

# SANTA CRUZ

Fall 2010

## magazine

Riding  
the range with  
**local  
cowboys**

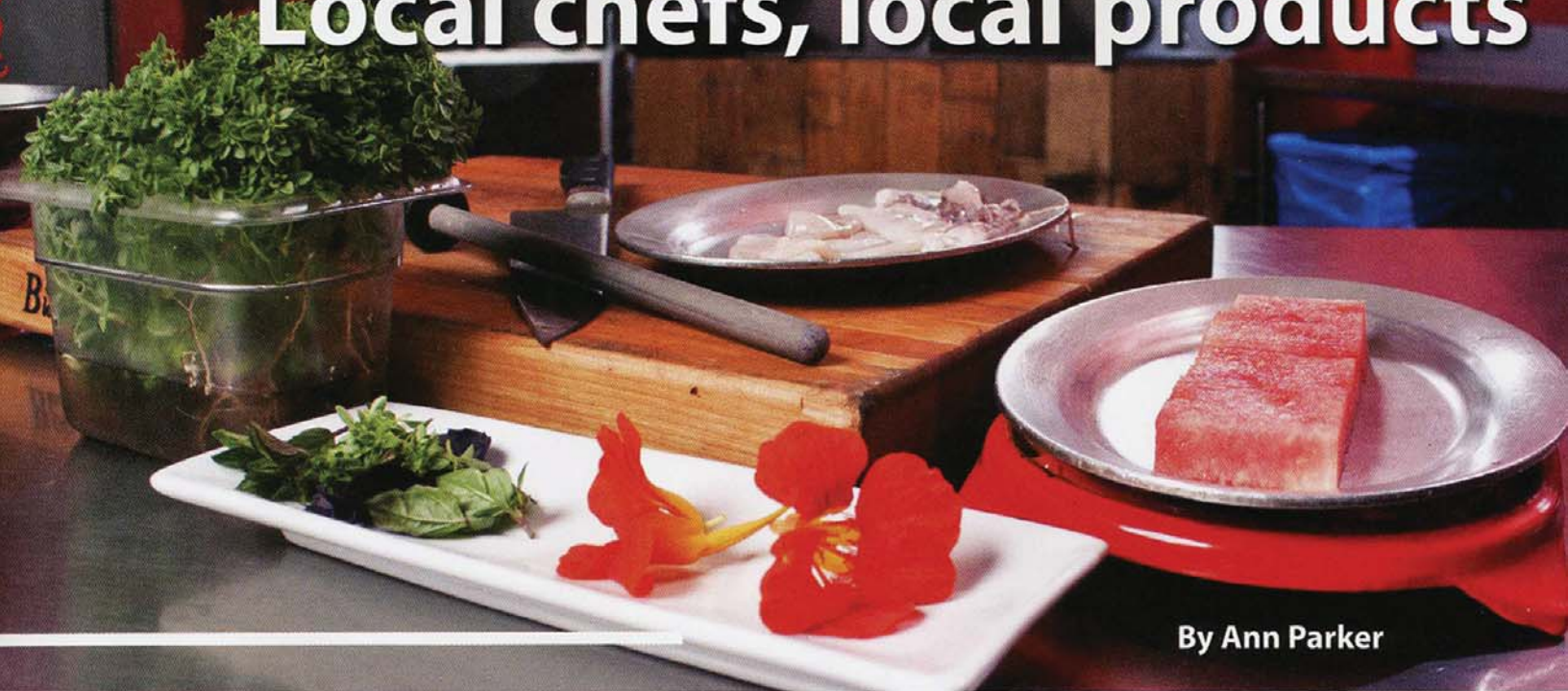
Local  
**Artists**  
open their  
studio  
doors

Hot on  
the trail  
of the best  
**mountain  
biking**

**Getting  
down to earth  
with Santa Cruz  
chefs and farmers**

Kathryn Lukas  
Slow Food Santa Cruz

# Local chefs, local products



By Ann Parker

Local chefs use a natural palette of sustainable flowers, produce and products for an artistic feast.

## Culinary artists use fresh local products to create mouthwatering delights

**B**iodynamic agriculture, wildcrafting, farm-to-table, heirloom produce, sustainable seafood, the 100-Mile Diet, locavores, Slow Food — it's all about the evolution of modern eating.

For many Santa Cruzans, these words represent concepts to believe in and practice. And to a number of local chefs and restaurateurs dedicated to honoring and making the most of this area's considerable edible resources, the terms describe a way of working.

We've chosen four chefs whose menus embody a particular regard for the produce, meats, seafood and other products they use. They value their ingredients and producers, make weekly forays to the county's farmers markets, and follow the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch.

These aren't just cooks. They are artists, using a natural palette from scarlet tomatoes and grass-green figs to lemons the color of sunlight and dusky purple eggplants. Talk about local color.



Charlie Parker of the Cellar Door Café prepare a dish with local Monterey Squid.

### Executive Chef Charlie Parker: Bonny Doon Vineyard's Cellar Door Café

“Food is directly related to culture, family and bringing people together – that’s why I love it.”

Charlie Parker is only 27, but you’d never know it from the depth of experience on his resume. He cut his culinary teeth at Manresa, one of only four restaurants in the Bay Area with two coveted Michelin stars. Parker’s career is in fact studded with Michelin-starred restaurants — including Copenhagen’s Noma, recently named the best restaurant in the world — and his list of mentors is a veritable Who’s Who of California chefs.

Growing up in Menlo Park, Parker made frequent family visits to Maryland.

“We’d catch blue crabs and boil ‘em in beer, toss in bay leaves and corn,” he recalls. “My dad’s mom is an amazing Southern cook; every meal was huge. Starting around age 10 or 12, I was always helping Mom in the kitchen. My favorite thing [to make] was pasta sauce.”

At 17, he entered California Culinary Academy. He interned with Manresa, which had recently opened, and ultimately rose to the position of sous chef at the acclaimed Los Gatos restaurant. Parker went on to cook at the Village Pub in Woodside and opened Severino Community Butcher in

Santa Cruz before becoming executive chef at Napa’s famed vegetarian restaurant, Ubuntu. A four-month stint at the Danish restaurant Noma strongly influenced his style.

“The food was very straightforward, very bright and clean, very local—and lots of smoked things,” Parker said. (His current Cellar Door menu includes items that reflect that Noma influence, such as smoked potatoes and smoked goat cheese.) While in Europe, he got a call from David Kinch, owner/chef of Manresa, who was teaming with Bonny Doon Vineyard owner Randall Grahm to revamp the Cellar Door café.

“I flew back one day and started work the next,” he grins. “We’re privileged to live in this area with such amazing produce and products. ... I can make pretty much any dish and find a Bonny Doon wine that goes with it. Randall’s wines are so food-friendly.” The Cellar Door’s seasonally-driven offerings change daily, inspired by products that Parker buys mainly from the Westside farmers market nearby. “I start with an idea that keeps progressing, depending on what the gardens bring in. It’s nice to see the seasons change through the markets.”

Parker comments, “Something that got

### The Chef Speaks: Charlie Parker, Cellar Door Café

**Born:** June 29, 1983

**Farmers market tip:** “Make the most of it. Try new things – and ask the farmers how they’d cook it.”

**Mentors:** David Kinch, Jeremy Fox, James Syhabout (all Michelin-starred chefs)

**What product do you wish local farmer markets carried?** “Soft-shell crabs – I wish Maryland blue crabs were local and I wish ramps were local.”  
Don’t-miss items at Cellar Door: Smoked potatoes with aioli made of egg yolks, espelette (French chili pepper), Dijon mustard, lemon juice and sherry vinegar

**A restaurant you’d like to visit:** “Etxebarri in Spain – the chef cooks everything over fire.”

**Are you married?** “To my job” (laughs)

**Favorite ingredient:** “Fresh herbs – thyme, rosemary, dill, cilantro, parsley, chives – they’re necessary to make good food. We get ours from Lindencroft Farms.”

**Gotta-have utensil:** A bird’s beak paring knife

**Primary producers:** “Lindencroft, Dirty Girl and Freewheelin’ Farms produce; Fog Line Farm chickens, Devil’s Gulch pork, Don Watson lamb. And rabbits from my former sous chef, Tim.”

**Food Memory:** “I was 17 years old, at a place in Rome with my family. There was this very old mother and her daughter – one of the most beautiful women I’d seen in my life. The mom brings a huge wheel of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese with a hole in it – she pours the risotto in, and stirs and stirs, then pours it onto the plate. It’s one of the coolest things I’ve ever seen.”

lost in America is respect for what you’re eating, where it’s from. Eating is a way of bringing the whole family together — the kitchen is the heart and soul of the house.”

## Monterey Squid, Seared Watermelon, Padrón Peppers and Pine Nuts

from Chef Charlie Parker

### Ingredients: Garnish

¼ lb. Monterey squid, cleaned [*Royal Hawaiian Seafood*]

¼ medium-sized watermelon, cut into 2"x1" rectangles [*Happy Boy Farms*]

2 c. padrón peppers [*Happy Boy Farms*]

¼ c. pine nuts

1 c. cream

1 lemon, juiced

¼ c. grapeseed oil

1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

10 fresh basil leaves [*Linda Butler, Lindencroft Farm*]

8 fresh mint leaves [*Lindencroft Farm*]

Fleur de sel to taste

Salt to taste

Greens [*Freewheelin' Farm*] and flowers [*Lindencroft Farm*]

### Method

1. Preheat oven 350°F. Toast pine nuts about 8 minutes or until golden, place in sauce pan and cover with cream. Cook on low heat about 1 hour. Blend, then pass through a strainer.

2. Heat two sauté pans with even parts of the grapeseed oil. In one, sear watermelon on both sides, then season with fleur de sel. Bring other pan to smoking point and sauté padrón peppers until golden brown; season with fleur de sel and lemon juice to taste. Season squid with salt; sear in same pan used to sear the watermelon. Cook quickly, about 15 seconds per side. Then season with fleur de sel and lemon juice.

3. To plate: Dress greens and herbs with lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil and salt. Place watermelon slices on the plate first, then place dabs of pine nut pudding around the plate. Lay the greens down, then squid; and last, padrón peppers. Garnish with greens and flowers.

