

FOOD SCENE

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Culinary Curators

San Ramon's Hudson Daniel Group aims to connect the world, one food experience at a time.

BY ALEJANDRA SARAGOZA



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When Dan Cassara and Andy Neiman set out to start an online marketplace, they didn't just want to sell artisanal foods and handmade products—they wanted to tell the stories behind them, too.

"We believe people should know exactly where their food comes from," says Cassara, "and we want to connect them to the special makers who create it."

In November 2017, the duo launched Hudson Daniel Gourmet, an online marketplace where foodies can discover nearly 150 artisans; browse through dozens of recipes; and shop for 500-plus specialty foods, beverages, and accessories. The marketplace features items produced by exceptional makers from across the country—including hard-to-find East Bay–crafted products, such as the savory jams created by Concord's Hot Pepper Market, all-natural marshmallows baked by Oakland's The Candy, and loose-leaf teas from Livermore's Luna Tea Co.

Shoppers even get a behind-the-scenes look into how some goods are produced, in Hudson Daniel's *Meet Your Maker* video series. The first season, set to air on YouTube TV June 1, follows Cassara and Neiman as they drive down the California coast in search of artisans.

Later this year, Cassara and Neiman will start offering themed subscription boxes (such as barbecue or Italian), as well as food-centric excursions.

All of these experiences are meant to complement the other brands under the San Ramon–based Hudson Daniel Group umbrella, such as Hudson Daniel Adventures, which develops an array of global getaways focused on food, lifestyle, and self-improvement. The first trip takes place this summer in Bali, but many more are in the works.

"We want to be the ultimate culinary destination," says Neiman. "And we want to create intimate, interactive experiences that encourage people to eat with purpose, travel with purpose, and live with purpose." hudsondanielgroup.com.

TRENDING NOW

Fish in the Raw

Island poke packs a punch in the East Bay.

BY NICHOLAS BOER

As a chef on Kauai, I would spend mornings filleting whole fish, including yellowfin tunas that outweighed me by 100 pounds. I always seemed to be racing to finish dinner prep, so more often than not, I had lunch on the fly: scraping chunks of ruby red fish from the skeleton, tossing them with Hawaiian salt and sesame oil, and eating it all straight out of the bowl. This is poke at its most bare-bones.

Traditional Hawaiian poke is slightly more involved, with the addition of minced green onions, shaved sweet onions, a little limu (seaweed), and soy sauce. This is what Roy Yamaguchi enjoyed during his childhood summer vacations on Maui. After Yamaguchi moved to the islands, he developed a chain of island restaurants (the first Roy's opened in 1988), where he gave poke a refined twist.

A popular recipe called for Maui onions, chives, *rayu* (spicy sesame oil), soy sauce, seaweed, yuzu, and roasted *inamona* (kukui nuts). This was tossed with uniformly diced ahi and extra virgin olive oil, garnished with frisée and limu, and sprinkled with crispy garlic and shallots.

Upscale-style poke such as this arrived in the Bay Area in 2003, when the first Pacific Catch in San Francisco offered poke as both an appetizer and in a bowl over sushi rice—and became its top seller. The concept has been so successful that the seventh Pacific Catch opened in Dublin in 2016, and an eighth is slated to launch in Walnut Creek this spring. The Walnut Creek location will feature the most intriguing poke options yet, including a “taco” of fresh jicama shells filled with cubed *kampachi* (yellowtail), orange,



pomegranate, yuzu, ginger, mint, micro greens, and crispy quinoa.

Happily, you needn't go to a full-service restaurant—or Hawaii—to get great poke; the East Bay has seen an explosion of fast-casual poke spots recently. We sampled several and listed our three favorites below, all of which serve lunch and dinner daily.

POKEATERY

Of all the assembly-line-style poke spots we tried, Pokeatery was the freshest and most authentic. Served in a box rather than a bowl, the ingredients stay separate so you can truly taste the fish. Innovative bases include kelp noodles, citrus kale, and *uala* (purple sweet potato) chips. The mix-ins are classic—cucumber, limu, and onions—and the sauces are delicate. Try the pokocado toast (avocado toast with poke toppings) and the pineapple Dole whip for dessert. 1345 Newell Ave., Walnut Creek, (925) 287-1888, pokeatery.com.

NORTH SHORE POKE CO.

There are three poke restaurants in Pleasanton alone, but North Shore was by far our favorite in terms of both atmosphere and quality. For freshness, the fish choices are wisely kept to two (ahi and salmon), and for \$1 more, you can get soba noodles as your base. The extras are minimal but include crispy onions and garlic; the creamy Waimea sauce is one of the best we tried. Ripe mango, avocado, and macadamia nuts comprise some of the premium add-ons (for \$1 each). 6786 Bernal Ave., Pleasanton, (925) 523-3848, northshorepokeco.com.

FISH FACE POKE BAR

Hands down our top choice, Fish Face might seem pricey—until you see the portions. The fish is sushi grade, includes sturgeon and sustainable Scottish salmon, and is served in a cold steel bowl. Charred scallions, rice crisps, and togarashi are among the creative mix-ins (all extra). But the creamy cilantro pesto (use sparingly) is out of this world. Try the “Spicy 41” bowl, featuring cilantro, seaweed, and spicy kimchee ponzu with sushi rice. 5959 Shellmound St., Emeryville, (510) 907-3947, fishfacepokebar.com.

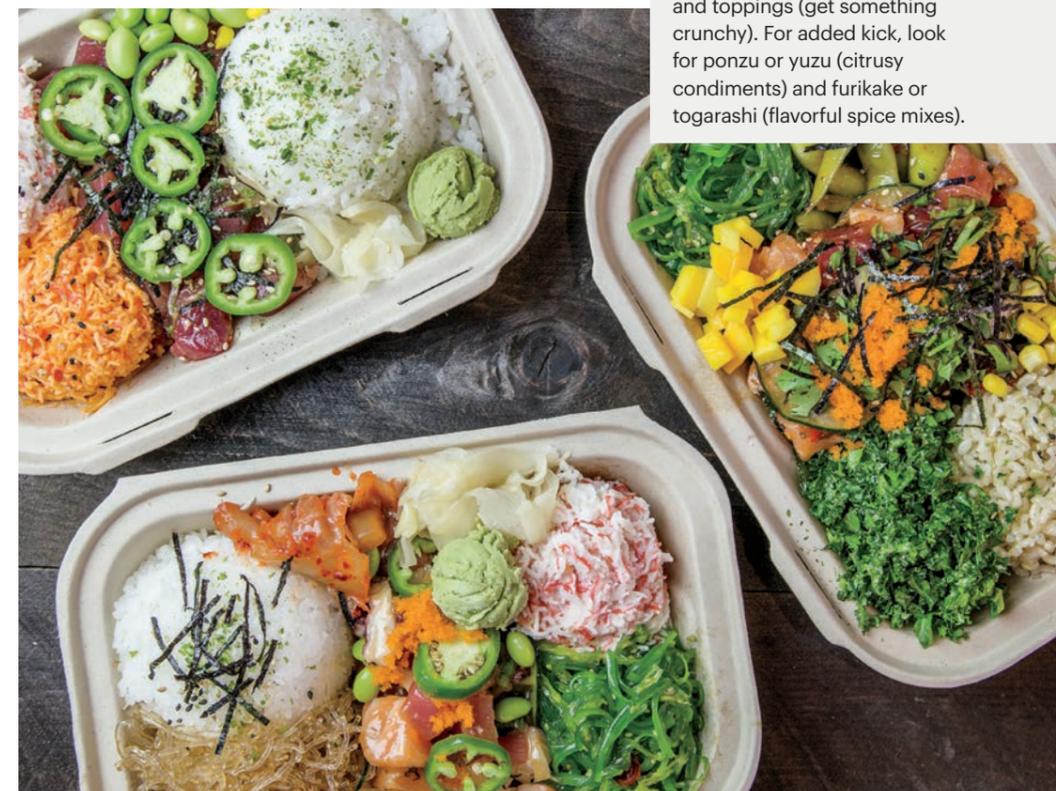


Opposite page: Jicama *kampachi* tacos from Pacific Catch. This page, from top: Pokeatery's Dole whip and Dole whip float; the restaurant's poke boxes.



Build a Bowl

While many poke places offer endless combinations, it's best to start out simple. You typically pick a base (if you choose hot rice, ask for it on the side); fish (stick with salmon and ahi at first); a simple sauce (most offer a soy-sesame blend); add-ins (cucumber and onions will do); and toppings (get something crunchy). For added kick, look for ponzu or yuzu (citrusy condiments) and furikake or togarashi (flavorful spice mixes).



KINGMOND YOUNG

COURTESY OF POKEATERY

ROUNDUP



Spice Up Your Spring

Get ready to cook spicy street eats, reinvented burgers, and Far East fare—thanks to new cookbooks from local culinarians.

BY LINDA LENHOFF

Let East Bay chefs take you on a culinary tour that begins in Oakland and travels to the Far East—with a stop in the heart of America. Start by strolling the packed aisles of Berkeley Bowl for eclectic veggies and dreamy spices, then get ready to make burgers, Thai, chai, and more, as our local master chefs offer up fresh creations to invigorate your springtime feasts.

THE BERKELEY BOWL COOKBOOK

By Laura McLively

Foodie and dietitian Laura McLively, who blogs at *My Berkeley Bowl*, wondered how to cook all those frilly green veggies and oddly shaped fruits overflowing the bins at the 41-year-old, family-run market. You could say she wrote the book on the place: McLively starts with “leaves” like epazote (served with corn tortillas) and mizuna (prepared with gooey, delicious goat Brie grilled cheese), then turns the aisle to “flowers, seeds, and pods,” like fragrant cranberry bean succotash dashed with crispy sage. Make a stop at “spores and succulents” to find a recipe for fiddlehead tempura, and “stems” for Moroccan cardoon stew. Top off your veggie fest with a dragon fruit and lime curd tart. You’ll be cooking inventively in no time.

THE JUHU BEACH CLUB COOKBOOK: INDIAN SPICE, OAKLAND SOUL

By Preeti Mistry and Sarah Henry

Revisit the creations of chef Preeti Mistry’s hip and (sadly) recently closed Temescal-based Juhu Beach Club in this feast-filled cookbook. The former *Top Chef* contender and culinary rock star reinvents Indian-inspired street eats from her childhood. (Must-tries include ginger chile Dungeness crab and *sev puri*—crispy, deep-fried dough with veggies—both of which are sure to get your party started.) Drool-worthy photos and a fun, chatty tone will keep you mesmerized between turns at the oven. And don’t worry: Mistry’s Navi Kitchen in Emeryville remains open for date night.

HAWKER FARE: STORIES AND RECIPES FROM A REFUGEE CHEF’S ISAN THAI AND LAO ROOTS

By James Syhabout with John Birdsall

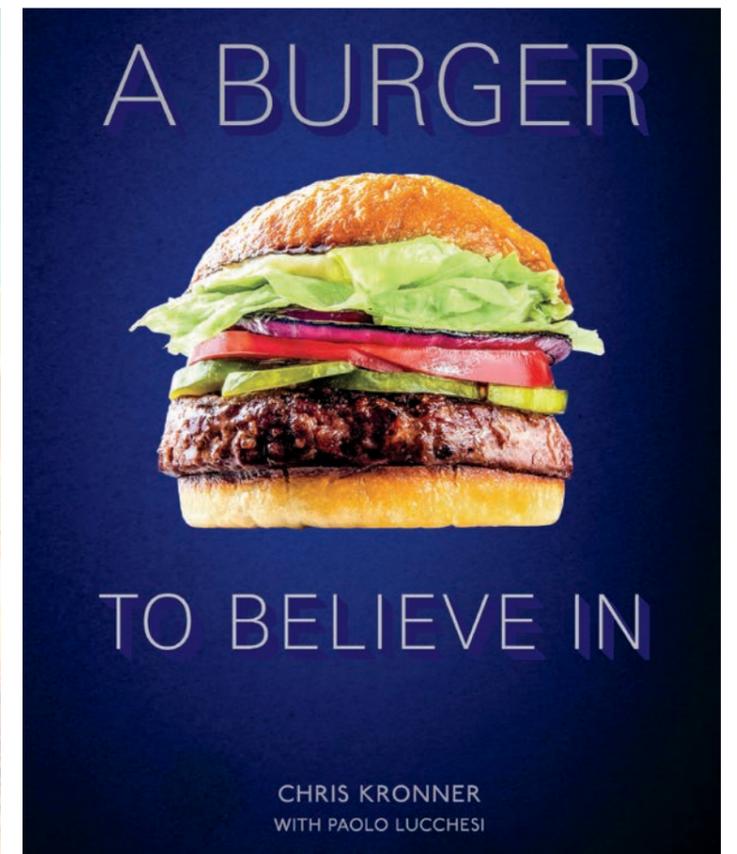
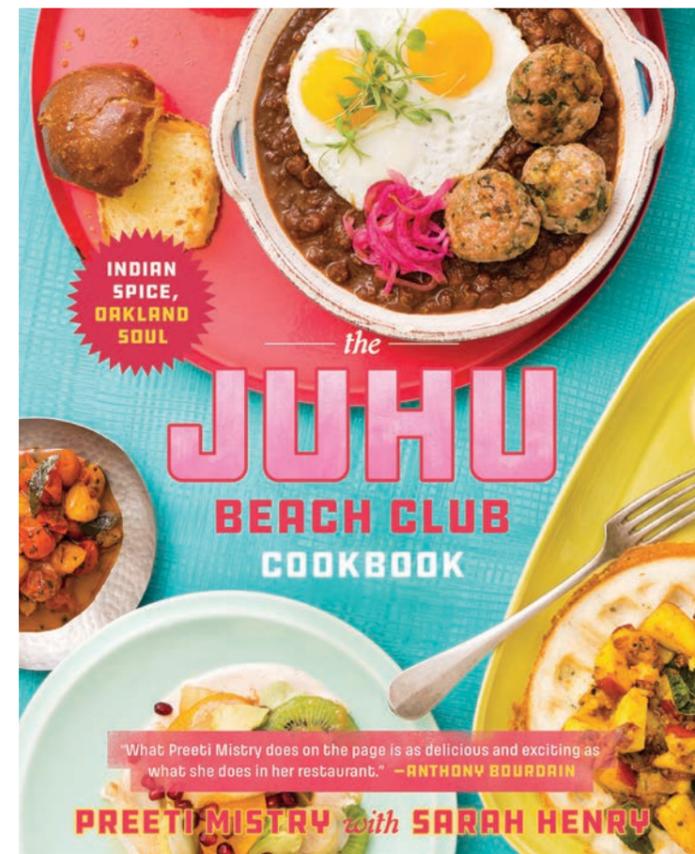
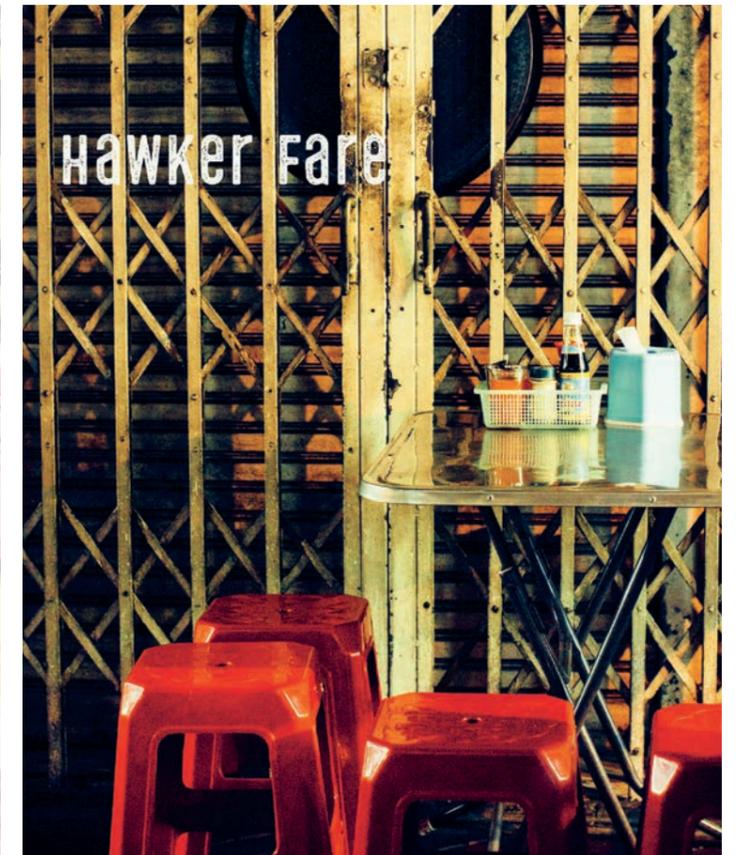
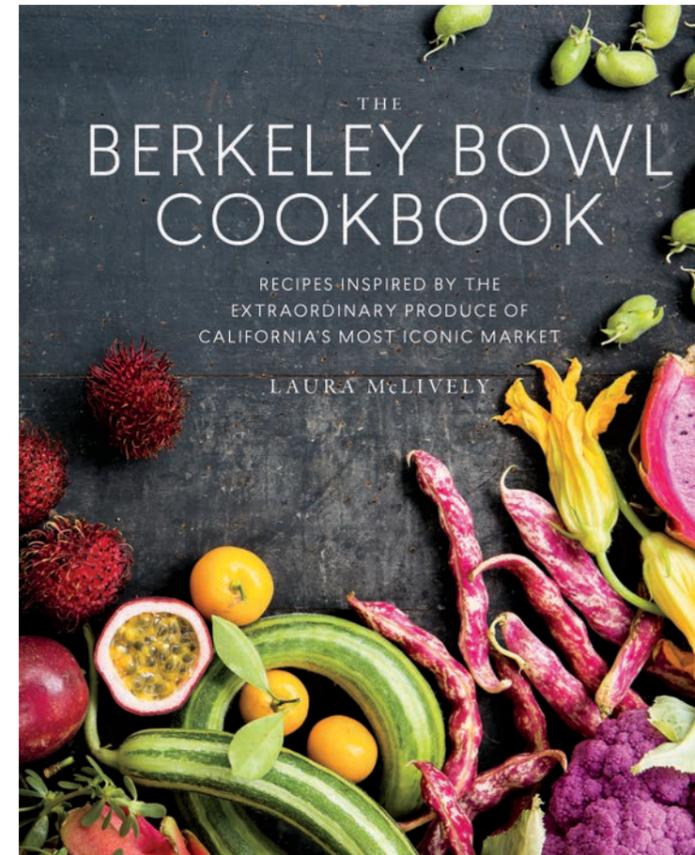
Two-Michelin-starred Commis chef James Syhabout’s long-awaited, striking volume presents tales of his days spent cooking and traveling, along with carefully guided (and stunningly photographed) recipes for home-style Thai and Lao dishes. Gather up your

friends, then set out some *sakoo yut sai*—tapioca dumplings stuffed with caramel-cooked pork, salted turnip, and peanuts (a gluten-free conversation starter). Follow up with luscious Isan barbecue chicken and sultry Lao pork-rib stew. Then, for dessert, enchant your guests with a lotus blossom sundae. Syhabout helps you fill your pantry with the right spicy ingredients—to tide you over ’til your next visit to Commis.

A BURGER TO BELIEVE IN: RECIPES AND FUNDAMENTALS

By Chris Kronner and Paolo Lucchesi

Get ready to wrap your mind (and your mouth) around juicy American hamburgers and their ideal accompaniments with the May release of Chris Kronner’s burger bible. The chef of Oakland’s KronnerBurger hands you the spatula to craft perfectly simple, totally delectable burgers. In the tome, Kronner meditates on the Zen of buns, along with the proper proportions for Calabrian chile and tofu mayo. Master the art of perfect onion rings and vegan chili-cheese fries (at home)—and up your fish-fillet game with a fried crab burger. Thanks to Kronner, it’s French fry pavé for everyone!



ERIC WOLFINGER

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ERIN SCOTT; ERIC WOLFINGER (2); ALANNA HALE