

Strong showing for the holidays

Michael Bauer

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Randall Grahm, the quirky founder of Bonny Doon Vineyard, captures all that's special about Santa Cruz. He admits in an interview that he wouldn't have been able to carve his own path in any other locale.

This streak of independence is a theme that runs through many aspects of life here, whether it's the unique character of Annie Glass that has produced its 29th holiday glass line, or in the surfers who have their own unique culture and dining options.

The farm-to-table connection runs through many restaurants in Santa Cruz, and we highlight the best of what we found. And to show the depth of this wine-growing region, we're offering a guide to some of the top rooms around Los Gatos and Saratoga.

Santa Cruz and the surrounding areas are prime for a late fall and winter outing. With the holidays approaching, we've also included a list of events that can make the trip even more festive.

- *Michael Bauer, San Francisco Chronicle executive food and wine editor*

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