

FOOD & DRINK

Cove to Table

Bring the taste of the seaside home with these recipes from legendary Tomales Bay restaurant and getaway Nick's Cove.

Photographs by
FRANKIE FRANKENY





A chingly beautiful Tomales Bay sits at the nexus of so much that embodies the Northern California culinary dream—abundant seafood, artisanal cheese, organic farms on picturesque rolling hills with views of the sea—and Nick's Cove and Cottages is where it all coalesces on a perfectly ramshackle jetty jutting out into the sea.

Ever since a Croatian immigrant named Nick Kojich opened a little seafood restaurant in an old herring-curing facility and started renting out waterfront cottages by the night, road trippers on Highway 1 have had a place to eat shrimp cocktail, gaze out at the water, and enjoy a view that's barely changed for 90-some years. But what has changed is the quality of the food, an evolution jumpstarted in the late 1990s when Bay Area restaurateurs Pat Kuleto and Mark Franz bought Nick's, restored it, and elevated the offerings. Not only does Nick's now have its own farm that produces many of the vegetables on the menu, within 100 miles you've also got some of the best purveyors in the United States, many of which round out the building blocks of the dishes at the restaurant: Hog Island Oysters, Liberty Ducks, Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese, Cowgirl Creamery, County Line Harvest, and the list goes on.

Today Nick's is owned and run by locals Dena and Hans Grunt. Dena's new book, *Table With a View: The History & Recipes of Nick's Cove* (Cameron Books; \$30), chronicles the history of Nick's and collects the recipes they've served over the years. It's Northern California coastal cooking: lots of seafood, salads, Asian and Mexican influences, and a heavy dose of Alice Waters-style produce-first deliciousness. Think warm mushroom and arugula salad with poached egg, or oysters Nickerfeller—Pacific oysters spiked with buttery greens and shredded Toma, a local farmstead cheese. Here Dena shares a few recipes from the book so you can bring Nick's serene seaside getaway vibes into your kitchen and home.

Nick's Cove Cioppino

SERVES 6 TO 8

“Cioppino is one of those San Francisco staples that relies heavily on great seafood, and our version does not disappoint. The richly flavored broth provides a silky base for a profusion of shrimp, crab, mussels, clams, and fish. It takes a bit of patience and one eye on the clock to make a great cioppino, but the result is well worth the effort. Be sure to serve it with the crunchy crostini prepared here or with crusty slices of sourdough bread.”

FOR THE BROTH:

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 large red onion, finely diced
1 small bulb fennel, trimmed, cored and finely chopped
2 ribs celery, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups dry white wine
2 tsp. smoked paprika
1 tsp. red pepper flakes
1 bay leaf
1 tsp. dried thyme
3 cups clam juice or fish stock
1 (28 oz.) can diced tomatoes, with juices
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE CROSTINI

For the crostini:
1 loaf French baguette
3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt

FOR THE SEAFOOD:

2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
1 lb. medium shrimp in the shell, peeled and deveined
1 whole Dungeness crab, freshly cooked and cracked (optional)
18–20 medium mussels, scrubbed clean and beards removed
18–20 small manila clams
3 Rock Cod filets, 8 oz. each, halved crosswise

2 lemons, quartered
1 bunch Italian parsley, leaves chopped

1. Make the broth: In a large pot, warm the oil over medium heat. Add the onion, fennel, celery, and garlic and cook, stirring until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Add the white wine, chili flakes, bay leaf, dried thyme, and smoked paprika and cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Pour in the clam juice and tomatoes with their juices and simmer, stirring occasionally, until fragrant, about 15 minutes.
2. Remove from heat and discard the bay leaf. Using an immersion blender, lightly purée the mixture, so it is still slightly chunky. (Alternatively, in batches, purée the mixture in a blender, then return to the pot.) Season to taste with salt and pepper and check spice level, adding more chili flakes if necessary. Return the pot of broth to the stovetop, cover, and keep warm on the lowest heat setting.
3. To make the crostini, preheat oven to 350°F. Slice French bread diagonally into 8 long pieces, each about ½-inch thick. Place on a baking sheet, brush each side with olive oil, and sprinkle with kosher salt. Toast in the oven until crispy, flipping pieces over halfway through, and checking to make sure they don't get too dark, until crisp and golden brown, 8–10 minutes total.
4. If necessary, reheat the broth over low heat until piping hot. To cook the seafood, melt the butter over medium heat in a large hot skillet. Add all seafood together and carefully sauté, gently stirring for 2–3 minutes. Add the seafood to the hot cioppino sauce, then cover the pot and steam, stirring gently every so often, until the mussels and clams open, the shrimp have turned pink and are opaque and cooked through, and the crab is heated through, about 5 minutes. Discard any clams or mussels that fail to open.
5. Divide seafood evenly into shallow bowls, then add two ladlefuls of hot broth to each bowl. Garnish with crostini, lemon, and fresh chopped parsley. Serve at once.



Dungeness Crab Cakes with Spicy Paprika Mayo

MAKES 6 LARGE CRAB CAKES

“Pan fried until crispy and golden brown, our crab cakes are hearty and rich, packed full of the local Dungeness crab, coated with just a thin layer of bread crumbs to hold everything together, and drizzled with a paprika-spiced mayonnaise. A simple salad of arugula, shaved fennel, and chives dressed with Champagne vinaigrette is a nice accompaniment. Of course, a glass of bubbly would also be a welcome pairing.”

FOR THE SPICY PAPRIKA MAYO:

¾ cup mayonnaise
2 Tbsp. smoked paprika
3 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper, or to taste
Kosher salt

FOR THE CRAB CAKES:

1 lb. fresh-cooked Dungeness crabmeat, picked over for shell fragments
1 cup mayonnaise
2¼ cups panko
1 Tbsp. Old Bay seasoning
2 tsp. smoked paprika
1 tsp. kosher salt
½ cup canola oil
1 lemon, cut into 6 wedges

“Tomales Bay embodies so much of the Northern California Culinary Dream.”

1. Make the mayo: In a small bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, paprika, lemon juice, and cayenne, mixing well. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and cayenne if needed. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. (The mayo can be made up to 4 days in advance and refrigerated.)
2. Make the crab cakes: In a medium bowl, combine the crab, mayonnaise, ¼ cup panko, Old Bay seasoning, paprika, and salt. Using your hands, gently mix together the ingredients, breaking up any large lumps of shell that may remain. Divide the mixture into 6 equal portions, about ¼ cup each. Shape each portion into a cake, and set aside on a baking sheet. Pour the remaining 2 cups panko into a wide, shallow bowl. One at a time, press each crab cake into the panko to coat evenly on all sides.
3. Preheat the oven to 200°F. Line a second sheet pan with paper towels. In a large skillet over medium high heat, warm the canola oil. When the oil is hot, working in batches if necessary to avoid crowding, place the cakes in the pan, spacing them about 1 ½ inches apart. Cook, turning once, until golden brown on both sides, about 6 minutes total. Using a slotted spatula, transfer to the towel-lined pan to drain, and place in oven to keep warm. Repeat with remaining cakes.
4. Serve the cakes warm, drizzled with the mayo, with a wedge of lemon on the side.



Seaside Sources

5 LOCAL BRANDS NICK'S COVE USES THAT YOU CAN, TOO.

THE SUPPLIER: Bellwether Farms
THE PRODUCTS: Luscious dairy, such as sheep's milk yogurt, crème fraîche, and ricotta

THE SUPPLIER: Bodega Bay Oyster Company
THE PRODUCTS: Miyagis, Kumamotos, mussels, and other bivalves

THE SUPPLIER: County Line Harvest
THE PRODUCTS: Baby lettuces and heirloom Italian chicories

THE SUPPLIER: Cowgirl Creamery
THE PRODUCTS: Legendary cheeses like triple-cream Mt. Tam and washed rind Red Hawk

Homemade S'mores

MAKES 8 S'MORES

"At Nick's, we wanted to recreate that nostalgic feeling that many associate with experiences they've had around a campfire on Tomales Bay, so we decided to celebrate those special memories with a handcrafted s'mores kit. It comes complete with homemade graham crackers and marshmallows and locally made TCHO chocolate. The best part of this story is that we donate money from every s'mores kit we sell to organizations that help kids in the nearby city of Petaluma. So the box is both *filled* with good things and *does* good things!"



FOR THE MARSHMALLOWS:

1½ Tbsp. powdered gelatin
½ cup light corn syrup
1 cup granulated sugar
¼ tsp. kosher salt
1½ tsp. vanilla bean paste or pure vanilla extract
¼ cup powdered sugar
¼ cornstarch

FOR THE GRAHAM CRACKERS:

1 cup whole wheat flour
¼ cup all-purpose flour
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
¼ tsp. baking soda
¼ tsp. kosher salt
¼ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
½ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
¼ cup granulated sugar
¼ cup honey
½ tsp. pure vanilla extract

8 squares semisweet or milk chocolate

1. Make the marshmallows: In a bowl, whisk together ½ cup lukewarm water with the gelatin. Set aside. In a heavy medium saucepan, whisk together ½ cup water, corn syrup, granulated sugar, and salt over medium-high heat and bring to a boil, whisking constantly. Clip a candy thermometer onto the side of the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture registers 248°F, 10–12 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow the syrup to cool to 212°F.
2. Pour the hot sugar syrup into the clean bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. With the mixer on medium speed, slowly pour the gelatin mixture into the sugar syrup in a thin, steady stream. Add the vanilla bean paste and continue to beat until light and fluffy, about 10 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, grease the bottom and sides of a 6-inch square baking dish with melted butter. Sift the powdered sugar and cornstarch together into a bowl, then add ¼ cup of the mixture to the greased dish. Shake the dish until it is evenly coated on the bottom and sides with the cornstarch mixture.
4. Using a clean rubber spatula, scrape the marshmallow mixture into the prepared baking dish and spread into an even layer. Sift 2 tablespoons of the remaining cornstarch mixture evenly over the top of the marshmallow mixture. Cover with plastic wrap and leave at room temperature for at least 8 hours or overnight to set. Set the remaining cornstarch mixture aside.
5. Cut the marshmallows into 1½-inch squares; you should have 8 marshmallows. Roll each marshmallow in the remaining cornstarch mixture to coat. Arrange the marshmallows in an airtight container in a single layer so they are not touching. Set aside at room temperature.
6. Make the graham crackers: In a medium bowl, whisk together both flours, the cinnamon, baking soda, salt, and nutmeg. In the stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the honey and vanilla, and mix for another minute. Add the flour mixture in three equal parts, beating well and scraping down the sides of the bowl after each addition. Transfer the dough to a work surface, press into a disc, and let rest for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 325°F.
7. Dust a large piece (12 x 12 inch square) of parchment paper, and a rolling pin, with all-purpose flour. Transfer dough disc to the floured parchment and roll the dough into a large 10-inch square that is about 1/8-inch thick. Using a ruler and a pizza wheel or pastry cutter, cut the dough into 2½-inch squares, trimming the edges if needed to even them. Just cut the squares; don't separate them. Using the tines of a fork, dock each square 2 or 3 times. Transfer the parchment with the dough onto a large sheet pan.
8. Bake the squares, rotating the pan back to front once halfway through baking, until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and, using a small, sharp knife or a metal bench scraper, recut the squares while the crackers are still warm. Let cool completely on the pan on a wire rack, then separate the squares. (The graham crackers will keep in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 6 days.)
9. To assemble the s'mores, arrange the graham crackers, marshmallows, and chocolate squares on a platter along with some long sticks or roasting skewers. Roast the marshmallows over a fire, then assemble the s'mores by layering a graham cracker with some chocolate, a molten marshmallow, and another graham cracker. Eat right away!

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➤ For more recipes, pick up *Table With a View: The History and Recipes of Nick's Cove.*

\$30, NICKSCOVE.COM

