



Keb' Mo' and band put on powerful show at Lobero

ENTERTAINMENT | D3

SECTION **D**  
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Codeword .....D2 Dear Abby .....D2 Comics .....D4  
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2011

PICKS of the WEEK



## Season's eatings

Bistro 1111's new executive chef Martin Alcala embraces nature's clock



Bistro 1111's dining room.



THOMAS KELSEY/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS



### Organic Honey Balsamic Sun-dried Olives

The newest member of the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers Market Association, Makela Olive Co., offers an exceptional selection of organic olives. These Honey Balsamic Sun-dried Olives are some of the best I've tried. Stop by for a sample! With subtle sweet undertones and a salty finish, they can be served on a cheese platter, in a mixed green salad, or topping a crostini appetizer, the Fix of the Week on page D6. Available at the Wednesday Solvang, Thursday Goleta and Carpinteria, Friday Montecito, Saturday Santa Barbara and Sunday Camino Real farmers markets. \$4.50 for a 5-ounce jar.



### Cranberry Walnut Goat Cheese

I hope you've all had a chance to try Drake Family Farms' line of fresh goat cheese since its introduction about a month ago. If you haven't, head down to sample the eight varieties of farmstead artisan cheeses. The newest blend incorporates dried cranberries and walnuts, which is perfect for the holidays. Spread onto a cracker for a festive hors d'oeuvre, smear onto a toasted bagel or crumble over a mixed green salad. Available at the Thursday Carpinteria and Saturday Santa Barbara markets. \$6 per 4-ounce container or three for \$15.



### Baby arugula

This spicy tender green from Carpinteria farmer Tom Shepherd of Shepherds Farms can be added to wraps and sandwiches. It's also tasty in salads paired with a sweet, acidic dressing to balance the strong flavor. Arugula is extremely nutritious; it's a good source of dietary fiber; vitamins A, C and K; calcium; iron; and more. Available at the Tuesday Santa Barbara, Thursday Goleta and Carpinteria, Saturday Santa Barbara and Sunday Camino Real markets. \$1 per quarter ounce.

Sam Edelman is general manager of the Santa Barbara Certified Farmers Market Association; photos by Matt Wier, News-Press

Find out when local farmers markets are held in the Culinary Calendar on page D7.

By **BRETT LEIGH DICKS**  
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

**W**hen the Hyatt corporation took over Hotel Mar Monte in Santa Barbara in January 2010, it wasn't only the resort's 80-year-old property that received a makeover.

The restaurant, Bistro 1111, also was given a new lease on life via the appointment of a new executive chef, Martin Alcala.

Having previously served as executive sous chef at Hyatt Regency Long Beach, Mr. Alcala was swiftly transferred to Hyatt Santa Barbara. The promotion meant that, at 30 years old, the rising star became one of the company's youngest executive chefs.

While it was a position Mr. Alcala didn't hesitate to take, the decision to move from Orange County was by no means an easy one.

"I come from a large family," Mr. Alcala said. "And we love spending time together. So that side of things made it pretty tough coming up here. But coming here has been a great opportunity in so many other ways."

Mr. Alcala, now 31, arrived in October of 2010 and immediately set about transforming Bistro 1111 into a restaurant reflective of both the Hyatt name and its Santa Barbara setting. It has been a steep learning curve with plenty of long hours not only for the executive chef but everyone involved.

"It has definitely been a lot of hard work getting the restaurant in order," Mr. Alcala admitted. "And it's been a big challenge for everyone."

"My culinary staff has done a great job accepting Hyatt and a new approach with new standards. They're really interested in learning and growing and their attitude of being willing to be better has really helped."

Please see **CHEF** on **D8** Executive chef Martin Alcala prepares tiramisu at Hyatt Santa Barbara's Bistro 1111.

## CHEF'S CHOICE

### Appetizer



#### Crab Cakes

A guest favorite. "We use 100 percent lump crab meat and serve them on a bed of avocado relish with a light drizzle of chipotle aioli and cilantro oil," said executive chef Martin Alcala.

### Salad



#### Ancho-Rubbed Ahi Salad

The salad is made with ruby red sushi-grade ahi, watercress and wild arugula and is tossed in a light citrus mango wasabi vinaigrette.

### Entree



#### Roasted Local Sea Bass

The bass, caught daily from waters around the Channel Islands, is served with white bean ragu, local olives, sauteed spinach and oven-roasted vine-ripened tomatoes.

### Dessert



#### Warm Chocolate Souf. e

The decadent souff. e is topped with a cloud of whipped cream and dusted with powdered sugar.

**SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS**

**Wine Club**  
newspress.com

*100% enjoyment by vol.*

**D**ecember ushers in celebration, and the Santa Barbara News-Press Wine Club is excited to feature local wines ideal for this month's bevy of festivities.

The holidays will mean another round of important meals, with lots of signature dishes on the table and lots of palates to please. One wine can't fit the bill on its own, so variety will be key. And since traditional foods — with their richness of flavors and textures — are bound to reign, wines that are both complex and approachable will be essential.

Whether it's a wine to bring to that party, to stuff into a stocking or to feature at your year-end feast, this month's selections will not disappoint. One of them even marks the club's first-ever bubbly. And remember, you can find out more about the Santa Barbara News-Press Wine Club — and its two-bottle Silver membership and three-bottle Gold

membership — at [www.newspress.com](http://www.newspress.com).  
**Riverbench 2009 Cork Jumper Sparkling Wine**

**Gabe Saglie**

Sparkling wine is the beverage that defines celebration. After all, who doesn't love that oft-rowdy pop, the rush of foam, the dancing bubbles? It's a perfect companion to start an evening, end a meal or count down the midnight hour.

The Santa Maria Valley is relatively new to the production of sparkling wines. There are a handful of well-known labels producing sparklers now. But even just three years ago, when Riverbench Vineyard & Winery produced its first bubbly, it was on its own. That 2008 sparkling wine began as an experiment.

"But it was a really pleasant surprise," says general manager Laura Mohseni.

It turns out that the Riverbench estate off Foxen Canyon Road, which is planted almost entirely to chardonnay and pinot noir, lends itself perfectly to bubbly friendly

fruit. "The climate is just right, our acids are high and we can pick a bit earlier, when the grapes have a bit less sugar," Mohseni adds.

Like that initial vintage, the 2009 Riverbench sparkler featured in this month's shipment is made from 100 percent chardonnay grapes. It was crafted by legendary winemaker Chuck Ortman, whose career dates back to the Napa Valley of the 1960s. The man who'd go on to found well-known Meridien Vineyards in Paso Robles would also gain the title Mr. Chardonnay for being one of the first winemakers in the state to explore barrel fermentation of the popular white grape. This program marked Ortman's first foray into sparkling winemaking, and perhaps his last. Ortman, who's 73, retired from the business just last month.

Only bubbly made in the Champagne region of France can be called true

Please see **CLUB** on **D6**



MIKE ELIASON / NEWS-PRESS

The Willows' Crab Cakes with Old English Mustard Sauce and Spicy Corn Relish

**CULINARY SOS**

**LOCAL EDITION**

Is there a dish at a Santa Barbara County eatery you've tried and want the recipe for? Tell us about it. Email your request to life@newspress.com or send to Santa Barbara News-Press, c/o Life section, P.O. Box 1359, Santa Barbara 93102-1359. Include your name, city and phone number.

## These crab bites really take the cake

**D**ear SOS: I helped my husband celebrate his birthday at The Willows in the Chumash Casino. The excellent crab cakes with corn salsa were the best I have had in my many years of searching for the correct balance of ingredients. The entire meal was marvelous to the taste buds, but I hope the fantastic chef will share his recipe for crab cakes. —Jeanette Carpenter, Santa Barbara

Dear Jeanette, Willows Restaurant Chef Sergio Renteria's Crab Cakes With Old English Mustard Sauce and Spicy Corn Relish are perfect for any occasion — including holiday parties! He was kind enough to share the recipe with readers. Happy early birthday to your hubby — you can prepare them yourself next year!

### CRAB CAKES WITH OLD ENGLISH MUSTARD SAUCE AND SPICY CORN RELISH

- Crab cakes:  
 1 egg  
 2 tablespoons lemon juice  
 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
 ¾ cup panko breadcrumbs, plus more for dredging  
 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce  
 1 tablespoon Tabasco sauce  
 ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped

- ¼ cup mayonnaise  
 ½ cup fresh chives, chopped  
 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat  
 Salt, to taste  
 Pepper, to taste  
 Spicy Corn Relish (see recipe)  
 Old English Mustard Sauce (see recipe)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix egg, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, breadcrumbs, Worcestershire, Tabasco, parsley, mayonnaise, chives, crab meat, salt and pepper. With mixture, form 2- to 3-ounce cakes, then dredge cakes in panko breadcrumbs. In saute pan over low heat, sear cakes to golden brown, then flip cakes over. Put saute pan and cakes in oven for 6-8 minutes. To plate, place corn relish on plate, then top with crab cake. Finish with cream mustard sauce.  
**Yield:** about 10 cakes

### SPICY CORN RELISH

- 1 tablespoon olive oil  
 1 cup red bell pepper, diced  
 3 cups roasted corn kernels  
 2 teaspoons minced garlic  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and minced  
 1 cup tomatoes, seeded and chopped

- ½ red onion, diced  
 4 tablespoons cilantro, chopped  
 4 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped  
 3 teaspoons white wine vinegar  
 Salt, to taste  
 Pepper, to taste

Combine all ingredients in small bowl.  
**Yield:** about 4-5 cups

### OLD ENGLISH MUSTARD SAUCE

- 2 cups sour cream  
 ½ cup whole grain mustard

- ¼ cup dry white wine vinegar  
 2 teaspoons sugar

Combine sour cream and mustard, then mix with vinegar. Add sugar to balance the flavor.  
**Yield:** about 3 cups

## Christmas cocktail

Christmas parties can be a civilized way to celebrate the season, not as frantic as Christmas Eve or as fraught with familial tensions as Christmas Dinner.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

It's also an excellent time to break out the light but festive cocktails that can elevate the occasion. Jackson Cannon, owner of The Hawthorne bar in Boston, advises keeping the drinks light since there's likely sweets in abundance. Champagne cocktails with a touch of cognac, calvados or American brandy can give you the flavor of those wintery spirits at an alcohol content that won't end your night too early. Want to try your own Christmas cocktail? Here is a festive recipe.

### CHILLY PEAR TREE

To freeze the pears for this recipe, buy the canned pear halves in syrup, drain them, cut them into chunks, then arrange them on a parchment paper lined baking sheet. Freeze, then transfer to a plastic bag until needed.

- 3 canned light syrup-packed pear halves, cut into chunks and frozen  
 8 ounces pear syrup (from the can)  
 4 ounces vodka  
 1 ounce lemon juice  
 Pinch cinnamon  
 Pinch salt  
 2 sprigs fresh rosemary, to garnish

In a blender, combine all ingredients except the rosemary and puree until very smooth. Serve in a cocktail glass. Garnish each glass with a rosemary sprig.  
**Yield:** 2 servings  
**Source:** AP Food Editor J.M. Hirsch

# Season guides menu

**■ CHEF**

Continued from Page D1

The greatest change Mr. Alcalá has made thus far has been to the bistro's menu. While it still offers contemporary American cuisine with a Californian flair, there is now greater emphasis placed on seasonal and sustainable produce. In the more than 12 months that Mr. Alcalá has been at the helm, Bistro 1111's menu has changed four times.

"That's true," Mr. Alcalá affirmed.

"We're onto our fourth menu," he said, accounting for the seasons. "That's a big change from before. And we're also offering daily seafood specials and have incorporated more local and sustainable seafood into the menu."

"We want the restaurant to offer a real Santa Barbara experience. And that carries through to the wine list as well, incorporating all of those great Santa Barbara wines."

The seasonal approach affects the hotel setting itself. Winter dishes are wholesome and comforting and perfect for lingering over the dinner table while summer inclusions are light and easily transferable to poolside.

"In summer, we highlight fresh produce and do a lot of grilling," said Mr. Alcalá. "We do grilled shrimp with a little lime juice and olive oil and put it on top of a roasted corn guacamole. It goes great with a cold beer or a nice glass of wine by the pool."

"In fall and winter, we give customers a little bit more food and incorporate starches. A nice winter dish is our filet mignon with a wild mushroom risotto. It has chanterelle, portobello and a little truffle oil. You just can't go wrong with risotto when it's cold."

Both food and family have long held equal prominence in the chef's life and, at times, the two have gone hand in hand.

"It might sound crazy, but I have had aspirations of being a chef since I was 12 years old," Mr. Alcalá admitted from his immaculate kitchen at the Hyatt. "My mom and dad both love to cook and I have always admired that. I come from a big family and it's a family tradition to cook and eat together."

His mother would cook for the family of seven during the week while his father assumed cooking duties on the weekends.

The Alcalá family moved to Anaheim from the small Mexican town of Jalos, located about 25 miles south of Guadalajara, when Mr. Alcalá was 5 years old. During his senior year at Anaheim High School, Mr. Alcalá's English teacher provided the impetus for the culinary arts to become his professional focus.

"She knew some people in the Disney corporation and set up a chef traineeship after (I graduated from) high school," Mr. Alcalá recalled, adding that he worked in the main kitchen at Disneyland. "I immediately fell in love with the whole culinary scene."

Mr. Alcalá graduated at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Pasadena prior to undertaking an internship with Hyatt Hotels and Resorts.

After starting at Hyatt Regency Irvine as a line cook, he moved on to the Hyatt Regency Long Beach, all the while refining the skills, discipline and expectations that come with working at a major hotel company.

Working with Hyatt has afforded Mr. Alcalá a diverse range of culinary experiences. As well as heading his own kitchen, he has participated in many company-sponsored events, including catering for VIPs at the Grand Prix of Long Beach, Super Bowl in Miami, Flavor Magazine Food Show in Newport Beach and the opening of the Hyatt Regency Curacao Resort.

"The difference with events like those is you're coming into somewhere new and you're in unfamiliar surroundings," explained Mr. Alcalá. "It's nerve-racking and a lot of work and a huge challenge. But cooking is always a challenge, whether you're cooking for 3,000 people or three people. It's the challenge of it that I love."

While Hyatt has offered Mr. Alcalá a variety of challenges to date, perhaps the greatest is the one that he and his colleagues at Hyatt Santa Barbara are currently orchestrating. The hotel has already refurbished more than half its rooms, lobby, landscaping and pool, and the renovation of the remaining rooms under way. In 2013 attention will turn to the restaurant.

"It's not set in stone, but we're looking at a concept called Shore," explained Mr. Alcalá. "It's a seafood and steak house. It's a



THOMAS KELSEY/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

### HEIRLOOM CAPRESE SALAD

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 3 slices fresh mozzarella                    | 2 tablespoons Basil Oil (see recipe)                 |
| 3 basil leaves                               | 2 slices grilled ciabatta                            |
| 1 tablespoon Balsamic Reduction (see recipe) | 1 chip Peppercorn Parmesan (see recipe), for garnish |

Stack baby arugula, tomatoes, mozzarella and basil leaves in alternating layers. Drizzle with Balsamic Reduction and Basil Oil. Serve with side of grilled ciabatta. Garnish with Parmesan chip.

**Yield:** 1 serving

**Source:** Martin Alcalá, executive chef at Hyatt Santa Barbara's Bistro 1111

### BALSAMIC REDUCTION

- |                         |             |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| 2 cups balsamic vinegar | 1 cup honey |
|-------------------------|-------------|

Place ingredients in pot on stove over low heat and reduce by half. Cool and place into squirt bottle.

**Yield:** ½ cups

### BASIL OIL

- |                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| ½ cup blanched basil leaves | 1 cup olive oil |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|

Mix ingredients in blender.

**Yield:** 1½ cups

### PEPPERCORN PARMESAN

- |                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| 1½ cups shredded Parmesan  | pepper |
| 1 tablespoon cracked black |        |

Form 12 circles of shredded Parmesan on waxed paper on sheet pan using 3-inch diameter cookie cutter. Sprinkle black pepper on top and bake at 350 degrees until golden, about 2-3 minutes. Cool for about 5 minutes and remove from wax paper. Store in cool, dry place.

**Yield:** 12 rounds



### GRILLED DAY BOAT SCALLOPS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 3 large scallops  | 1 slice avocado   |
| Salt, to taste  | 1 bunch watercress  |
| Pepper, to taste  | 2 tablespoons lemon Dijon vinaigrette (preferably Girard's brand) |
| 4 tablespoons Lemon and Spinach Cream (see recipe), chilled | 1 tablespoon Basil Oil (see other recipe)                         |
| 2 tablespoons backfin crab meat                             |   |

Grill both sides of scallops on hot grill or over high heat, about 2-3 minutes per side. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Ladle Lemon and Spinach Cream on bottom of bowl. Place crab in middle of bowl and top with sliced avocado. Toss watercress with lemon Dijon vinaigrette and place on avocado. Arrange hot scallops in bowl and drizzle with Basil Oil.

**Yield:** 1 serving

**Source:** Martin Alcalá, executive chef at Hyatt Santa Barbara's Bistro 1111

### LEMON AND SPINACH CREAM

- |                               |                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 cup sour cream              | 1 tablespoon lemon juice |
| ½ cup blanched spinach leaves | Salt, to taste           |
| 1 tablespoon roasted garlic   | Pepper, to taste         |

Blend all ingredients.

**Yield:** about 1 cup

great concept for this location because it takes advantage of our fresh fish, but also gives the customers here what they want, which is great steaks."

With Bistro 1111 having smoothly transitioned into the Hyatt brand and Mr. Alcalá now settled into Santa Barbara life with his wife, Maggie, and three children, Adrian, 5, Santiago, 3, and Noah, 9 months, he is eager to explore the local culinary scene.

"Santa Barbara is well-known everywhere for its culinary expertise," Mr. Alcalá enthused. "There are a lot of great chefs and restaurants here and I need to do a little bit better job of getting out there and experiencing more of the food."

"This is really a great place for chefs and that's one of the reasons I am glad to be here."

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