolted slaw.

No diner has yet to bite on the last entree on the menu, the Red Legged Frog "with mounds of sticky red tape," priced at \$2 million. The dish, which



Nick's Cove includes a dozen guest cottages and a restaurant overlooking Tomales Bay.

Photos by Paul Dyer

