

Tips for a fun food-and-wine trek to Point Reyes

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Point Reyes offers a lot in the way of natural beauty — wild ocean views, hiking trails filled with Tule elk and beautiful, bundle-up beaches. And it has a lot to offer the food and wine aficionado too, making it a tempting day trip or quick overnight for the hungry and curious.

People have been going to Point Reyes and the Tomales Bay for years for oysters and it's still an important supplier to travelers and restaurants around the Bay Area. Cheese, too, has long been an established local product for Point Reyes, thanks primarily to Cowgirl Creamery, which set up shop in Point Reyes Station years ago, inviting people to come in and see how their cheese was made.

Straus Family Dairy and Creamery, the Marin French Cheese Company, Giacomini Dairy's Point Reyes Original Blue Cheese and Nicasio Valley Farmstead Organic Cheese Company maintain West Marin as a major area for cheese.

Grassfed meat also has ties to the region, most notably via Marin Sun Farms, a ranching outfit for grassfed beef, lamb and goat as well as pasture-raised chickens. BN Ranch in nearby Bolinas is Bill and Nicolette Niman's natural meat company specializing in traditionally produced food, like heritage turkey.

And there are a number of restaurants well worth a drive to the coast, if even just for lunch. Osteria Stellina in downtown Point Reyes Station is a stunning addition to the food scene here, inventive and celebratory of its surroundings, with Hog Island oysters at the raw bar, BN Ranch brisket on the grilled cheese and Star Route Farms' nettles on the pizza.

Osteria Stellina: Stellina describes its food as Point Reyes Italian and that's exactly what it is - creatively wrought zuppa, pasta and pizza made from local organic ingredients like Drake's Bay oysters, Glaum Ranch organic eggs and County Line chicory salad. The slow-cooked BN Ranch beef tongue with Paradise Valley greens is a wintertime star. So are the handful of grilled cheese choices, made on Brickmaiden sourdough with a slate of cheeses, caramelized onions and/or brisket to add. Main courses in winter tend to focus on stews made from just-caught seafood or pasture-raised beef. The wine list reflects the best of Italy and Northern California, including many local producers, Pey-Marin, Stubbs and Thackrey among them. Open Friday-Wednesday 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

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