



Fresh from the harbor



Quiet Pillar Point

By Patty Burness

NORTHSIDE

SAN FRANCISCO

The Inquisitive Traveler
Going Coastal – Dec 2008

The sun was peaking in and out of the fog as my husband and I left the Northside early one Sunday morning and headed south. Cruising down Route 1, past San Pedro Point in Pacifica where surfers were hitting their mark, through the eucalyptus trees on Cabrillo Highway, winding by the massive new tunnel being built into the hillside at Devil's Slide, past the Pt. Montara Lighthouse, and on to Pillar Point Harbor.

Pillar Point Harbor bustles with fishing boats returning with their catch. Planning a seafood dinner? Call ahead to discover what fish are available right off the boat. But not on Sunday morning – it's quiet and sleepy with only the signs from yesterday's sales to indicate what was jumping. Take in the fresh sea air and enjoy a peaceful coastside stop on the way to Half Moon Bay.

Dating back to the 1840s, "Spanishtown" was first inhabited by Costanoan Indians, then Spanish settlers and Mexican and Chilean laborers. In 1874 the name was officially changed to Half Moon Bay. Nestled between the Santa Cruz Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, this is the perfect place to kick back, relax and bask in serenity.

Half Moon Bay has a bit of everything: bluffs and beaches, antique shops and galleries, restaurants and cafes, B&Bs and



Half To Have It

amazing bead emporium in the conveniently located on Main open kitchen, and a natural (The structure is the former trucked produce destined for sat idle, but on a cold day, a

served with a Chantilly cream breakfast, but why not? We also the wood-fired baked eggs ground polenta. Brunch calls for sparkling wine so we tasted Cristalino Brut, Penedes, NV from Spain, Roderer Estate Brut, NV from the Anderson Valley and Clerostein NV from Alsace, France.

As my husband headed off to play the Ocean Course at the Half Moon Bay Golf Links, I went back up Main Street to Half Moon Bay Wine & Cheese. For 11 years, Nancy Girard has guided this local tasting room, carrying more than 800 wines from around the world to pair with luscious cheeses. Whether you choose a taste in the store or goodies to go, you'll delight in the high quality amid a casual atmosphere.

Time to leave Main Street for a quick drive south to The Ritz-Carlton Half Moon Bay. Spectacularly situated atop a coastside bluff, the property blends in with the undulating golf courses and pristine greens. Our luxe corner room gave way to vistas of crashing waves and a lush landscape.



Cetrella's warm open interior



It's for breakfast

bookstores. Strolling is the way to go and Main Street is the place. Half To Have It is a collector's dream with 10,000 square feet of unique items for home and garden. You'll love the recycled colored glass – buy it by the pound for your own creations or purchase mosaics and other objets d'art that use this medium creatively. Browse Tokenz, a shop with something for everyone with clothing, handmade jewelry and an back room.

Hungry for brunch, we went straight to Cetrella, Street. High ceilings and skylights, wooden beams, warm interior make this historic building come alive. home of the Growers Association, where farmers urban markets.) A double-sided limestone fireplace blazing fire must be inviting.

We chose the ricotta-stuffed brioche French toast and strawberry compote – it seemed like dessert for enjoyed Monterey Bay calamari (light and spicy) and served in a terracotta pot, complemented with stone-



Atop the bluff

It seemed only fitting with Half Moon Bay being the pumpkin capital of the world to succumb to a pumpkin body peel at the hotel spa. After 45 minutes of slathering, exfoliating and massaging with an exclusive pumpkin formula followed by a Vichy shower and then hydrating with Vitamin A and pumpkin shea butter, I was rejuvenated and definitely soft and smooth.

My husband came off the Ocean Course raving about the rolling dunes, the Scottish feel and the stunning views of the Pacific. The course was in perfect condition. He called the 17th hole, a par 3 set on a cliff overlooking the pounding surf, one of the most exciting holes he's ever played.

Our room rate entitled us to access the Club Lounge, so we grabbed a glass of bubbly and headed for the blazing fire pits on the hotel's terrace. Overlooking the ocean, we watched the glorious sunset. There's even a hot tub farther out toward the edge of the bluff. As the sun sunk lower in the sky, we went inside to Navio for dinner.

Not losing the view for a second, we settled into the middle of an extraordinary room. Navio is Portuguese for ship and the dining room transports diners to the days of the 1800s and the master craftsmanship of Portuguese boat builders. The ceiling is shaped like the underside of a ship's hull. All this is fitting because chef de cuisine Aaron Zimmer salutes Half Moon Bay's coastside location in his flavorful cuisine.



What a course

photos: Bo Links

The tasting menu (which changes seasonally) paired with wines from around the world got our votes. We enjoyed dill-scented risotto with smoked trout roe and soft-shell crabs with freshly picked

strawberries and pickled red onions; chef Aaron is now serving boat scallops with a Muscat tapioca and a salmon with chickpeas and a red wine fish sauce. For beef lovers, there's always Niman Ranch steak – tender, juicy, delicious. Plums were in season when we visited, so dessert combined sweet plum gelato with a luscious white chocolate cream. And of course, now it's all about pumpkin – pumpkin panna cotta with marcona almond, pumpkin seed, and gingerbread ice cream.

Even after that dinner, we had room for a little more, so we settled in next door at ENO, the wine bar. From more than 15 flights, we sampled local Santa Cruz offerings paired with the Chocolate Buzz. Created by chocolatier Mark Ainsworth, the bittersweet ganache, the milk chocolate blended with Kentucky straight bourbon, and the vanilla-butter caramel in a dark

bittersweet chocolate were all superb with the tastes of Syrah, Pinot and Cabernet.

The fire pits were still ablaze as we fell into bed. Before long, we were lulled to sleep by the sound of waves rolling into shore. The next morning, coffee, fruit, cereal, bagels, and more awaited us in the Club Lounge. Then it was back on Highway 1 north, leaving the coastside for the Northside. You can't beat 24 hours of great fun, delicious food and wine, and fresh sea air.

Essentials

Half Moon Bay is located

about 35 miles south of San Francisco; www.visithalfmoonbay.org, www.halfmoonbayecotourism.com.

Cetrella, 845 Main Street, 650-726-4090, www.cetrella.com. Brunch appetizers from \$6, entrees from \$12, sparkling wines by the glass from \$8.

The Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay, One Miramontes Point Road, 650-712-7000, www.ritzcarlton.com. Rooms from \$299 (add \$150 to access the Club Lounge where food and beverages are offered throughout the day; add \$25 resort fee with services and amenities that include wireless high-speed Internet access; add \$125 per stay for dog/cat less than 30 lbs; ask about specials like "Give Back Getaways"). Spa: pumpkin body peel \$150; Navio Restaurant: tasting menu \$97, wine tasting supplement \$70; ENO wine bar: wine flights from \$15, Chocolate Sensations \$9.

Don't Miss: Pillar Point Harbor, 650-726-8724, press 3 to find out the latest catch, www.smharbor.com/pillarpoint; Half To Have It, 601 Main Street, 650-712-5995, www.halftohaveit.com; Tokenz, 524 Main Street, 650-712-8457; Half Moon Bay Wine & Cheese, 604 Main Street, 650-726-1520, www.hmbwineandcheese.com, tastings from \$15; Half Moon Bay Golf Links, Two Miramontes Point Road, 650-726-1800, www.hmbgolfinks.com; Ocean Course greens fees \$185 weekends/\$165 weekdays.

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