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BLOODY MARY
MADNESS!
- PAGE 25 -

BAKERIES, BISTROS, DINERS, AND DIVES

BREAKFAST ON THE STRAIT

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⊕ THE HISTORY OF CARQUINEZ / PAY "HOMAGE" IN MARTINEZ / AUSTIN SCOTT: FROM BENICIA TO BROADWAY

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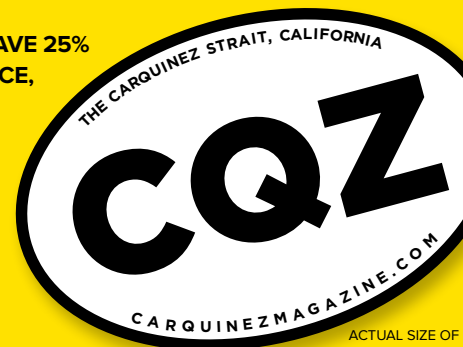


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Carquinez winter 2020



Better get to Momo's Cafe in Vallejo early if you want a table for breakfast. See why on PAGE 20.

The Carquinez Breakfast Breakdown

FROM DELICIOUS DONUTS TO BOMB BURRITOS TO BOOZY BREAKFAST COCKTAILS, FIND THE BEST OF BREAKFAST ALONG THE STRAIT WITH OUR HANDY GUIDE. **PAGE 18**

strait side

» Check out standout vintage thrift shops and meet local star Austin Scott, Vallejo artist Lorenzo Crockett, and

gardener extraordinaire Vilma Aquino. **PLUS:** How a musical legend got its start in Benicia. **PAGE 9**

local events

» Save the date for these local festivals, shopping events, holiday celebrations, and more. **PAGE 15**

sip & savor

» Pay homage to great food at Homage in Martinez, where Chef Tim Hammack turns simple ingredients into

explosions of flavor. **PLUS:** Drinks that the whole family can enjoy together. **PAGE 33**

ON OUR COVER
The cover image of the Hail Mary at The Rellik Tavern in Benicia was shot by Mitch Tobias. See more on **PAGE 25**.

"It was 12 degrees below in Ottawa. I decided I'm getting the hell out of here."

—JIM DUNLOP, ON DECIDING TO MOVE TO CALIFORNIA (PG. 14)



HISTORY OF THE STRAIT

See a snapshot of the Carquinez Strait through the centuries as it shaped the course of California and beyond. **PAGE 28**

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MITCH TOBIAS; DEANNE O'CONNOR; VALLEJO NAVAL & HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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Carquinez

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they're the best!

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Welcome!

I remember the first time I discovered the Carquinez region. I was living in Oakland at the time, working as an editor for a small regional magazine. I was given an assignment that took me out to the tranquil environs of



Mare Island, but what I found was so much more than that. From the blue waters of the Carquinez Strait to the delightful scenes of families playing together at Vallejo's Independence Park, I saw a deeply knitted community surrounded by the beauty of this region.

Since then, I've had the privilege to get to know more about the area—

its storied history, the amazing culture, and of course, all of the incredible food and drink I could ever want.

In our inaugural issue, we thought we'd start with the most important meal of the day. Our handy, city-by-city breakfast guide shows off why the best early bites are found right here in the Carquinez area. We also take a look back at our area's rich past through a collection of historical photos. Discover how this vibrant cultural hub came to be, as well as a peek at what the future may hold.

Finally, we share the stories of some of the incredible people who call this region home, such as Benicia native and Broadway actor Austin Scott, who crushed it as the lead in *Hamilton*; Lorenzo Crockett, a Vallejo artist turning reclaimed materials into stunning portraits; and the masterful Chef Tim Hammack of *Homage*, an up-and-coming restaurant in Downtown Martinez.

We are so excited to embark on this journey with you, and to discover even more reasons to love the Carquinez area. Let's tell our story—together.

Best regards,
Casey Cantrell
Executive Editor, Carquinez

@carquinezmagazine
go online for more! carquinezmagazine.com

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR

I love a good story.

Who doesn't? I'm so happy to introduce you to the brand new Carquinez magazine, where we're committed to telling the great stories in and around the Carquinez region. This magazine will cover life, culture, and everything in between in Benicia, Crockett, Mare Island, Martinez, Port Costa, and Vallejo.

When I moved to Benicia years ago, I fell in love with the area. Little bit East Bay, little bit North Bay—throw in the almost daily gorgeous pink-and-orange sunsets over the water, the fascinating people, and the unique charm of these towns, and you got yourself a truly magical place.

I realized that this beautiful, burgeoning area didn't have a magazine to promote and share all the great things happening here—throughout the whole region. So, I decided to create my own, with help from the super-talented friends I've met during my 20+ years in advertising and publishing. So many have pitched in, and the whole process felt like a community effort—an effort we hope will reflect the region's own strong community spirit.

We hope you enjoy Carquinez! If you have a good story idea, let us know on our website (carquinezmagazine.com). You can also subscribe there.

Here's to the first of many stories we hope to tell!

Sincerely,
Deanne O'Connor
Owner, Publisher & Creative Director, Carquinez



Top Left: The sunset view from Benicia. Photo by local photographer, Kevin Denton (kevindentonphotography.com). **Above:** Publisher Deanne O'Connor, with her dog, Gromit, along the Benicia waterfront, taken by Cali Godley (call-godley.com).

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TOP LEFT: KEVIN DENTON; BOTTOM LEFT: ALAN NIKU; BOTTOM RIGHT: CALI GODLEY



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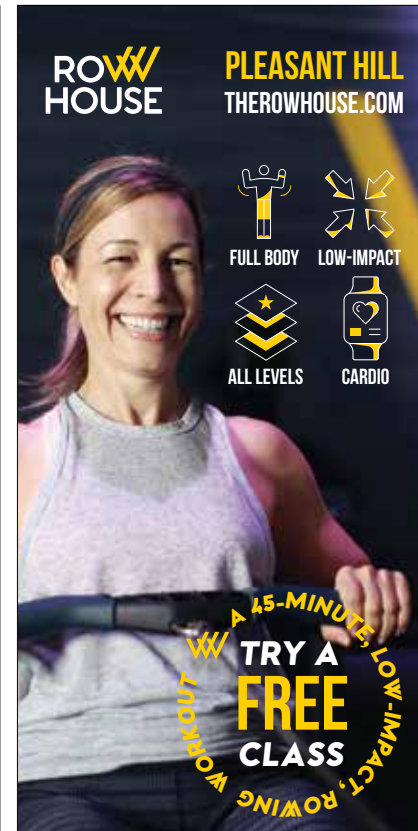
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The Tikka Masala salad at Homage in Martinez, shot by Cali Godley. See page 33 for more.



CALI GODLEY
Cali Godley is a freelance photographer based in the Bay Area specializing in editorial and commercial photography. She pursues photography to connect with her community and provide creative services to growing organizations, publications, and brands. See more of her work at cali-godley.com or follow her on Instagram at [@caligodley](https://www.instagram.com/caligodley). In this issue of Carquinez, Cali took on the breakfast feature. See her delicious work starting on page 18.



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{local talent} contributor spotlight



KEVIN DENTON is a photographer from Northern California and has resided in beautiful Benicia for the last 20 years. Kevin's passion for photography began in his high school years snapping shots of nature with a Pentax K-1000 film camera. Kevin also hosts a local Benicia photography meetup group where photo enthusiasts can explore, share ideas, and capture beautiful images of our community and the surrounding areas. His work can be found in the Little Art Shop in Downtown Benicia or online at kevin-dentonphotography.com. Kevin is married to Elizabeth, a Benicia-based ceramic sculptor who also shares the same love for photography, nature, and travel. Their last trip was exploring the untouched landscapes of Iceland.



LAUREN BONNEY is a Bay Area writer and editor specializing in lifestyle, travel, culture, fitness, and food and drink. She has a soft spot for cheese and a great cup of coffee. Follow her gastronomic discoveries at [@bonneyeatworld](https://www.instagram.com/bonneyeatworld).



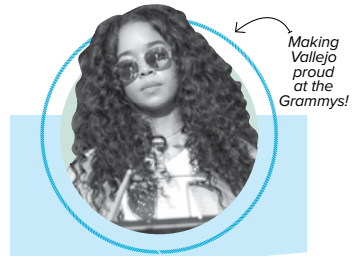
MITCH TOBIAS When Mitch isn't drinking coffee, he's shooting campaigns and projects for Uber Eats, eBay, Cisco, and McDonald's. You can also find his work in *San Francisco* and *Diablo* magazines. He specializes in fun, stylized lifestyle photography. mitchtobias.com.



FARLEY WALKER moved from Mississippi to California in 2006 to wax poetic about wine. Her work across various topics has been published in books, newspapers, and magazines. She is now becoming a farmer! Follow her at [@movingfarwords](https://www.instagram.com/movingfarwords).



ALEJANDRA SARAGOZA is an editor and writer based in the Bay Area. Her work has been published in *The Huffington Post*, *Via*, *Diablo*, and *Touring & Tasting*. She can usually be found cheering the Warriors, sipping a cocktail, or grabbing a bite. alejandrasaragoza.com.



DID YOU KNOW?

I'M WITH H.E.R.
Soulful, enigmatic, lit. Three years ago, R&B sensation and Vallejo native H.E.R. (real name Gabriella Wilson) took the world by storm with her dream-like sound. In 2019, she won the Grammy for Best R&B Performance and Best R&B Album, and she's been nominated for five more Grammys this year, including Album of the Year and Song of the Year. Once labeled a child prodigy, Wilson released a single at the age of 14 under her own name. After a two-year hiatus, she re-emerged as the now-iconic H.E.R. Catch H.E.R. at the Grammys on January 26 at 5 p.m.



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strait side

ELECTRONIC REFURB
ADK HiFi in Vallejo can restore your old electronics to work like new.
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Niche Vintage

DISCOVER EVERYTHING FROM HERITAGE GARMENTS TO NOSTALGIC HOUSEHOLD WARES AT THESE STANDOUT VINTAGE SHOPS.

BY MORGAN MITCHELL

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IF YOU WANT ... HIPSTER THREADS

Pay a visit to **Port Costa Mercantile**. Just across the road from Bull Valley Roadhouse, this shop carries a boatload of flannel, as well as classy dresses and suits, retro candy and toys, and more. But the standout is the shelves of vintage hats. Perfect for the dapper gentleman, the impressive collection of top hats, bowlers, fedoras, and more make a great addition for any fanciful dinner party. 17 Canyon Lake Dr., Port Costa



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treasure trove is only open on weekends, but the assorted and charming home goods warrant a special trip. 2 Canyon Lake Dr., Port Costa

IF YOU WANT ... ELECTRONIC RESTORATION
Fill out a repair request form for Vallejo's **ADK HiFi**. You won't find any vintage equipment on sale here, but the pros behind the shop are more than happy to take in your old turntable or radio and get it working like brand-new. Drop-off location at 164 Robles Way, Vallejo, adkhifi.com



Find classic men's attire at Pocket Monkey Vintage in Benicia, a tiny shop with a big personality.

IF YOU WANT ... MASCULINE THROWBACK OUTFITS

Head to **Pocket Monkey Vintage** in Benicia. One of many antique dealers on First Street, this tiny store stands out for its complete focus on men's attire, making it the go-to shop for a colorful Hawaiian shirt or a wacky retro tie. 623 First St., Benicia, pocketmonkeyvintage.business.site

IF YOU WANT ... OLD-TIMEY TEXTILES

Meander into Vallejo's **Urban Burp**. With more than 2,000 yards of cloth—some dating back as far as the 1930s—this retailer caters to artisans looking to craft their own unique fabric creations out of '50s florals, '60s abstracts, '70s geometrics, and much more. 615 Florida St., Vallejo, urbanburp.com

IF YOU WANT ... VINTAGE DESIGNS

Swing by (or book an appointment at) **Boutique Classique** in Vallejo. While the cutesy storefront on Sonoma Boulevard doesn't stock any actual historic goods, its collection of new dresses and swimsuits draw inspiration from classic styles. 1711 Sonoma Blvd., Vallejo, boutiqueclassique.net

IF YOU WANT ... ECLECTIC HOMEGOODS

Make a trip to **Compulsive Peddler** in Port Costa. Located under the Burlington Hotel, this quirky



Garden of Good

THE VALLEJO PEOPLE'S GARDEN HELPS BRING A COMMUNITY TOGETHER AND GIVES BACK TO THOSE IN NEED.

BY MORGAN MITCHELL



What happens when a global financial crisis hits a passionate home gardener with a vision? The creation of a thriving community garden, of course. At least, that was the case for Vilma Aquino, founder of the Vallejo People's Garden.

Back in 2009, the Mare Island resident had recently lost her job due to the recession. When trying to decide what she wanted to do next in her life, she was inspired by a vacant lot at the corner of East Poplar and Oscar streets. "It looked like a great place for a community garden," she reminisces. "So I asked the lessor if we could use it, and they were all for it."

As word about Aquino's project spread, people began clamoring to get involved. She also found support from Amanda Cundiff at the regional office of the U.S. Forest Service and Elvie

DeLeon, the former executive director of Global Center for Success. "I couldn't have done it without these women," Aquino says.

Within a year, the Vallejo People's Garden became one of only three gardens in the country to win \$30,000 in grant funding from Nature's Path's Gardens for Good contest. Since then, the garden has grown more than 20,000 pounds of produce, donating most of it to homeless shelters in Vallejo. The garden also hosts adult and children's classes on agriculture, the environment, and sustainable practices while promoting community well-being.

Aquino couldn't be more proud. A decade later, she is still just as passionate about the project as she was at the beginning. "I believe in the power of gardens to heal people," she says. vallejopeoplesgarden.org

TIPS FOR GARDENERS

NOT MUCH SPACE AT HOME? AQUINO SHARES HER TIPS FOR "GARDENING IT YOURSELF" WITH OR WITHOUT A YARD.

IF YOU HAVE A YARD Get started composting. "It creates free, rich soil to develop really health plants," Aquino says. **NO YARD?** Even in a 10x6 room, you can still grow microgreens, Aquino says. Follow Vallejo People's Garden on Facebook for workshops on farming microgreens.

ABOVE: A former vacant lot, the Vallejo People's Garden has bloomed into a community gathering spot, offering classes on gardening, sustainability, and the environment while donating produce to homeless shelters.

Benicia to Broadway: 5 Questions with Austin Scott

THE BENICIA NATIVE AND *HAMILTON* STAR IS NOT THROWING AWAY HIS SHOT.

On January 6, 2018, a familiar face to Benicians took the stage at the San Diego Civic Theatre: the Benicia High School graduate turned multi-talented actor Austin Scott. But this was no ordinary production role. This was the second national tour of the smash hit *Hamilton: An American Musical*, and Scott was playing the man himself—Alexander Hamilton.

Scott concluded his Broadway run as the Founding Father this past December, but he's not slowing down. The actor took time out of his busy schedule to chat with us about growing up in the Bay Area, playing the role of a lifetime, and what he likes to do when he visits home.

What was it like growing up in Benicia? Looking back as an adult, I'd say that Benicia was a great place to grow up. It was small, quiet, and pretty safe. I remember

spending most of my time hanging out with friends downtown or fishing in the bay with my dad. I also had a lot of friends who lived in Vallejo, so I would spend a lot of time out there.

What sparked your interest in acting? I was always a class clown growing up. I remember a traveling theater company came to my elementary school when I was in 4th or 5th grade. They were putting on a condensed production of *The Barber of Seville*, and they were looking for one student to play a cameo role as "Dr. Bartelow." I have to say, I crushed it. Then I was on a show called *The Benicia Follies* when I was about eight at the Benicia Old Town Theatre group.

By that point, I had totally caught the bug. My parents were always incredibly supportive, and they took me to every audition, even if it was in L.A. As I got older, I started doing more professional work here and there, but it wasn't until after high school when I moved to L.A. that I really started in earnest.

How did you react when you landed the lead role in *Hamilton*?

It was in the middle of the day. I was on a train when my agents called to tell me, "You booked *Hamilton*, and you're going to be playing Alexander Hamilton."

I freaked out. I jumped off the train and was running up and down the street in Harlem, screaming and probably crying and laughing. I called my parents, my girlfriend, and my acting teacher. It took a couple of days to sink in and feel real.

What was the best part about playing this role?

Probably the fans. This show means so much to so many people, it truly was an honor to be a part of it. Unless I'm really exhausted, I'd go out and sign for the fans every night because I loved connecting with them.

What are you watching right now?

I don't get a ton of time to watch TV, unfortunately, but my girlfriend and I just finished watching *Dead to Me* on Netflix. Really enjoyed that.

"Benicia was a great place to grow up. I remember spending most of my time hanging out with friends downtown or fishing in the bay with my dad." —AUSTIN SCOTT

Who are your biggest influences as an actor and singer?

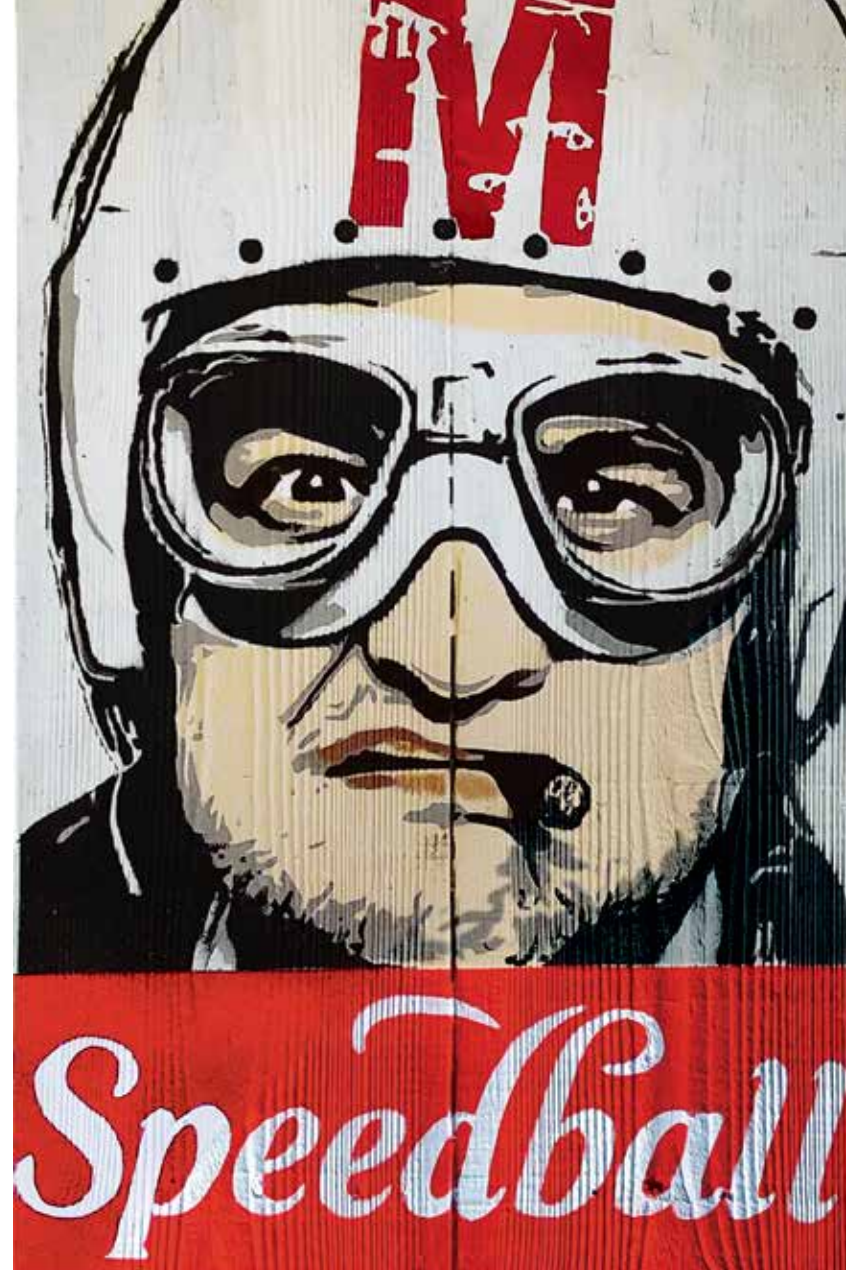
My major acting role models are Will Smith, Viola Davis, Denzel Washington, and Meryl Streep. Musically, my favorite artists are probably John Legend, Michael Jackson, Chance the Rapper, and many [Motown] artists because that's the music I grew up on.

What profession, other than acting, would you have liked to pursue?

I've thought about pursuing physical therapy before. My mom's a physical therapist, and I grew up seeing how much she helped people.

Last question. Which superpower would you rather have: flying or invisibility?

Flying for sure. I know invisibility has more practical applications, but I mean, come on. I could go anywhere and see anything. So much freedom—assuming the rest of the world would be cool with me flying. •



shipping pallets, and weathered steel. Take his portrait of Billie Holiday—a spare profile of the jazz singer on a canvas of worn reclaimed wood—or the portrait of John Belushi wearing a Speed Racer helmet—an ostensibly lighthearted image undercut by the inclusion of the Speedball logo, a reference to the storied comedian's tragic death from a drug overdose.

Growing up, Crockett always had a passion for art. He wanted to do more with his talent, but he couldn't afford supplies. One day, he drove past a man tearing



down a fence and asked if he could take the wood.

"I cleaned it up and just started painting on it," he says. "The wood itself just gave the whole work a different kind of dimension."

His success with recycled wood led him to experiment with different materials such as rusted metal. "Little

"We all got a mark to make, no matter how small. I just want to leave my little mark."

—LORENZO CROCKETT

by little, I starting finding out different things about texture," he says. "People loved it."

Crockett cites the history of Black Americans turning reclaimed materials into works of art as a source of inspiration.

"To have something that was recycled, repurposed—Black folks do this all the time," he says. "It's 400 years of taking a little something and making something out of it. We've done it all our lives."

Perhaps that's what gives Crockett's art its authentic vibe—an energy that makes his artwork instantly accessible.

"God doesn't allow you to have anything you can't pass on," he says. "We all got a mark to make, no matter how small. I just want to leave my little mark."

You can check out Lorenzo's work on his website at iconicvinylart.com. •

Top left: Lorenzo Crockett's *John Belushi*, done on reclaimed materials.

Recycling Icons

LORENZO CROCKETT TRANSFORMS RECLAIMED MATERIALS INTO EYE-CATCHING POP ART. **BY DEANNE O'CONNOR**

Lorenzo Crockett is a man of many contradictions.

The Vallejo artist creates contemporary art with an old-school feel. In the same breath that he quotes scripture, he'll drop a swear word. He draws inspiration from Black culture, but he insists his work is for everyone. He's a fan of John Coltrane and Johnny Cash, and he's painted portraits of them both.

"Everybody has a little ratchetness in them," he says. "We all got a little darkness. It ain't always got to be bad—just a little edge to make it interesting."

That duality is evident in Crockett's work. He specializes in hyper-stylized pop art using reclaimed materials—a mashup of icons past and present, retro signage, and vintage comics on reclaimed materials such as aged wood planks, discarded



Austin Scott in his *Hamilton* costume.

Rock out with your pick out!



Over the years, Dunlop would become something of a hero to musicians, thanks to his work with guitar picks, capos, and effects pedals. He first turned heads with a capo for 12-string guitars, but it was his work with guitar picks that changed the music scene.

At the time, guitar picks offered little variety—and in turn, a limited range for different music styles and sounds. Dunlop began tinkering with the standard plectrum, including creating precise measurements for thickness as well as a highly durable but flexible plastic blend called Tortex. What resulted was a plethora of new picks that would change the soundscape of guitars.

From there, the company continued to expand. It later focused on effects pedals, working with rock stars such as Slash and Eddie Van Halen to create ultra-specific sounds.

Thanks to his work, Jim Dunlop would become a hero to musicians.

Sadly, Dunlop passed away last February after a long illness. There was no shortage of guitarists and musicians paying homage to the great innovator: Buddy Guy, Joe Satriani, Metallica's Kirk Hammett, and Pearl Jam were just a few who shared how much Dunlop's work and character meant to them.

Dunlop served as a mentor to many of his employees, including his son, Jimmy. In fact, he once bragged how Jimmy had improved on one of the company's signature picks, the Jazz III pick. It's safe to say that the business and the legend will continue to rock on. jimdunlop.com

JIM DUNLOP: THE MAN OF ROCK 'N' ROLL



In an old interview posted on his company's website, the late Jim Dunlop Sr. recalled his journey from his native country of Scotland to Canada to the sleepy suburbs of Benicia.

"It was 12 degrees below in Ottawa. I decided I'm getting the hell out of here."

— JIM DUNLOP

"I got a postcard from a friend of mine," he said. "It had a picture of a bikini-clad lady and said it was 90 degrees in Muscle Beach. It was 12 degrees below in Ottawa. I decided I'm getting the hell out of here."

This easy zeal for life helped set the guitar icon apart—and it won him his fair share of fans among music's biggest names. The list of stars who worked with Dunlop reads like the headlines of the greatest music festival: Eddie Van Halen, Dimebag Darrell, Slash, Zakk Wylde.

Because of his innovations, Dunlop will live on in the products used by millions of guitarists around the world.

DEANNE O'CONNOR

local events

JAN-MARCH 2020

MAKE MEMORIES THIS WINTER WITH OUR GUIDE TO LOCAL FESTIVALS, EVENTS, HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS, AND MORE.



Holiday Lantern Light Festival @lopusnak

HOLIDAY LANTERN LIGHT FESTIVAL AND CARNIVAL

Through Jan. 26

Enjoy an evening of dazzling lights and colors at the Solano County Fairgrounds

in Vallejo. This spectacular event celebrates Chinese traditions and features massive lanterns built by Chinese artisans as well as inspiring performances and traditional Chinese cuisine. lanternlightfestival.com/bayarea

DO YOU WANT TO GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT AN UPCOMING EVENT?

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Go to carquinezmagazine.com/your-event to submit your event info.

AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS Through March 31

This winter-long exhibit at Benicia's Gallerie Renee Marie features the talents of modern African artists, including Madouba, Patrick Tagoe-Turkson, and Samson Gahoui. galleriereneemarie.com

2ND ANNUAL INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE SYMPOSIUM Jan. 12, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Get inspired with a day of seminars and workshops featuring experts in Western Ayurvedic, Tibetan, and Chinese medicine. Held at Tuoro University on Mare Island, the symposium includes a continental breakfast and lunch for all guests. com.tu.edu/cme/integrativemedicinesymposium.html

CAL NORTH FUTSAL STATE CUP

Jan. 18–20

NorCal Courts in Martinez plays host to this three-day, indoor-soccer tournament, where the winner will have a chance to compete for a spot in the National Championship. calnorthfutsalstatecup.com

DOWNTOWN BENICIA RESTAURANT WEEK Jan. 18–25

Grab a bite at a fraction of the price in Downtown Benicia during this week-long celebration of the city's culinary scene. Patrons can enjoy discounts up to 20 percent at participating restaurants with the purchase of a dining passport. beniciamainstreet.org

MARY POPPINS JR. Jan. 24–25, 31, Feb. 1
Enjoy the cutest show around at the

Martinez's Starlight Dance Studio and Theatre

Presented by Diablo Theatre Company's SingOut!, talented tykes and teens take the stage for a fantastic play based on the award-winning Broadway musical and Walt Disney film. singouttheatre.org

WACKEN OPEN AIR 2020: BATTLE OF THE BANDS Feb. 1, 8 p.m.

Metalheads, unite! For one night, Toot's Tavern in Crockett transforms into a battleground as local bands compete for a shot to perform at the Germany-based Wacken Open Air, the biggest heavy metal festival in the world. tootstavern.com



Downtown Benicia @deanneonfire

WINE & CHOCOLATE WALK

Feb. 1, 1–5 p.m.

Take a stroll with your sweetheart through Downtown Benicia and taste fine wine and chocolate pairings inside downtown shops. beniciamainstreet.org

Guitar Hero

BENICIA'S DUNLOP MANUFACTURING CONTINUES TO RESHAPE MUSIC MORE THAN 50 YEARS LATER. BY FARLEY WALKER

If music truly does make the world go round, then Benicia is home to a vital spoke in the wheel. Dunlop Manufacturing began in 1965 when a Scotland-born chemical engineer turned his passion for guitars into a part-time business. Jim Dunlop Sr. made the move to full time in 1972, when he relocated his company and his family to Benicia.



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SUN 11AM-5PM

THREE TENORS: THE NEXT GENERATION Feb. 1, 7:30–10:30 p.m.
Enjoy a spectacular night of opera as three rising stars (Alex Boyer, Christopher Oglesby, Pene Pati) converge at **Empress Theatre in Vallejo**. Conducted by award-winning conductor Thomas Conlin, this musical event is history in the making. empresstheatre.org

I (HEART) DOWNTOWN MARTINEZ WINE & CHOCOLATE STROLL
Feb. 8, 1:30–4:30 p.m.
Spend an afternoon with that special someone sampling delicious wines and chocolate treats at participating stores and restaurants in **Downtown Martinez**. downtownmartinez.org

GOLDEN DRAGON ACROBATS
Feb. 8, 3 p.m. & 8 p.m.
Watch acrobats take flight at **Vallejo's Empress Theatre**. This performance brings together Chinese traditions and world-class acrobatics, music, and dance in a spellbinding performance you won't soon forget. empresstheatre.org

"THE GREAT ONE" LARRY WILSON
Feb. 13–15, 7:30 p.m.
Just in time for Valentine's Day, **California Magic Club in Martinez** hosts the one and only Larry Wilson, an award-winning magician and entertainer. Tickets include a three-course dinner and drinks. calmagic.com

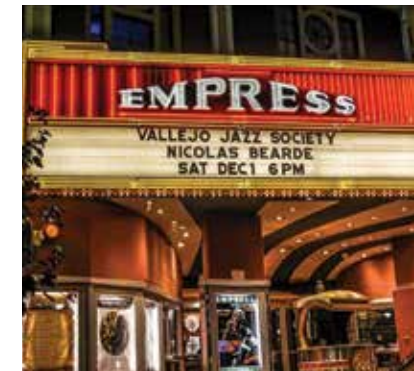


Benicia Clock Tower
@jadrodeo

28TH ANNUAL TRIVIA BEE!
Feb. 22, 6 p.m.
Show off your trivia skills at "The Greatest Show in Benicia." Join for a fun-packed night of trivia, costumes, dinner and an open bar, and a raffle at the **Benicia Clock Tower**, with all proceeds

supporting the Benicia Public Library Foundation. benicialibrary.org

PAMPER ME WEEK Feb. 22–29
Treat yourself! Relax and rejuvenate in **Downtown Benicia**, with participating salons, spas, and stores offering special promotions. beniciamainstreet.org



Vallejo's Empress Theatre
@bayareawill707

VALLEJO SYMPHONY CONCERT II
Feb. 29, 8 p.m.; March 1, 3 p.m.
Vallejo's Empress Theatre presents its second concert series of the 2019–2020 season. Violin virtuoso Amalia Hall tops the bill for performances of Roy Harris' Symphony No. 3, Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2, and Dvorák's Symphony No. 8. empresstheatre.org

ST. PATRICK'S DAY BEER CRAWL
March 14
Beer, beer, and more beer—need we say more? Celebrate St. Patty's Day as participating businesses in **Downtown Benicia** offer craft beers. beniciamainstreet.org

SHAMROCKS & SHENANIGANS 2020
March 21, 6–11 p.m.
Wear green for charity and enjoy Irish-themed food and bar, live entertainment, and more at this event benefiting the Benicia Middle School Innovative Grants Program, held at the **Benicia Clock Tower**. bms-shamrock.com

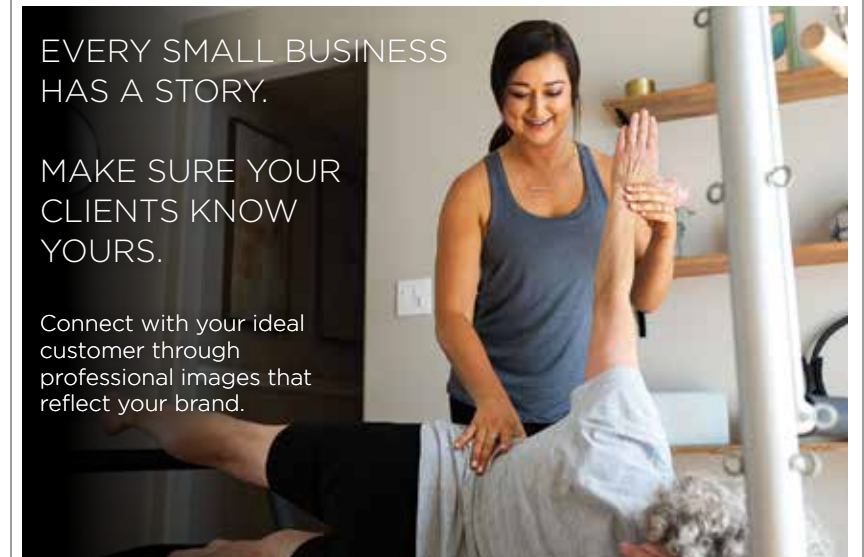
13TH ANNUAL BEF RUN FOR EDUCATION March 29, 8–11 a.m.
Lace up your running shoes for a good cause in **Benicia**. Races include the 5K, 10K, and Kids' Fun-Run, making it perfect for the whole family, and all proceeds support the Benicia Education Foundation. beniciaeducationfoundation.org

CALI GODLEY
PHOTOGRAPHER

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Cali Godley is freelance commercial and editorial photographer serving the San Francisco Bay Area.

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Pictured: Katelyn Galvin of Free & Well in Martinez

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– Neil Gaiman



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Kiss your diet goodbye with the decadent waffle sandwich at Vic's in Martinez.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CALI GODLEY &
MITCH TOBIAS

RISE AND SHINE!

It's Breakfast Time!

THE TASTIEST PLACES TO
START YOUR MORNINGS

Up and at 'em, folks! Start your day right at these 23 morning stops along the Carquinez Strait, where fresh coffee is brewing, bread is baking, and bacon is frying. Our go-to breakfast guide makes getting up bright and early worth it.

WRITTEN BY

Lauren Bonney, Casey Cantrell, Deanne O'Connor, and Alejandra Saragoza

Vallejo

GOOD DAY CAFE

Great food, massive portions, and friendly service come together at Good Day Cafe.

While working as a waitress at Joy of Eating Cafe, former owner Cindy Balanesi decided to pay her own homage to diner eats, opening Good Day Cafe in 1998. Now under new ownership, the downtown café remains committed to providing its loyal customers with breakfast fare that hits the spot every time. And on the menu, you'll still find scrumptious offerings named after members of the Balanesi family.

Just make sure to set aside some time to enjoy your meal—it can take a while to get a seat at this popular joint.

Don't Miss: Cindy B's Omelet You can't go wrong with the former owner's savory namesake dish: Italian sausage, pepperoncini, olives, and jack cheese rolled up in a delicious omelet. 314 Georgia St., good-day-cafe.cafe-inspector.com

MOMO'S CAFE

Just a short walk from the Vallejo Ferry Building, Momo's Cafe is the perfect spot to fuel up in the morning.

Owner Manuel Melendrez opened Momo's after spending decades in the culinary industry mastering



Momo's Owner, Manuel Melendrez

the art of breakfast—and it shows. Friendly service and bright décor invite you to sit back and relax as you enjoy generous portions of delicious Cali-Mex breakfast fare. From huevos rancheros made with pork or steak to buttery cornmeal pancakes,

The Joy of Eating Cafe in Vallejo



BREKKIE ON A BUDGET

SCOTTY'S RESTAURANT

Scotty's Restaurant is a judgment-free zone. Want to order from the kids' menu? Go for it. Craving a donut? The restaurant's got a display case full of them. Slept in late? There's a menu item named just for you. (The "Late Riser," and it's good.)

Opened in 1937, this long-time local haunt opens bright and early (5:30 a.m. on weekdays, 6 a.m. on weekends), but as the staff and regulars like to say, "It's breakfast time any time."

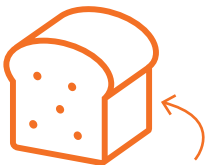
The best part? Getting full won't cost you much—most of the menu is priced at \$10 or less.

DON'T MISS:

Bacon Avocado Omelet Scotty's is famous for its omelets for good reason. Served with hash browns and toast, this omelet comes loaded up with mushrooms, sour cream, cheese, and of course, bacon and avocado. 1645 Tennessee St.

everything on the menu is a must-try.

Don't Miss: Country Fried Steak This is what heaven looks like: Fried crunchy goodness meets tender, flavorful steak, all smothered in savory country-style gravy. This feast on a plate is only offered as a special, so make sure to grab it when it's available. 402 Georgia St., momoscavevallejo.com



Get the dang toast!

JOY OF EATING CAFE

Eaters, beware—this is where diets go to die.

An ode to diners, Joy of Eating Cafe more than lives up to its name, serving breakfast classics alongside savory lunch fare. But the restaurant's calling card is its aptly named Joy Bread—a sweet homemade bread that's so good, it's borderline addictive.

The café has been a hit among locals since it opened more than three decades ago, and that popularity has only grown under current owners Won and Sun Kim and their famous bread, made from a secret family recipe.

Don't Miss: Joy Bread

Get hooked with a side of toast loaded up with butter, or up the sugar rush with a plate of French toast made with this indulgent bread. You can even order a loaf to go. 1828 Springs Rd., joy-of-eating-cafe.cafe-inspector.com —C.C.

TOP: MITCH TOBIAS; BOTTOM: DEANNE O'CONNOR



The Country Fried Steak at Momo's Cafe is only offered as a special, so grab it when you can!

Did somebody say country-fried steak?

MITCH TOBIAS

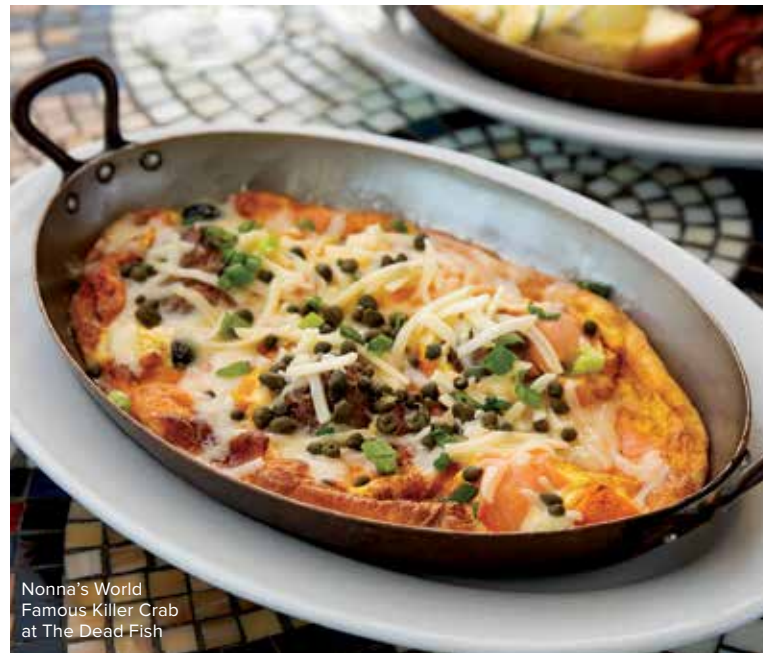


Crockett & Port Costa

THE DEAD FISH

Renowned for its waterfront locale and killer seafood dishes, this Crockett restaurant's quirkily labeled brunch menu offers downright comforting bites. From the smoked salmon "Momlettes" to the cotechino sausage and bacon Benedict from Nonna's pantry, you'll feel right at home.

Don't Miss: *Nonna's World Famous Killer Crab* Roasted in a secret housemade garlic sauce, this spectacular Dungeness crab dish can be ordered for one, two, or the whole family. 20050 San Pablo Ave., Crockett, thedeadfish.com



Nonna's World Famous Killer Crab at The Dead Fish

BULL VALLEY ROADHOUSE

With a special menu only offered on Sundays, Port Costa's Bull Valley Roadhouse offers a brunch that's anything but ordinary. Foregoing the sticky-sweet breakfast pastries for more savory items—such as a cornmeal and rye waffle with apple-cinnamon compote and tomatillo-braised chicken chilaquiles—Bull Valley whips up dishes that perfectly toe the line between breakfast and lunch.

"The whole menu starts with stuff I feel like eating," says Chef David Williams. "It still follows the same rule as the dinner menu in that we use whatever we find at the farmers market." It also doesn't hurt that brunch is Williams' favorite meal.

Don't Miss: *Morning Bowl* Inspired by Williams' foray as a vegan and vegetarian, this savory bowl is packed with braised greens, meaty shiitake mushrooms, creamy cranberry beans, and wonderfully jammy egg on top. 14 Canyon Lake Dr., Port Costa, bullvalleyroadhouse.com —L.B.

DONUTS FOR DAYS

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO INDULGE YOUR SWEET TOOTH

ROYAL JELLY DONUTS

Royal Jelly Donuts' two Vallejo locations are favorites among locals, thanks to their selection of tasty, old-school donuts.

DOUGH BOY DONUTS

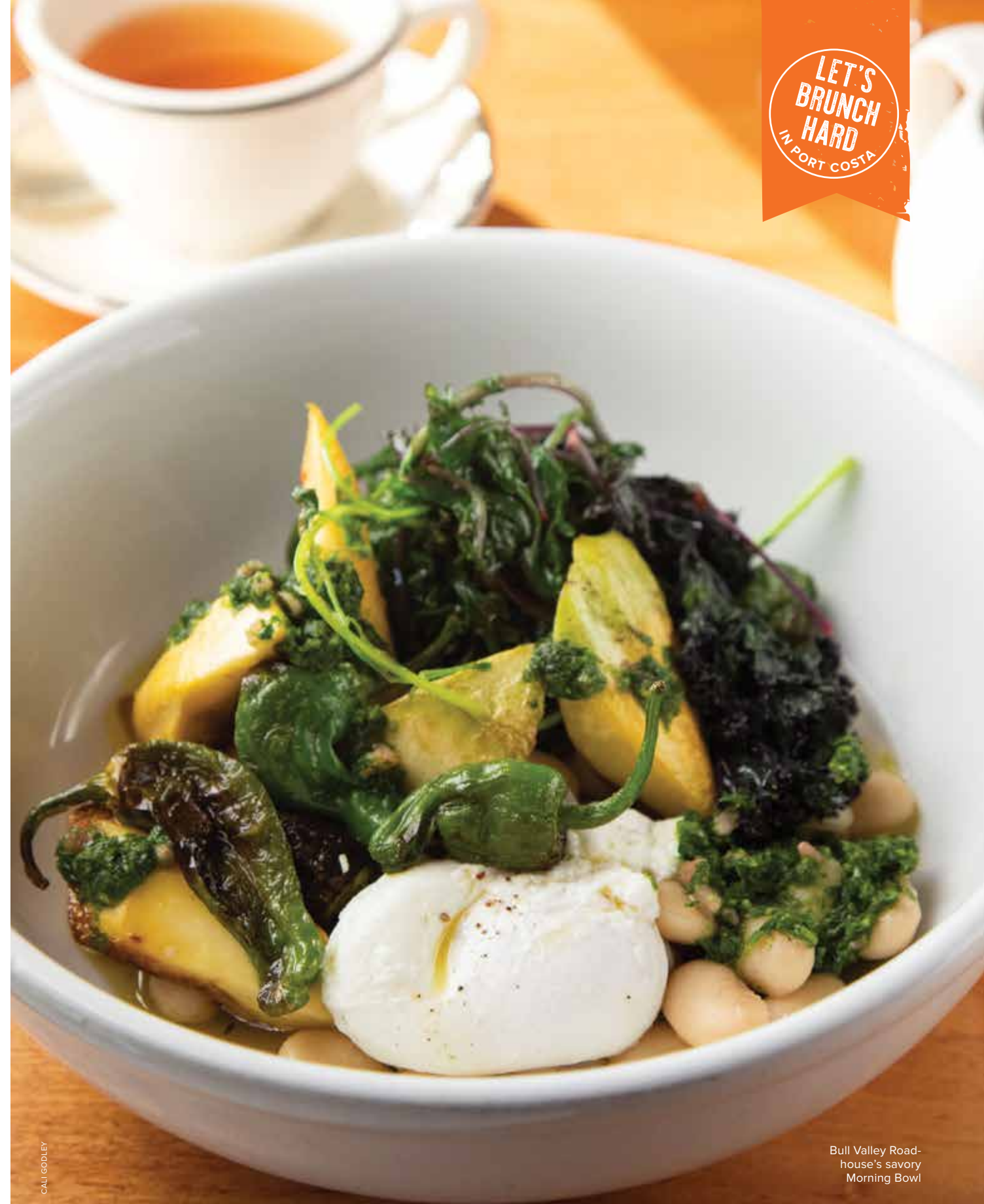
For those early risers, Dough Boy Donuts is your go-to spot, offering fresh-made donuts starting at 4 a.m.

DAILY DONUTS

In Benicia, Daily Donuts serves up plenty of sugar-filled goodies in a shop that's pinch-your-cheeks cute.

ALHAMBRA DONUTS & DELI

On the other side of the strait, kick off your morning with delicious donuts made and served by the super-friendly staff at Alhambra Donuts in Martinez. —C.C.



FROM LEFT: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; CALI GODLEY

CALI GODLEY

Bull Valley Roadhouse's savory Morning Bowl



GOT COFFEE?

WAKE UP WITH THE HELP OF SOME OF THE HIPPEST—AND TASTIEST—CAFÉS ALONG THE STRAIT

Benicia's **Rrags Caffé** takes great pride in roasting its own beans onsite, serving up each cup of coffee with a big smile. For some serious latte art and fun caffeinated concoctions (honey lavender latte, anyone?) in a laidback setting, check out **Barrelista Coffee House** in Martinez. Another Martinez staple, **States Coffee** is a true coffee aficionado's paradise.

Find a cozy spot at **Honey House Cafe**.

Located inside the Victorian-era Burlington Hotel, this bright and sunny café in Port Costa sells strong, delicious, slow-drip coffee by-the-cup as well as tasty pastries and local honey.

For a little extra pizzazz, visit Crockett's **Sugartown Sweet Shoppe**. The bright pink café sets the mood for hand-crafted sandwiches, fresh espresso, and organic ice cream. In Vallejo, the industrious **Moschetti Artisan Roaster** uses fair-trade, organic beans that are roasted fresh every day. What's not to like about that? —L.B.



Breakfast Sliders at First Street Cafe

Benicia



Hannalee Pervan of One House Bakery

ONE HOUSE BAKERY

The orneriest teenager won't have trouble getting up early for breakfast at the wildly popular One House Bakery—not after they get a whiff of co-owner and baker Hannalee Pervan's French toast.

Made from super-flaky and buttery croissant dough soaked in custard, the French toast is served with hand-whipped Chantilly crème, fresh strawberries, maple syrup, and a "big pat of butter."

Even Pervan can't resist her own delectable morning treat. "I don't even use a fork," she admits. "I take it in the back and eat it like an animal."

Don't Miss: The French Toast Don't hesitate to order a plate (or two) of this brunch-time favorite. 918 First St., onehousebakery.com

FARM & FLOUR

Forget everything you thought you knew about toast. Farm & Flour redefines the breakfast staple with a bountiful bevy of topping options, including cashew butter, honey lavender, and strawberry and apricot jams, all served on a variety of housemade

bread. Of course, there's also avocado toast, but there's nothing basic about this popular dish here—starting with a layer of fresh avocado, the toast is then topped with feta, lemon zest, and mint. Grab some toast and a cup of joe (with coffee by States Coffee in Martinez) before kicking back at this warm, bright café.

Don't Miss: Cinnamon Sugar Toast Made with housemade butter, cinnamon, and sugar on a thick slice of fresh, warm country bread, this sweet delight is best paired with a cup of dark mocha latte. 700 First St., farmandflour.com

FIRST STREET CAFE

Just a couple minutes' walk from the water, First Street Cafe has been a Benicia mainstay for over 20 years. Owner Mark Krull believes the secret to the popular breakfast spot's longevity is its food and its people.

"I think our crew does a wonderful job of giving our guests a great experience," he says.

Breakfast is always busy at the cafe, but if the weather's nice, you can enjoy a fresh-baked oat and berry scone at a sidewalk table as Downtown Benicia begins to wake up. But get there early—the scones sell out fast.

Don't Miss: Breakfast Sliders Aidells sausage, egg, and cheese between two slices of Belgian waffle, covered with thick, warm maple syrup—need we say more? 440 First St., firststcafe.com —D.O.

TOP: MITCH TOBIAS; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF ONE HOUSE BAKERY

Hail Mary!

TRY THESE BLOODY GOOD BLOODY MARYS

FROM OUR COVER!
Drink your brunch at Rellik Tavern in Benicia.

BUILD YOUR OWN

NO WEEKEND BRUNCH is complete without a cocktail, and a potent Bloody Mary is the perfect way to start the day off right. Whether you crave a traditional tomato juice and vodka or a lavish libation with full-on meals as garnishes, here are three Bloody Mary spots in the Carquinez region that make for a great excuse to drink in the a.m.

THE RELLIK TAVERN

Head to this upscale yet unpretentious eatery in downtown Benicia for a special build-your-own Bloody Mary buffet, or go ham with the Insta-worthy Hail Mary, a revitalizing concoction adorned with a fried chicken slider, a fried pickle, bacon, and an array of vegetables.

BULL VALLEY ROADHOUSE

Pair the hearty American brunch favorites at this iconic Port Costa restaurant with one of its four inventive takes on a Bloody Mary. From the smoky Bloody Maria spiked with mezcal and barbecue sauce to the

spicy Bourbon Bloody Bull laced with horseradish and beef broth, the creative cocktails are bound to titillate your taste buds.

THE DEAD FISH

For a Bloody Mary with a great view, look no further than this Crockett staple perched on a hill overlooking the Carquinez Strait. Belly up to the bar or sit out on the picturesque patio to take in the ocean vistas as you sip a Bloody Shark—featuring vodka, tomato juice, and house spices—with your crab Benedict or stack of flapjacks.

—A.S.

MITCH TOBIAS



Dive into the Huevos a la Azteca at La Primavera.

Martinez

LA PRIMAVERA

For 30-plus years, this hole-in-the-wall has been serving up authentic Mexican dishes in a welcoming environment to those lucky enough to have discovered this hidden gem of a restaurant.

Settle into a booth next to colorful murals of Mexican villages and landscapes, and munch on crunchy, house-made tortilla chips and a medley of salsas as you peruse the menu. From simple yet flavorful huevos con chorizo to vibrant chilaquiles—all served with hand-made tortillas, rice, and beans—it's hard to go wrong here.

Those nursing a hangover should try the comforting pozole, served in a bowl brimming with savory broth, pork, hominy, and Mexican herbs and spices. It'll fix you right up, especially when paired with a Michelada: a refreshing concoction of Mexican beer, tomato juice, spices, and lime juice served in a chilled, Tajin-rimmed mug.

Don't Miss: Huevos a la Azteca Start your morning with this feast composed of thick enchiladas stuffed with cheese and adorned with fried eggs and a trio of grilled veggies. 1311 Pine St. #1, laprimaveramartinez.com

COPPER SKILLET COURTYARD

As soon as you step inside the rustic Copper Skillet Courtyard, the tantalizing scents of sizzling bacon, freshly made coffee, and buttermilk waffles will instantly make your mouth water. And no matter what you're craving, you'll be satisfied by the tasty—and generously portioned—dishes here.

The family-owned business on Ferry Street has been drawing droves of hungry diners since it opened in 2000. It's easy to see why: Fluffy biscuits are smothered in a rich bacon gravy; the Monte Cristo is stuffed with slices of ham, cheese, and pineapple between thick French toast; stacks of pancakes are adorned with strawberries and whipped cream; and massive, three-egg omelettes are accompanied by crisp hash browns and buttery toast.

Between the breakfast classics and the twists on diner cuisine—not to mention \$5 mimosas—you can find a cure for whatever ails you.



Those nursing a hangover should try the comforting pozole, served in a bowl brimming with savory broth, pork, hominy, and Mexican herbs and spices. It'll fix you right up, especially when paired with a Michelada: a refreshing concoction of Mexican beer, tomato juice, spices, and lime juice served in a chilled, Tajin-rimmed mug.



Don't Miss: Eggs Benedict A house specialty made with Canadian bacon and perfectly poached eggs drenched in creamy Hollandaise sauce. 811 Ferry St., copperskilletcourtyard.com

VIC'S

Opened last January, this down-home eatery from the family behind Lafayette's popular Hideout Kitchen has already gained a loyal following—and for good reason. When you have a meal here, it feels like you're one of the family.

The staff welcomes you into the cozy haven, while chef-partner JB Balingit crafts comforting American classics in the kitchen. Order traditional fare such as French toast, pan-

cakes, omelets, corned beef hash, and egg Benedicts, or treat yourself to more indulgent dishes including biscuits and gravy with tater tots; toast topped with peanut butter, fresh berries, honey, and powdered sugar; and breakfast sandwiches loaded with ham, applewood-smoked bacon, avocado, a fried egg, and cheese.

Named after Balingit's beloved grandfather, Vic's certainly nails its goal of providing delectable comfort food in a relaxed yet lively environment.

Don't Miss: #TheWaffleSandwich A decadent dish featuring chicken fried steak, cheddar, over-easy eggs, and sausage gravy nestled between two waffles dusted in powdered sugar. And if you post a pic to Instagram, you get a free cranberry bread pudding for dessert.

1500 Pacheco Blvd., vicsmartinez.com —A.S. •



DOWNLOAD THE BREAKFAST GUIDE!

Visit all 23 breakfast spots and check them off as you go! Download the checklist at carquinezmagazine.com/breakfast



News deserts are emerging in areas like the region surrounding the Carquinez Strait, depriving our communities of important local stories that impact local governments, businesses, and families.

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ZenStax



THE MAKING OF A
STRAIT

From prehistoric times to World War II, the Carquinez Strait has played an outsized role in the shaping of California and beyond.

BY CASEY CANTRELL

DICK LYON

Forget Land's End and the Oakland hills—there's no better spot in the Bay Area to catch the sunset than along the shores of the Carquinez Strait. Twisting beside golden foothills, its blue waters shine like the precious metal that inspired hundreds of thousands to seek their fortunes here a century-and-a-half ago. Fishing boats, pleasure crafts, and massive freighters dot the waterway while locals gather on the piers—some to try their luck at fishing, others content with watching the sinking sun's dazzling diminuendo. The bucolic scene belies the deep history of this boom-and-bust region, one that stretches back nearly a million years and has had a profound impact on the state of California. San Francisco and Silicon Valley may get the buzz these days, but without this eight-mile stretch of shoreline, there would be no Bay Area—literally. What follows is a short snapshot of the Carquinez Strait through the centuries—and its winding course to shaping a region and a state.

Opposite: The Carquinez Strait from above.



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3

A WATERSHED MOMENT

The California of 700,000 years ago was a radically different landscape. The Bay Area was a vast valley of grasslands and forests that stretched as far west as the Farallon Islands. To the east, the ancient Lake Corcoran covered the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, and giant glaciers blanketed the Sierra. But in the Carquinez region, a massive geological event was about to take place...

The Land Before Time: Around 650,000 years ago, the world started to warm. More and more runoff from the Sierra's glaciers began pouring into Lake Corcoran. The lake's water levels rose dramatically, and the coastal ranges strained under the growing pressure, until the waters finally breached the foothills between what is now Crockett and Benicia. The resulting flood was likely catastrophic, submerging the entire region as a raging torrent carved 100 feet into bedrock, forming what would become the Carquinez Strait.

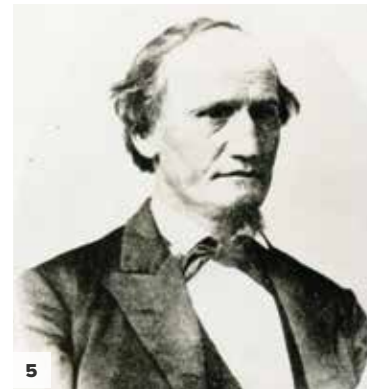
Early Paradise: Despite the disaster, the region flourished from the new water source. Eventually, a group of Native Americans, the Ohlone, settled across the Bay Area. One offshoot of this group, the Karkines, made their home on the lush and bountiful strait, fishing and foraging for food. Spanish settlers later named the strait after them.

The Gold Rush: Although it passed from Spanish to Mexican to American rule in the span of just three decades, the Carquinez region remained largely untouched throughout the early 19th century. That all changed in 1848, when John Sutter found gold at his lumber mill. Sutter initially kept his discovery secret, but his efforts were undone by a fellow pioneer. Stopping at a general store in Benicia on his way to Monterey, a man named Charles Bennett couldn't resist showing off his bounty: four ounces of shiny gold nuggets. The secret was now out.

1 & 2: The Carquinez Strait, as seen from Benicia, circa 1908; 3: John Sutter's lumber mill in Coloma, California, where he discovered gold in 1848.



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1 & 2: BENICIA HISTORICAL MUSEUM; 3: BENICIA HISTORICAL MUSEUM; 4, 5, 7: BENICIA HISTORICAL MUSEUM; 6: VALLEJO NAVAL & HISTORICAL MUSEUM

STRIKING IT RICH

The Gold Rush led to a different kind of flood, as hundreds of thousands of people from the United States and abroad migrated to California in search of riches. Thanks to some good timing and a little luck, the inhabitants of the Carquinez region were ready to stake their own claim.

Right Place at the Right Time: One such person was Robert Semple, a young dentist from Kentucky. Two years before the start of the Gold Rush, he was deeded a tract of land by Mariano Vallejo, a Mexican general who believed the United States could best tap into California's potential. A few months later, Semple co-founded the city of Benicia and started a ferry service, the only crossing on the Carquinez Strait—and for prospectors from San Francisco and further south, one of the only ways to reach the gold fields in the Sacramento Valley.

Great Expectations: The massive influx of migrants catapulted California to statehood in 1850 and inspired grand ambitions for General Vallejo. Working together with his son-in-law, John B. Frisbie, the general donated another part of his widespread landholdings to build a state capitol, which would become the city of Vallejo. Unfortunately, the plan didn't quite work out as he had envisioned: Shoddy construction and a wet winter resulted in leaky buildings that reeked of mold. State officials quickly voted to move the capitol to Sacramento. The legislature briefly returned to the Carquinez Strait in 1853, when it designated Benicia as the new state capitol, but left again for Sacramento just a year later.

Global Markets: While politics didn't stick in the Carquinez region, the business boom that was spurred by the Gold Rush did. With access to both the bay and Pacific Ocean as well as inland waterways, the strait made for a natural industrial hub. Prospector-turned-entrepreneur Matthew Turner created a shipbuilding juggernaut in Benicia, tanneries and canneries filled up the shoreline, and trains and cargo ships transported agricultural and manufacturing goods around the world. A few decades later, companies like Shell Oil Company and C&H Sugar would build plants in Martinez and Crockett, respectively, cementing the area's reputation as an industry stalwart. Another business thrived as well during this time: Dozens of brothels and saloons set up shop along the strait, more than happy to open their doors to tired and thirsty workers.

4: A photo of the purportedly last train ferry crossing of the Carquinez Strait; 5: Robert Semple; 6: Mexican General Mariano Vallejo; 7: The grand opening of the "Carquinez Bridge" in May 1927.

CARQUINEZ CURIOUS?

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CARQUINEZ STRAIT? PAY A VISIT TO THESE LOCAL MUSEUMS TO DISCOVER EVEN MORE ABOUT OUR REGION'S STORIED PAST.



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Wed.–Sun., 1–4 p.m.
beniciahistoricalmuseum.org

CROCKETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Wed. and Sat.,
10 a.m.–3 p.m.
crockettmuseum.org

MARTINEZ HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Tues. and Thurs.,
11:30 a.m.–3 p.m.
martinezhistory.org



VALLEJO NAVAL AND HISTORIC MUSEUM

Tues.–Fri., 12–4 p.m., and
Sat., 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
vallejomuseum.net



1: The Vallejo Waterfront, circa 1930s; 2: A barracks at the Benicia Arsenal in 1892.

Base of Operations:

Military in the Carquinez Strait actually preceded the Navy's arrival. In 1852, the Army established the Benicia Arsenal. The base took on a variety of roles, participating in 15 military campaigns over the next century. During the Civil War, it operated as a staging

A SHOW OF MILITARY FORCE

Sadly, the good times wouldn't last forever. Technological innovations rendered some Carquinez businesses obsolete, while other industries moved to San Francisco, Oakland, and Monterey. Some of the region's cities faced the very real risk of becoming ghost towns. Fortunately, reinforcements were on the way.

Navy Rescue: While much of the region thrived after the Gold Rush, Vallejo was scrambling for a reason to exist. Losing its status as state capitol left the fledgling city without a unifying purpose. That all changed in 1854, when the U.S. Navy established its first permanent installation on the West Coast at nearby Mare Island. The Mare Island Naval Shipyard continued the strait's shipbuilding tradition, producing almost 100 seagoing vessels, including 17 nuclear submarines, until its closure in 1996. It was also an economic boon to Vallejo: During World War II, the base employed up to 50,000 workers—nearly half of the city's population at the time.

area for Union troops from the West; it took part in the short-lived Camel Corps, experimenting with the use of the Middle Eastern pack animal for military purposes (the Camel Barns, built in 1855, now house the Benicia Historical Museum); and it provided ordnance support during World Wars I and II. Like the naval base, the arsenal also served as a reliable line of work for locals, especially after the departure of other industries in the area. At its peak, it employed nearly 7,000 workers, this time during the Korean War.

Big Bang: Of course, an expansive military presence can have its downsides—sometimes in the form of espionage worthy of a spy thriller. In 1917, German saboteur Lothar Witzke set off a massive explosion at Mare Island Naval Shipyard that killed six and injured almost 40 more—an attack that would stoke virulent anti-German sentiments during the first World War. Little is known about this mysterious foreign spy, but his ignoble legacy lives on in the wreckage that still washes ashore the surrounding coasts to this day. •

1: BENICIA HISTORICAL MUSEUM; 2: VALLEJO NAVAL & HISTORICAL MUSEUM

THE ELOTE BRUSSEL SPROUTS AT HOMAGE delights with a zesty kick of chili-lime aioli and cotija cheese. Page 34

sip & savor



Paying Homage

AGE-OLD TRADITIONS MEET INNOVATIVE COOKING TECHNIQUES TO CREATE A TIMELESS CULINARY EXPERIENCE AT MARTINEZ'S HOMAGE.

BY CASEY CANTRELL



The latest addition to Downtown Martinez's restaurant scene, Homage defies easy classification: The menu features flavors from Italy, Japan, Hawaii, and South America. The food is prepared simply using traditional techniques—the house-made sourdough bread, for example, has only three ingredients—but every bite of every dish bursts with an incredible complexity of flavor. The lunch-only eatery's offerings scream fine dining, but the patrons run the range of blue and white collar, student and professional. The Roman-style pizza slices are a favorite among regulars, but co-owner and chef Tim Hammack insists the restaurant is not a pizzeria even while

claiming it's "more traditional than other pizzerias."

Even the name Homage resists a straightforward interpretation. Hammack cites a variety of influences, from family to his relationship with God to the farmers who grow the ingredients he uses.

"We're a cog in the wheel," says Hammack, who opened the restaurant last April. "So much goes into our food that we take for granted. It's an eclectic menu—we have things from all over the place."

"All over the place" could very well describe Hammack's background as a chef. He's worked at world-renowned restaurants such as Bouchon Bistro, Chez Panisse, and César, as well as high-end



Clockwise from left: A delicious Neapolitan Pizza of the Day, buffalo cauliflower, and a salad of roasted shishito peppers with elote sauce; **Opposite:** Chef and co-owner of Homage, Tim Hammack.

catering services such as Compene Fine Catering. He's cooked in kitchens throughout Europe and Morocco, learning the ins and outs of global cuisines.

But he's also spent time in the most humble of kitchens. Before he opened Homage with his wife, Erin, and co-owners Rachel and Erik Ruhe, Hammack worked at Richmond's Bay Area Rescue Mission for 16 years, training hundreds of people grappling with homelessness and drug addiction through the organization's culinary arts program.

"I wanted to give people an opportunity to excel," says Hammack, who hired a former graduate of the program to join him in Homage's kitchen. "There were a lot of people who had broken lives, but if they have an opportunity, they'll rise to the occasion."

Perhaps it's this eclectic background that explains the eclectic menu—one that incorporates "lost and overlooked" traditions as well as the latest innovations to create delectable dishes. Pizza slices on tangy sourdough come layered with San Marzano sauce, mozzarella, preserved Meyer lemon garlic oil (also



"[Tim] seems to work magic with food. You can put a few ingredients in front of him, and all of a sudden, he's made food for 30 people. He's driven like nobody I've ever seen."

—RACHEL RUHE, CO-OWNER OF HOMAGE

made in-house), and other toppings, while a deceptively simple farro beet salad—a medley of three kinds of beets that are first roasted and pickled, then mixed with farro, citrus, organic greens, and goat cheese, topped with a cabernet vinaigrette—takes days to prepare.

"We just build layer upon layer of flavor," says Hammack. "It's really quite complex."

"He seems to work magic with food," explains Rachel Ruhe. "You can put a few ingredients in front of him, and all of a sudden, he's made food for 30 people. He's driven like nobody I've ever seen."

The Hammacks and Ruhes have a lot of big plans for the restaurant—adding a dinner service; expanding to another location; producing a line of sauces, jams, spices, and preserves—but for now, the group is focused on establishing themselves as a part of the community, bringing people together and giving back when they can.

"Cooking is a unifying thing," says Hammack. "It's a way of expressing love through something other than words." 712 Main St., Martinez, homagemartinez.com

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COCTIONS THAT PLEASE
ANY CROWD.

BY ALEJANDRA SARAGOZA

I don't really consider myself creative, but when it comes to drinks, I guess I am," says Debbie Rollans, owner and bar manager of The Rellik Tavern in Downtown Benicia. "Bartending is my creative outlet."

Anyone who's been lucky enough to sip one of her unique cocktails would wholeheartedly agree. From delectable key lime pie martinis, to herbaceous elderflower cosmopolitans, to green

"I'm constantly tasting drinks to make sure they're right ... I always want to put out a product that [the customer] will enjoy drinking."

—DEBBIE ROLLANS

tea-infused lemon drops, Rollans crafts a variety of innovative libations to please every palate. The Benicia resident created the ever-changing cocktail menu from scratch when she joined the Rellik team 10 years ago as a bar manager, eventually taking over ownership of the tavern.

But the seasoned pro got her start in the industry 27 years ago while living in Los Angeles as a twentysomething, working for upscale nightclubs and renowned resorts such as the Beverly Hills Hotel. When she and her husband decided to exchange the fast-paced metropolitan lifestyle for small-town living, they found themselves in Benicia and never looked back.



Debbie Rollans, owner and bar manager of The Rellik Tavern

Now, Rollans spends most of her days busy at her laidback local hang, slinging drinks and chatting with the locals, many of whom have been regulars since Rellik opened its doors in 2009. "The social aspect of bartending is my favorite part," Rollans says. "I love talking to customers and getting to know them."

You can also find her juicing fresh oranges, lemons, and grapefruits; whipping up Bloody Mary mix and sweet-and-sour mix; and in the summer months, preparing herbs and produce from the local farmers market. The hours of hard work pay off, culminating in vibrant cocktails such as the blood orange cosmo, Meyer's lemon drop, White Gummy Bear, and Tahitian vanilla rum mojito.

Taste for yourself during the week-day happy hours, Sunday poker nights, Tuesday open mic nights, or regular live music performances at The Rellik. And for a truly special sensory experience, order The Verbena. This savory cocktail is adorned with a Sichuan button, an

edible flower that numbs your tongue, imparting a different flavor every time you take a sip—and proving Rollans a creative maestro behind the bar.

726 First St., Benicia, therelliktavern.com •

THE RUSSIAN PUMPKIN

SPICE IT UP WITH DEBBIE ROLLANS' TASTY TAKE ON THE WHITE RUSSIAN.

1 1/2 oz Stolli vodka	1 oz half and half
1 1/2 oz Kahlua	Ice
1/2 oz Monin pumpkin spice syrup	Nutmeg and cinnamon (for garnish)

Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake for a few seconds to combine. Pour drink into glasses filled with ice. Garnish with a sprinkle of nutmeg and cinnamon.

MITCH TOBIAS



Try the tasty Green Machine at Juice House Co. in Benicia.

Juicy Story

SISTERS TIANA AND KELSEA DUVAUCHELLE ARE TRANSFORMING THE UNIVERSE, ONE DELICIOUS JUICE AT A TIME.

BY CASEY CANTRELL

When Tiana Duvauchelle and her sister, Kelsea, thought about starting their own juice bar in Benicia a few years ago, they had no idea how people would respond.

"Whenever we were together, we'd play around with juice recipes," remembers Tiana, who's a certified yogi. "I started sharing our kombucha with my yoga students, and they began asking me about purchasing it."

Encouraged, the sisters opened a commercial kitchen on Second Street near Downtown Benicia, and then a retail space on First Street a few months

later. Juice House Co. was born.

"We thought we'd just create the juice and ask the universe where to go from there," says Tiana.

Thanks to drinks like the Green Machine—a tasty detox packed with greens (chard, spinach, kale, and parsley), lemon, ginger, and apple—the universe has been loud and clear, as the sisters opened a second retail location in Petaluma back in June.

"The yoga and the juice—that's our lifestyle," says Tiana. "We get to share our juice, and we're happy people." 611 First St., Benicia, juicehouseco.com •



Vallejo's Morning Detox

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Maggie's Hamburgers in Vallejo is a traditional diner through-and-through, down to the creamy, handmade milkshakes. For something a little more modern, try the mocha and espresso shakes at Benicia's **First Street Cafe** (it also offers classic flavors like vanilla and chocolate), or expand your tastebuds' horizons with lassi-style mango and pistachio milkshakes at **Aroma Indian Cuisine**.

TEA PARTY

Whether it's morning or afternoon, it's always a perfect time for tea.

A self-admitted hole in the wall, **Mountain Grounds** in Martinez sells a traditional assortment of herbal, black, and green teas, but the true stars are the family-owned café's blended tea drinks. *Address and url.* Chill out with a tasty tea lemonade, or warm up with a freshly steeped tea latte.

Looking for something more luxe? Settle down for afternoon tea at the beautiful **Camellia Tea Room**, a full-service tearoom that offers more than 40 varieties of loose leaf teas.

just off the Napa River in Vallejo, Sunshine blends up refreshing juices and smoothies

made with produce from owner Carlos Ortega's 30-acre Tehama County farm.

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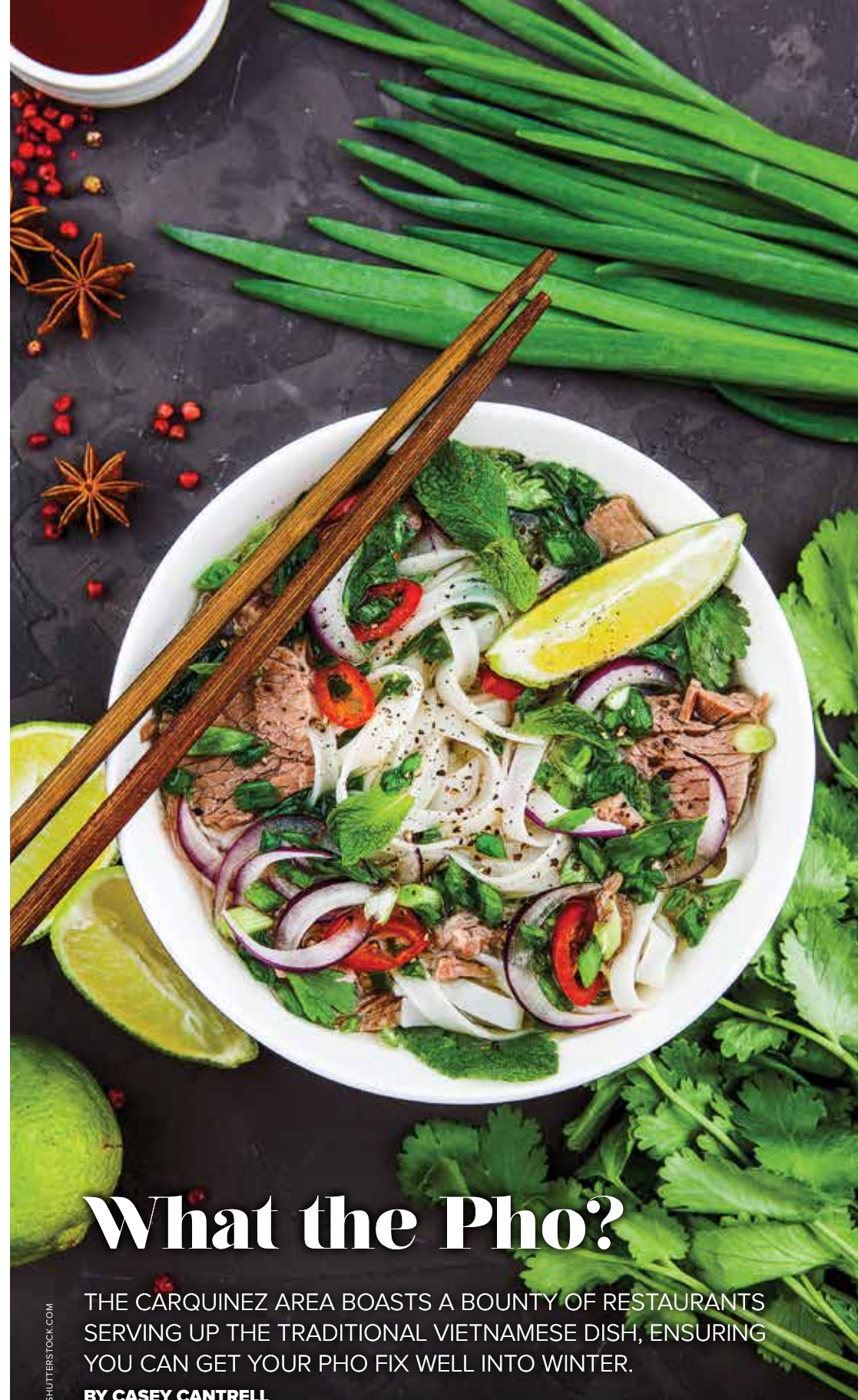
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What the Pho?

THE CARQUINEZ AREA BOASTS A BOUNTY OF RESTAURANTS SERVING UP THE TRADITIONAL VIETNAMESE DISH, ENSURING YOU CAN GET YOUR PHO FIX WELL INTO WINTER.

BY CASEY CANTRELL



The key to good pho is a great broth, and **LV Vietnamese Pho and Sandwiches** knocks it out of the park with its flavorful beef broth. (The seafood broth is delicious, too.)

Vallejo's **Pho Huong Viet Noodle House** offers authentic tastes of Hanoi, from pho loaded up with thin slices of steak, brisket, flank, tendon, tripe, and beef balls to hearty wonton noodle soup—all for less than \$8.

Share your pho with that special someone at **Pho #1** in Vallejo, which pairs an expansive menu with ultrachic decor that sets the mood. On the other side of the strait, **Pho May** in Martinez may be small, but the intimate setting and generous portions will help you settle in for a cozy dinner date.

Take a tour of Asian cuisines at **88 Noodle House** in Martinez, with a menu that offers Chinese and Thai dishes alongside the classic Vietnamese staple. Order pho with traditional noodles or sub in with ho fun, a Chinese rice noodle.

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