

HOME DINING RECREATION TRAVEL COMMUNITY HEALTH STYLE

# 805 LIVING

DECEMBER 2011

*A Few of Our Favorite Things*

A photograph of a silver bowl filled with white truffles, set against a blue background with wrapped gifts. The bowl is in the foreground, and the gifts are in the background, creating a festive holiday atmosphere.

SWEET TREATS,  
PRETTY PRESENTS,  
FESTIVE PARTIES—AND  
THE GENEROUS SPIRIT  
OF THE SEASON

# DIALED IN

Party time! Wonderful ideas from creative caterers.

By Angela Pettera

**DECEMBER IS A MONTH CHOCK-FULL OF PARTIES.** I asked some well-known and not-so-well-known caterers to divulge their best party weapons for the holidays. The answers sound downright delicious. Time to make out the invites.

Chef Alberto Vazquez left Mediterraneo restaurant in the Westlake Village Inn this year and started his own catering company called **Rock Chef Rolls** (rockchefrolls.com). He can roll up anywhere—a house, a golf course, a vineyard, the beach—in his huge mobile kitchen to stage intimate or elaborate parties. When I asked him about throwing Christmas parties, he responded, “I love this season. It’s when everyone is reminded about love and the important things in life.” Yeah, but what about the food? “It should be comforting and traditional but also creative and amped up,” he said. He likes to serve a raisin-bread bruschetta appetizer that is spread with ricotta, topped with cubes of roasted butternut squash and arugula-mint pesto, and drizzled with honey. He makes a harvest salad of wild arugula, roasted butternut squash, pork belly, and dried cranberries dressed in a maple vinaigrette.

**Brittany Rice** is a young biodynamic winemaker (millesimecellars.com) and organic chef (rustikchef.com) who caters parties at her family home and vineyard in Santa Ynez. She’s part of the family running Sunstone Vineyards and Winery (sunstonewinery.com). Rice also teaches cooking classes and caters parties anywhere from Santa Ynez to Santa Barbara to Westlake Village. An entrée that’s popular with her clients for the holidays is her slow-cooked bison with persimmon-jalapeño chutney.

Chef Jason Collis recently turned the catering arm of his former restaurant Jonathan’s at Peirano’s (jonathansatpeiranos.com) in Ventura into its own business. He’s now exclusively running **Plated Events by Chef Jason** (platedevents.com). He caters in private homes or at the beautiful Limoneira Ranch in Santa Paula. For the holidays he uses persimmon sauce to glaze free-range chicken breast or Cornish game hen before cooking. Then he serves it with pineapple succotash and his own chili jam.

**Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village** (fourseasons.com/westlakevillage) now provides off-site catering services in clients’ homes and at Saddlerock Ranch in Malibu, home of Malibu Family Wines. Chef Mario Alcocer and his banquet team not only bring the food, they also transport the hotel’s signature china, glassware, and place settings. Alcocer loves to serve lobster at holiday parties because “a lobster dish is an elegant tradition that makes any dinner party even more special,” he said. His lobster cannelloni is stuffed with the aforementioned lobster, sweet corn, butternut squash, and ricotta, then dressed in apple-cider *gastrique* (sugar-vinegar sauce).

The Bocchinos are a husband (Chris) and wife (Kristine) team of chefs, formerly of Terra Restaurant in Malibu. They’ve been catering holiday parties for years, whether working at their restaurants or under the umbrella of their **Cal-Fresco** catering company and food truck (thegodmother.com). “Most of the clients that we cater for like to go off the beaten path culinarily,” said Kristine. So Chris often makes a duck confit with roasted winter root vegetables and aged balsamic vinegar. Kristine is somewhat famous for her pies, having just won two categories in the Malibu Pie Festival. In the fruit category her double-crust French apple pie took top honors, and in the nut category she won with her organic nut and fig tart.

Denise Antico-Donlon built herself a castle in Lobo Canyon in Agoura Hills and then decided to share it with others. **Lobo Castle** (lobocastle.com) mostly hosts weddings on the castle grounds. Small parties can take over the living room and dining room—both have leaded-glass windows and plank wood floors—before eventually spilling onto the heated stone patio with its own fireplace. Antico-Donlon cooks many styles of food, drawing on her extensive kitchen garden behind the castle for inspiration and ingredients. A holiday-party favorite is her mother’s cannoli. “The secret is in the homemade cannoli shells,” she said. “My mom made the clever addition of Marsala wine to the dough.” The cooked shells are then stuffed with a combination of imported ricotta, mascarpone, confectioners’ sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, and shaved dark chocolate. The ends of the pastries are dipped in crushed pistachios. ♦

Have a tip for our restaurant news pages? Email our dining editor at [angela@805living.com](mailto:angela@805living.com). For more dining news, visit our blog, “805 Eats,” at [blog.805living.com](http://blog.805living.com).

**THE DINING GUIDE** includes restaurants from Paso Robles to Malibu. Our aim is to inform you of restaurants with great food that you might not have experienced yet. The guide is arranged not by cuisine type, but by style of restaurant. “Fine Dining” choices have an elegant atmosphere and very professional service. Restaurants included under the “Foodie” heading are heralded for their wonderful chef-driven cuisine, regardless of atmosphere. “A Good Bet” listings are just that—solid, casual, and delicious. “The Chain Gang” highlights the best of the national restaurant chains, and the “Fun, Fun, Fun” category brings you spots geared toward a good time. The “Lunch Bunch” listings are casual spots ideally suited for lunch hour. Enjoy!

Restaurant information is subject to change without notice. We will be adding new listings to the *Dining Guide* each month. Please send any comments and suggestions to [angela@805living.com](mailto:angela@805living.com) or write to us at *805 Living*, 3717 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Westlake Village, CA 91362, attn: *Dining Guide*.

## ■ FINE DINING

*These restaurants have a skilled kitchen team, a lovely dining room, and great service. Some of the spots require elegant attire, but most allow for all styles of dress, from fancy to casual.*

### 71 PALM FRENCH & AMERICAN BRASSERIE

71 N. Palm St.

Ventura, 805-653-7222

71palm.com

French-American; Entrées \$8-\$28

Romantic

More casual than it might seem at first, this brasserie-style eatery proves very friendly through and through. For instance, there are bowls of water on the porch of this Craftsman house to welcome pets; and the patios upstairs and down are great for kids. The bar area offers beer, wine, and cocktails with its own happy-hour specials. The French-American menu from chef Didier Poirier offers addicting nibbles, like french fries with garlic aioli, black tiger shrimp cocktail, Alsatian-style pizzas, and warm duck confit salad. Main courses include steaks, a double-cut pork chop, a Kobe burger, Atlantic salmon, and New Zealand rack of lamb. Poirier teaches cooking classes each month that culminate in a three-course meal paired with wines. He also hosts occasional winemaker dinners featuring wines from the Central Coast, Napa, and Sonoma. 71 Palm is open for lunch and dinner Monday through Saturday.

### BEAU RIVAGE

26025 Pacific Coast Highway

Malibu, 310-456-5733

beaurivagerestaurant.com

Mediterranean; Entrées \$16-\$37

Saturday & Sunday Brunch, Romantic