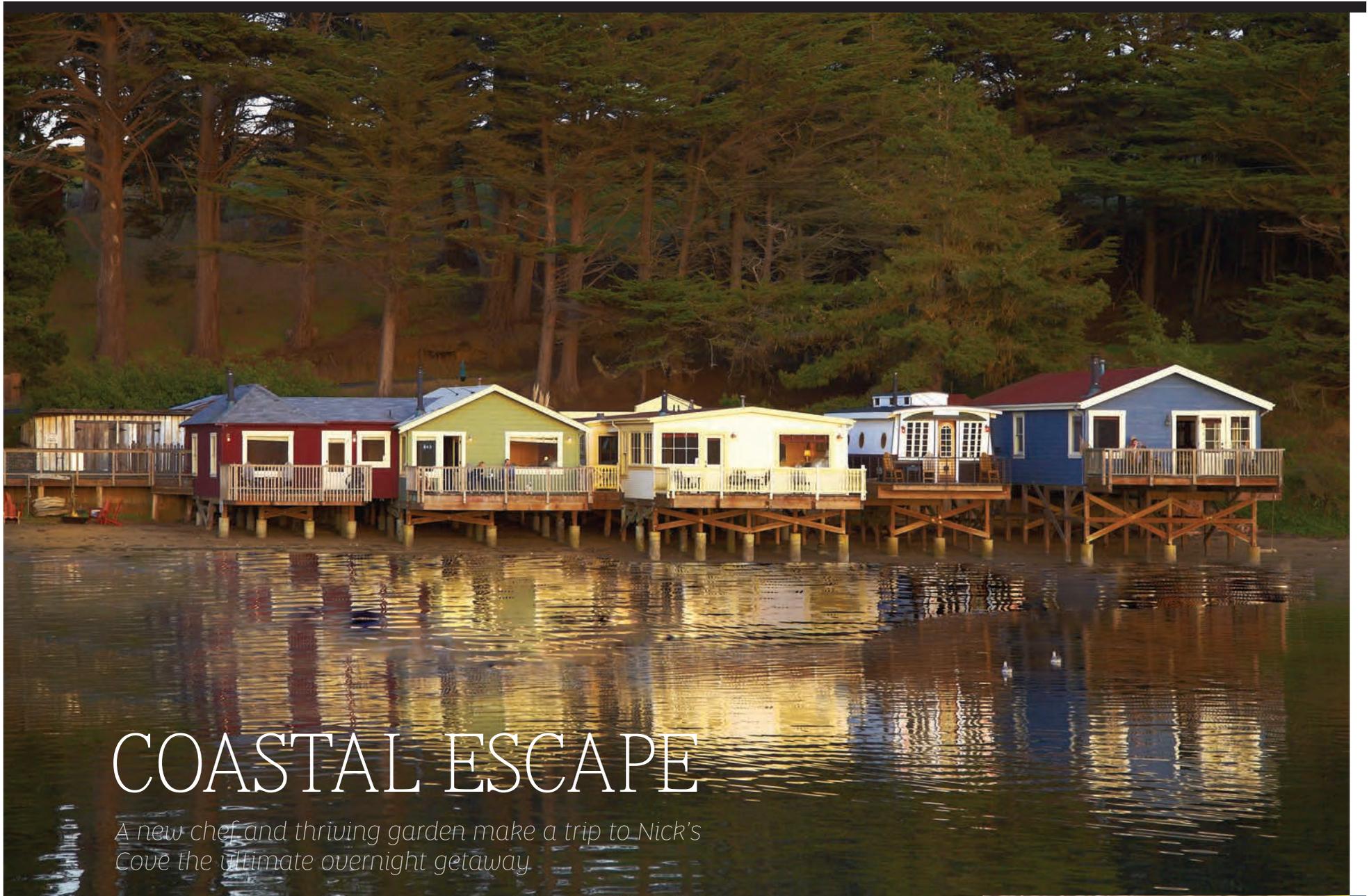


BY KATIE SWEENEY

Haute HOTEL



COASTAL ESCAPE

A new chef and thriving garden make a trip to Nick's Cove the ultimate overnight getaway.

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO is its proximity to amazing places, from wine country to redwood groves, and escaping the city is almost as fun as staying put. A tranquil spot to visit the next time you require getting away? Nick's Cove in Marshall. Located on Tomales Bay—a 50-minute drive from SF—Nick's Cove has been charming Bay Area residents since 1931. With five waterfront cottages, seven hilltop cabins, a fishing dock, boat shack, impressive gardens, and lively restaurant and bar, there is no other place like it in the region.

Although you could spend the afternoon enjoying all that the cove has to offer, the most relaxing experience is one that involves spending the night. Book one of the seaside cottages—which are incredibly luxurious but rustic at the same time—and you won't be disappointed. All boast eccentric names, wildly comfortable beds, spacious bathrooms with heated floors and clawfoot tubs, private

decks, and intimate living rooms. Al's Cottage is a favorite. It's one of the larger cabins with white wooden ceilings, chestnut wooden walls and masculine decor. Think hunting lodge meets boating club with a worn leather couch, wood burning fireplace, and vintage rugs. An eclectic mix of artwork—Audubon birds, boat-building schemes, black-and-white photos of figures from the cove's past—is featured throughout.

Once you've settled into the cottage, walk down the long dock to the boat shack. The cozy room is open to the public and makes an excellent place for a small party. There are cards and board games, old books, a fireplace, and a piano. A telephone directly connects to the bar, so place a quick call and order a Marshall Manhattan, Nick's take on the classic tippie made with Anderson Valley oatmeal stout syrup. One of Nick's signature dishes is their barbecued oysters, and you can't leave without trying them. Topped

Chef Kau Speer



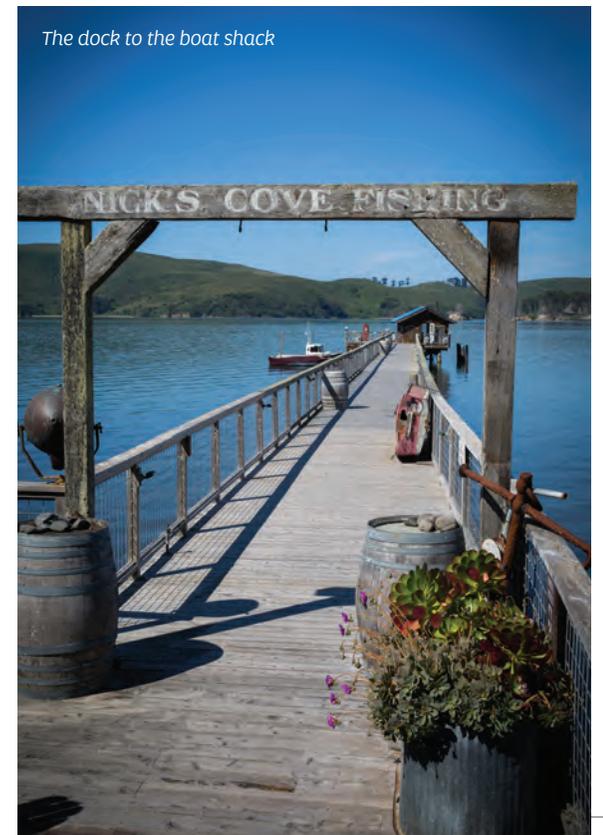
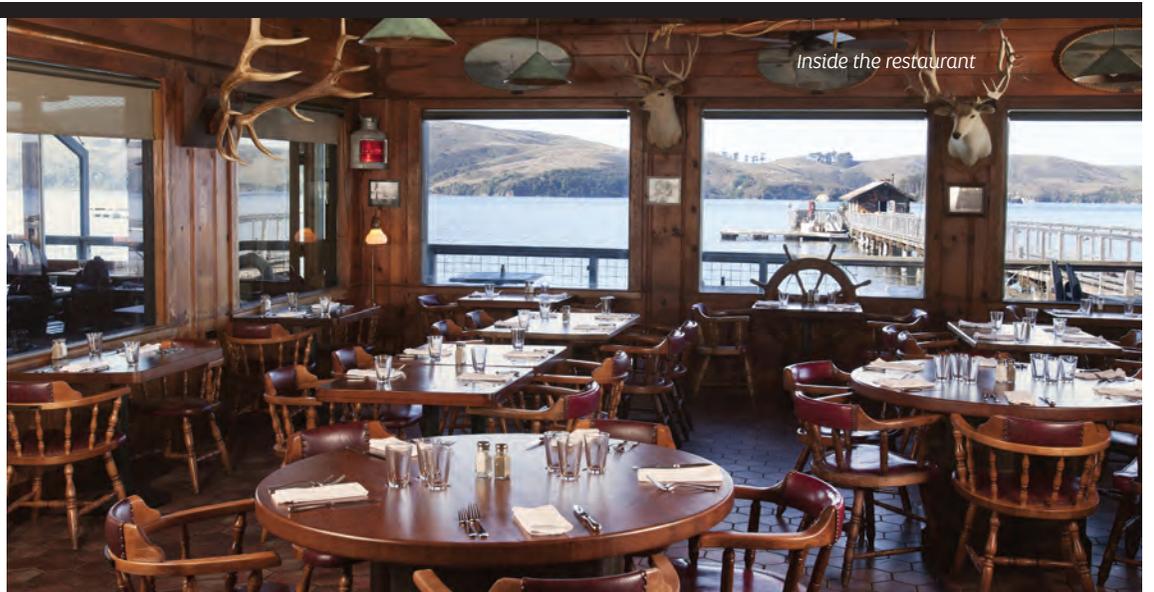
with a garlic parsley butter before being smothered in a tangy, smoky (not sweet) barbecue sauce, the grilled bivalves are a revelation.

While the restaurant is a relatively casual setting, new chef Kau Speer is bringing an elevated style of cuisine to the table. From the wood-fired pork chop to the butter-basted scallops, the fare is seasonal, hearty, and delicious. Seafood is featured throughout—there is ahi poke, prawn enchiladas, local halibut—and the crab macaroni and cheese is sensational. Speer has worked alongside farmer Brendan Thomas to craft a menu that is sustainable and uses as much harvested from the onsite gar-

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den as possible. Thomas has been developing The Croft, Nick's exclusive garden, for the past two years and it is finally flourishing. He's expertly landscaped the terraces so that no space is left without any vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit. A greenhouse ensures that plants survive colder winters and chickens provide fresh eggs.

As Nick's Cove heads toward the busy summer season, there is an exciting mixture of activities on the agenda, from live music to floral arranging classes, to farmers' markets where passerby can shop The Croft's bounty, proving that there's no better time to take a trip to Tomales Bay.



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