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SAN FRANCISCO



HOT
WEEKEND
GETAWAYS

Shot on
location at
Lake Sonoma

URBAN
WINE
COUNTRY

AMERICA'S
CUP



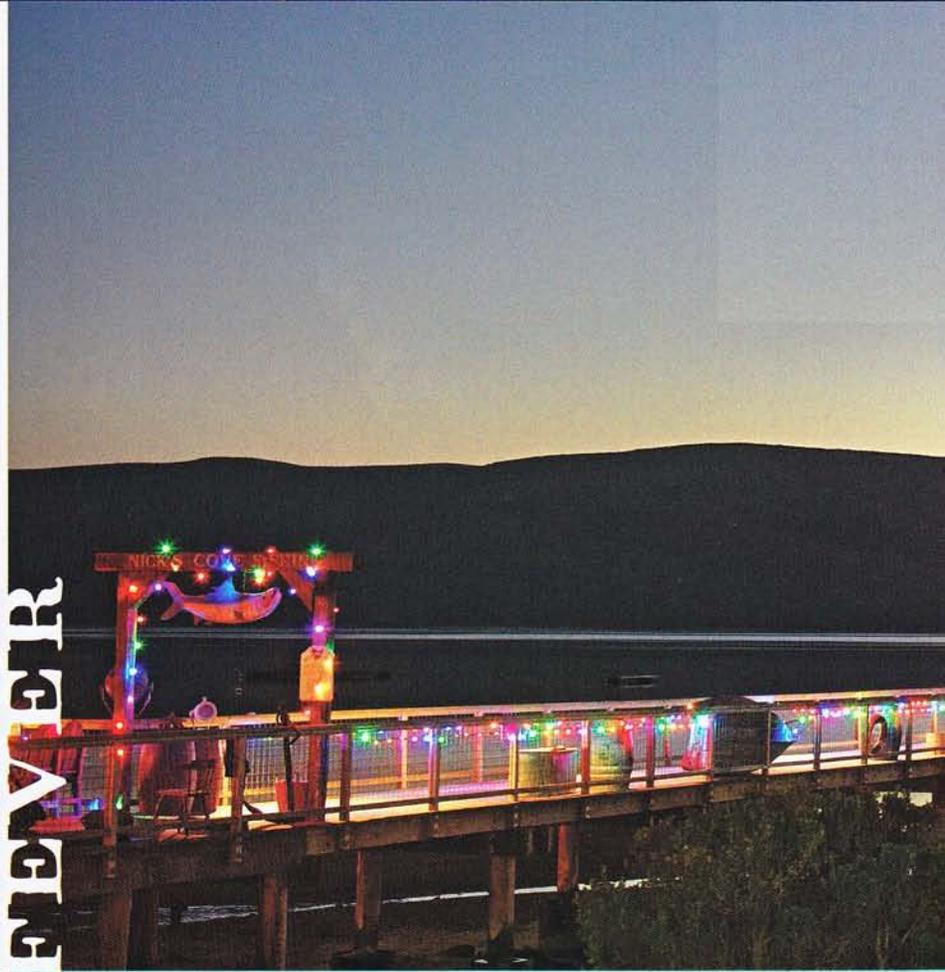
OAKLAND
A CHEF'S TOUR

JULY/AUGUST 2012 7X7 \$4.99
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“It’s like they’ve only just realized that, along with everything else, San Francisco also has the Farallones.”

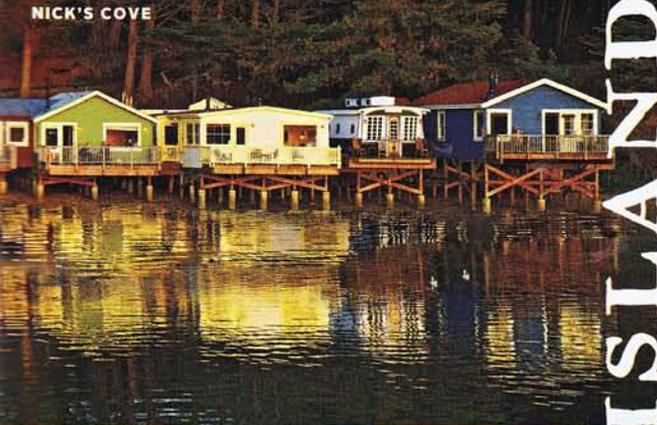
place where cage diving with great whites is legal, and two different outfitters, **GREAT WHITE ADVENTURES** (greatwhiteadventures.com) and **INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES** (incredibleadventures.com), offer one-day dives with certified instructors during feeding season. Anyone can dive—no experience necessary—but this trip is not for the faint of heart. (Though onlookers, called “topsid-ers,” are allowed to watch from a distance.) The asking price is hefty (\$775), but it’s worth it for thrill-seekers craving an up-close, real-life *Jaws* experience.

Scared? **SAN FRANCISCO WHALE TOURS** (sanfranciscowhaletours.com) has led expeditions to the Farallones since 2007. Summer is the best time to go, when the blue and humpback whales are all out and about. But at six to seven hours of navigating some of the nation’s roughest waters, this is no pleasure cruise for unsuspecting tourists. “Locals confuse these treks with something touristy since our boats embark from Pier 39,” says SF Whale Tours co-owner Kat Nazar. “But when we do get locals aboard, they’re among our most enthusiastic passengers. It’s like they’ve only just realized that, along with everything else, San Francisco also has the Farallones.”



EVER

NICK'S COVE



ISLAND

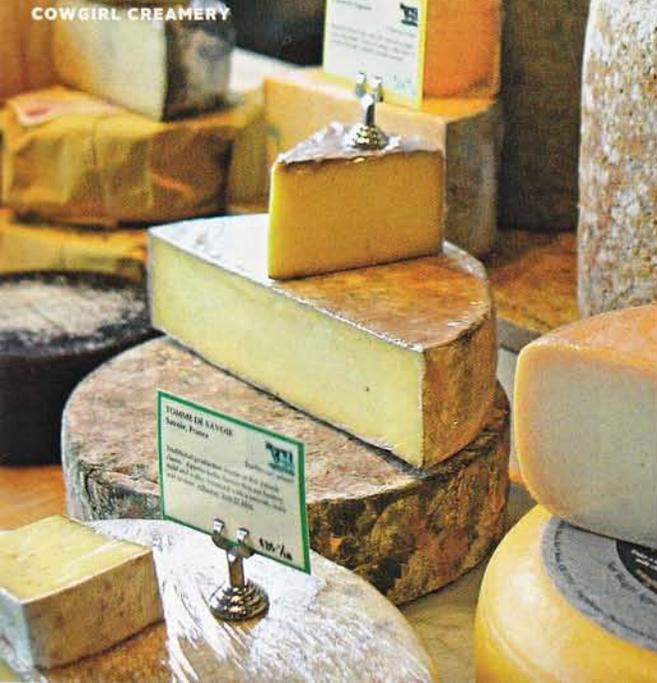
HOG ISLAND: HEAVEN FOR FOODIES

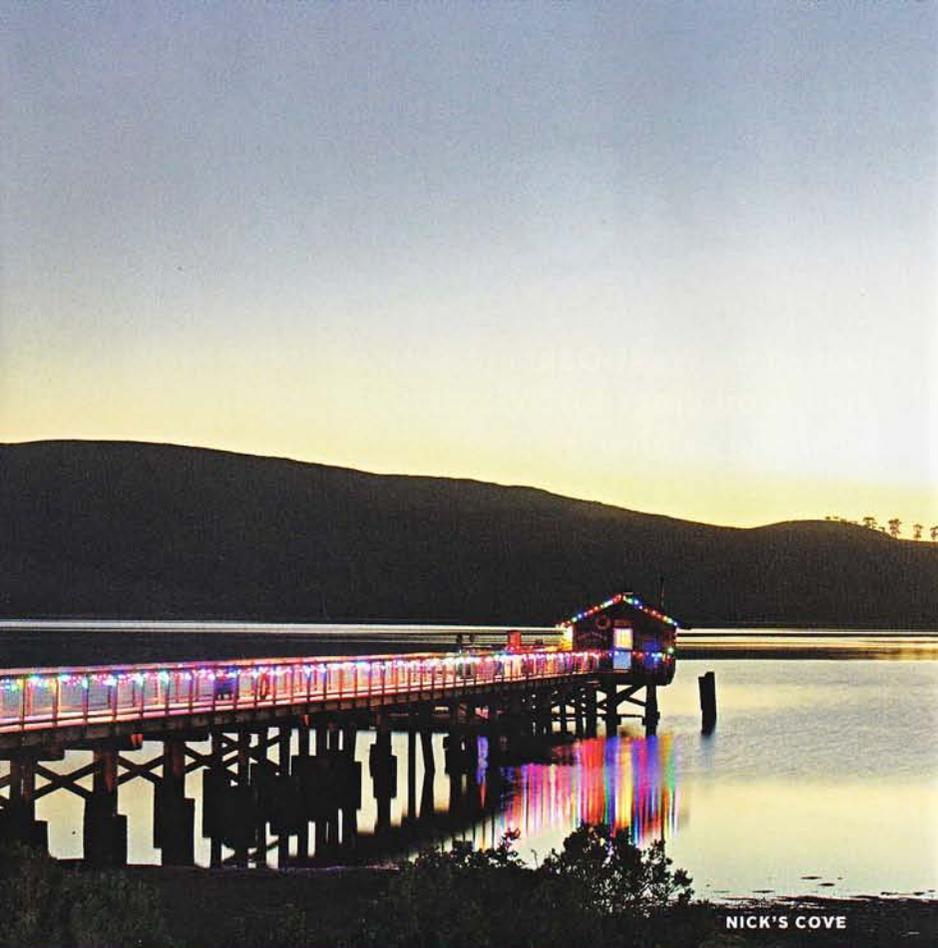
About halfway up Tomales Bay, California’s largest unspoiled coastal embayment, Hog Island is well-known among food lovers for its oysters, but the briny bivalves are certainly an acquired taste. Luckily, there is also cheese to be had in the area.

Cheese Trail (cheesetrail.org), published this year, is a field guide of nearly 30 cheesemakers located throughout Marin and Sonoma Counties. An easy-to-read map, the Cheese Trail points out which creameries are open to the public or by reservation-only tours. In addition to Petaluma’s Marin French Cheese Company (marinfrenchcheese.com), which is the oldest continuously operating cheese factory in the U.S., and of course the beloved Cowgirl Creamery (cowgirlcreamery.com) in Point Reyes, Craig Ramini (raminimozzarella.com) makes the list as a notable newcomer to the region.

At his farmstead in Tomales, Ramini is breeding and raising one of just a handful of water buffalo herds in the U.S. The buttery, fatty, high-protein milk makes the Italian buffalo mozzarella whiter, softer, creamier, and tangier than its cow’s milk competitors. If you call ahead, Ramini will be happy to introduce you to his beasts, which he assures, despite their considerable size and

COWGIRL CREAMERY





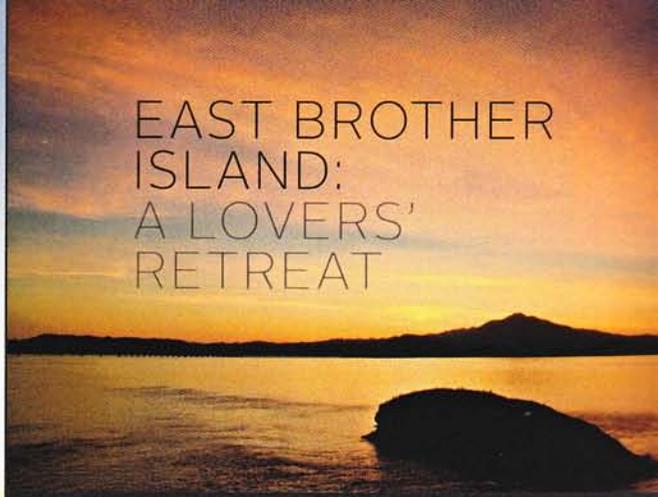
NICK'S COVE

horns, are just "as gentle as Labradors." Buy some cheese to go (it's finally ready for market this July), and pair it with house-smoked salmon or beef jerky from The Marshall Store (themarshallstore.com) just 20 minutes away.

Hog Island is known for its wildlife and beauty as well as its oysters. Part wildlife preserve, the island is home to tule elk, harbor seals, bat-rays, leopard sharks, osprey, sea lions, and gray whales. To protect the habitat of the animals, the island is largely off-limits to foot traffic. Only the west side is open for day use. "It's surrounded by some of the best water in the bay, where it feels and looks almost oceanic," says Jeff Quigley, who leads tours for Blue Waters Kayaking (bwkayak.com). The Tule Elk Tour offers as close a view as you'll ever get of the wildlife on the island. Also, keep your eyes peeled for a view of the peninsula's hidden beaches.

Things are a little tamer back at Nick's Cove (nickscove.com), the Marshall beachfront inn with 12 cozy cottages, many with claw-foot tubs and all with working wood stoves. (And you'll need them, what with the often heavy fog and chill of the crashing waves outside.) Nick's Cove was originally a fishing and seafood shack in the 1930s before being transformed into an inn and restaurant by Bay Area restaurant magnate Pat Kuleto in 2007. Since changing ownership—Kuleto sold Nick's Cove to a private investor in 2011—the retreat is attracting foodies with the popular restaurant's new chef Austin Perkins, who was promoted last year from executive sous chef to lead the kitchen in a more modern direction. The dining room serves such dishes as grilled oysters "nick-erfeller" (made with tarragon, butter, and Pernod) and a signature paella—both ideal for a quiet supper for two.

EAST BROTHER ISLAND: A LOVERS' RETREAT



For romantics and history buffs, the East Brother Light Station and Victorian Bed & Breakfast (ebls.org) is a one-night getaway par excellence. This is a rare chance to cuddle up in a 133-year-old working lighthouse, where the summer months are mercifully free of foghorn noise, in one of just five updated Victorian-era rooms. "Guests say it's like stepping back in time," says innkeeper Peter Berkhout, who runs the B&B with his wife (and chef) Dina.

To get there, a small motorboat departs from the dock in Richmond for East Brother Island, where the hotel's nightly rates (starting at \$295) include sparkling wine and hors d'oeuvres upon arrival, a four-course seasonal dinner, and breakfast the morning after. Spotty cell service, no Internet, and TV-free bedrooms present the perfect opportunity for whatever couples' activities may tickle your fancy (we're talking about board games, obviously). "These are the best bay views available anywhere," Berkhout says. "The food is incredible, the rooms are romantic, and though it's close to the city, it feels very remote."

