



NapaLife

**For those who live in Napa Valley –
and those who wish they did...**

An Insider's Look at Napa Valley

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Pilar closed, perhaps permanently?

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Calendar for the rest of the year

There's a sign on the door at Pilar Restaurant saying that it is closed for vacation until Feb. 5, but a call to the number indicated says the restaurant is closed for a few months for seismic retrofitting.

I've heard rumors that the closure may be permanent. One rumor was that Pilar Sanchez has taken a position as chef at the new restaurant going into Fagiani's bar space nearby, which was recently bought by Steve and Johanna Hasty but Steve denies that he's talked to Pilar about this possibility. At any rate, that project is also awaiting retrofitting.

Calls and emails to Pilar were not returned by the time I transmitted this. At any rate, Pilar is shut, and we'll have time to find out more in the future.

Maria del Pilar Sanchez and her husband Didier Lenders are great cooks, but don't seem very comfortable with the marketing needed to make a restaurant succeed, including schmoozing with customers as do Greg Cole, Bob Hurley and Cindy Pawlcyn and other top local chef-owners.

Mustard Festival kicks off

The Mustard Festival begins this Saturday, Feb. 2 with the Grand Opening at the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena.

It's always a fun and dazzling event, as it should be for \$175 at the door, but remember that the money just goes to pay for the Mustard Festival. It's not for charity, like almost all similar events held in Napa Valley.

The cost does help support the CIA, for some funds from the admission is donated in lieu of rental fees, and the festival literature mentions some charitable events, but I can't find any other specific charitable contributions listed this year.

The goal of the Mustard Festival is to attract tourists during the off season, and hence help tourist-serving businesses. It serves that purpose well.

It even got \$100,000 of the county's transient occupancy tax (more than the Art Council, in fact), in the guise of promoting mid-week tourism, though all the festival's events are held on the weekend.

The Mustard Festival promotion does promote mid-week stayovers, however, and lists special deals at inns and wineries during the week.

Personally, I believe a locally organized off-season festival highlighting Napa Valley wines could attract as many tourists with the same effort and benefit local arts as well as the hotels and restaurants.

More of my views on the subject are posted at www.napalife.com/archives.htm/#mustardfestival.

Arts Council meeting

Speaking of the Arts Council, it presented its draft cultural plan to an appreciative audience at the Opera House Wednesday, and solicited comments and suggestions.

The plan, drafted with the help of consultant Morrie Warsharwshi and about 700 individuals and groups, wisely called for more sharing and coordination, not a new building for community arts, which appears unrealistic. Clearly, a big need is for more resources to implement the many good ideas suggested: One excellent idea was more help for Arts Council director Michelle Williams so her group could match arts group needs with the existing and underutilized facilities. That, however, may not solve the special needs of Dreamweavers Theater, which must leave sets for its plays up and have space for realistic rehearsals.

Other ideas include a yearly art expo and an art and wine festival for the arts instead of the Mustard Festival (not from me in this case).

The new county Arts Commission is also now in place, but much of its role will apparently be coordination and counsel to government agencies on matters like public arts, a hot potato the politicians would probably be happy to toss to artists.

If you'd like to help in any way – especially to make contributions including the use of space or even a building (!), contact Michelle Williams at michelle@artscouncilnapavalley.org or 257-2117. You can read the plan and learn more at www.artscouncilnapavalley.org.

Dinner at Ubuntu

After the meeting of the Arts Council, we stopped in at Ubuntu for an pleasant meal. The menu keeps changing, and what we had was excellent and reasonable. It was a cozy spot on a nasty night, too.

Pizza Azzurro party

Pizza Azzurro tried to clear the cupboards in preparation for its move with a blow out Friday night. It was jammed, including with people spilling out of Back Room Wines, which will be moving later this year, too.

At Pizza Azzurro, Michael even served pepperoni pizza – for the first time after seven years, and he vowed it would be the last.

Pizza Azzurro Pizzeria and Enoteca opens about Feb. 5 at the new, expanded location in Main Street West, the new building across from Vintners Collective and down the street from Uva Trattoria, another favorite informal restaurant.

Whistle Stop coffee not approved yet

I got ahead of myself. The Whistle Stop in Yountville I mentioned is a proposed future agenda item but has not been approved by the town at this time.

The applicant is finalizing her application and will be bringing it forward for planning review and then zoning board and town council approval.

We'll provide details when we can.

Oxbow watch: Model Bakery to open today

I should be leery of predicting openings, for two of the places I said would open at the Oxbow Market haven't made it yet, and the other only halfway.

The Oxbow Cheese Merchants opened with about 75 delicious artisanal (mostly) cheeses and a few other deli items, and the kitchen of the Oxbow Wine Merchants in the same large space has started serving small plates.

Unfortunately, the wine permit hadn't arrived as of this weekend, but should be there soon.

Once it's in, you'll be able to get and consume wine on the patio as well as inside, and you can even bring food from other vendors to enjoy at least on the deck, though they'd naturally prefer for you to buy theirs.

The market has installed temporary tables inside until the weather improves and a few more eateries are open, and it makes a huge difference in both the look of the place and the appeal.

Unfortunately, the wine rules in the Market are a little awkward. You can't take wine from Folio Enoteca to other places and drink it, and Pica Pica doesn't have its wine and beer license yet, either. Its arepas are great, however.

Maybe one day the whole place will have a blanket wine and beer license, which would be a huge help.

In other news, the Model Bakery is opening at Oxbow Public Market today, Monday, Jan. 28, and is offering free coffee and a free freshly baked demi-baguette for anyone mentioning the grand opening celebration.

With it, 12 vendors are now operating with select farm stands open on available weekends.

The original Model Bakery has been part of St. Helena for over 80 years. With all its breads and

pastries baked on premises, the Oxbow location will bring to downtown Napa the same artisan breads made with organic stone-ground flours and the highest-quality ingredients.

Opening soon (we hope) will be

- Rôtisario grilled meats and poultry
- The Fatted Calf charcuterie and butcher
- Taylor's Automatic Refresher
- And Kanaloa Seafood in April

Free ice cream at Oxbow Market

Three Twins Ice Cream Factory in the Oxbow Public Market will serve free ice cream from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m. on Saturday Feb. 2, to celebrate the 31st birthday of the Founding Twin's twin brother.

Guests will be invited to enjoy a free single-sized cone or "teensy cup" of their choice of Three Twins Ice Cream's organic ice cream. No purchase is necessary, although pints, quarts, ice cream cakes, ice cream pies and branded merchandise will be promotionally priced for the day.

All gratuities for the day will be donated to the Napa Valley Land Trust.

Three Twins Ice Cream features organic ice cream produced sustainably and uses biodegradable packaging (including spoons made from potatoes!), offsets its emissions and gives away money to environmental nonprofits through its membership in the global nonprofit movement, 1% For The Planet.

Three Twins Ice Cream is open seven days a week, beginning a dream for children of all ages – breakfast at the ice cream store, featuring organic waffles, organic coffee and freshly squeezed organic orange juice. Ice cream, including shakes, sundaes, floats, cups, cones, ice cream cakes, ice cream pies and other treats are served all day.

Oxbow Public Market is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hours will soon expand to 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the week, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Lobster Shack building for sale

If you've seen the ad for the building housing the Lobster Shack, note that the building is what's for sale, not the restaurant. The restaurant is operating and has a lease in place until 2011.

The old building is for sale for \$1.5 million. It's 3400-sq.ft. on a 5000-sq.ft. lot. It was built in 1890. The broker is Alan Wilke at Coldwell Bankers, at 224-8454.

Follies du Valle seeks performers

Follies Du Valle or don't quit your day job will hold auditions Monday, Feb. 4 and Tuesday, Feb. 5, from 6 to 9 p.m. Here's a chance for Napa Valley performers, singers, dancers, actors and comedians to take the stage!

Follies Du Valle returns to Lincoln Theater in April. This funny and zany musical revue starring Napa Valley's own local talent will be a food-and-wine-themed production entitled "Eat Your Heart Out!"

The auditions will be held at Lincoln Theater in Yountville. All performers are welcome including children ages 4 and over. No talent or previous experience necessary, just a desire to work hard, have fun and perform. Bring a song if you would like a featured singing role. Everyone who shows up and commits to rehearsals can be in the show.

Rehearsals begin Feb. 19 at the Rutherford Grange.

Follies du Valle will be presented at the Lincoln Theater April 4, 5 and 6. It is a fundraiser to support the Lincoln Theater Student Outreach Program and the theater's ongoing operations fund.

For more information, email nvfollies2008@yahoo.com.

Performances added at Opera House

The Napa Valley Opera House has added two new shows to its already impressive lineup this season.

Rufus Wainwright performs a special solo show on Sunday, March 9 at 7 p.m. and the Cowboy Junkies take to the Opera House stage on Saturday, April 26.

You know where to buy tickets: www.nvoh.org or com.

Whole Foods

I've received a number of comments about the new Whole Foods, most mixed with appreciation plus caveats.

Here are some, not necessarily with my concurrence: "I thought I'd share my 50 cents on Whole Foods with you. I used to live near them and loved

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