

# House of CULINARY WORSHIP

Napa's newest food and wine destination caters to devotees from near and far *By Shelly G. Keller*

**N**amed for the bow-shaped bend in the Napa River where it sits, **Oxbow Public Market** in downtown Napa beckons local foodies and tourists alike to come eat and drink—and shake the hands that feed them.

The market is the brainchild of Steve Carlin, whose history of satisfying food lovers includes such havens as the Oakville Grocery and the San Francisco Ferry Building Marketplace. After a three-year stint as project manager for the Ferry Plaza remodel, and a one-year respite in Tuscany, Carlin rounded up 25 private investors and \$11 million to build the 40,000-square-foot market on land leased from COPIA. He

practically handpicked the market's tenants, a bevy of Bay Area food artisans and wine merchants who are favorites of local food lovers.

The building's barn-like architecture—elegant and inviting in its simplicity—houses 25 gourmet food, wine and specialty shops, restaurants, and a micro-winery with a wine bar. The market also includes, on adjacent property, a remodel of the old Napa Tire Center that has a restaurant, bakery and charcuterie. On the COPIA side of the market, 10 permanent outdoor farm stands provide a venue for a rotating lineup of local farmers who offer a bounty of organic and sustainably farmed produce seven days a week.



Visitors and residents alike can enjoy the bounty of gourmet and organic foods, wines and specialty items such as teas and baked goods offered at Oxbow Public Market.



## FARRO SALAD

Makes 1-1/2 quarts

**Sarah Scott**, executive chef of Folio Enoteca & Winery, calls this Farro Salad the restaurant's most popular salad. "It's a Cal-Ital inspired salad, using Italian farro, local citrus, olive oils and the very-California sun-dried tomatoes."

- 2 cups Italian farro
- 3 tablespoons salt
- 3/4 cup pine nuts, toasted and cooled
- 8 scallions, cleaned, finely minced (white and some of the green)
- 1 Meyer lemon, zested (zest finely chopped) and juiced
- 2 regular lemons, zested (zest finely chopped) and juiced
- 1/2 cup julienned sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 shallots, finely minced
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup pure olive oil
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/3 cup finely minced Italian parsley

Bring large pot of water to a boil. Add 3 tablespoons salt. Add farro, stirring to separate. Bring to a boil, then turn down and simmer for 15-18 minutes, or until tender. Drain in a colander, and run cold water over farro to cool it. Set aside.

Combine the shallots and the red wine vinegar in a small bowl. Let sit for 15 minutes. Combine the Meyer and regular lemon juices. Combine the pure and extra virgin olive oils.

Place the farro in a large bowl. Add the pine nuts, scallions, lemon zests and sun-dried tomatoes. Mix well. Add the shallot and vinegar mixture. Add half the lemon juice, the salt and pepper. Add the olive oils. Taste for seasoning. Add the rest of the lemon juice, if needed. Stir in the Italian parsley. Taste again, and adjust seasonings, if needed. Salad should taste fresh and lemony.



Loved for its gourmet rotisserie wagon, Roli Roti now serves its famous rotisserie grilled meats in its first restaurant location in Oxbow Public Market.

Over the next few years, the market will become the epicenter of the Oxbow District, with the opening this year of the Westin Verasa, a 160-unit condominium resort on the east side of COPIA. On the west side of COPIA, Ritz-Carlton will break ground for a 500-room hotel, slated to open in 2010.

The newest additions to Oxbow's roster include **Kanaloa Seafood** and **Ritual Coffee Roasters**, which opened in the spring, and **Hog Island Oyster Company**, scheduled to open in September. Santa Barbara-based Kanaloa sells primarily to restaurants, hotels and resorts all over the U.S. Since 1983, owners **Don and Randee Disraeli** have focused on sustainable sources, seeking premium seafood from select fisherman, fish farmers and processors from Alaska to New Zealand. "Oxbow is aligned with our environmental philosophy," says Don Disraeli. "Michael Mondavi [who owns Folio Enoteca & Winery] talked to us, and he was very persuasive about Steve Carlin and Oxbow."

The Disraelis use Japanese processing techniques not used elsewhere in the country. "The Japanese have been working with seafood for generations," Disraeli says. "We worked with a Japanese family who taught us everything from how to cut the fish to how to train our employees. It's reflected in the quality of seafood we provide for our customers." Shoppers won't find a display case at Kanaloa because displaying the fish compromises the quality, he adds. "We cut everything to order on the spot."

**Eileen Hassi**, proprietor of Ritual Coffee Roasters, calls her company's coffee "revolutionary." In 2003 she moved from Seattle to San Francisco and was disappointed with the city's coffee. She opened her first location on Valencia Street, followed by another on Bayview inside a plant nursery. What's surprised her most about the coffee

business is the emerging quality of coffee. "Coffee is getting better," she says. "And it's not just in the preparation. Green coffee is getting better because end producers like me are going back to the origin to talk with coffee farmers. That link had never been completed until recently, and it's still unusual. Coffee farmers are thirsty for knowledge about what we want because we'll pay more for coffee beans if they're really good."

Her company's approach is to question everything that's taken for granted about coffee. "We're always trying new methods to make better coffee, whether it's in the roasting or the preparation," Hassi says. "We don't blend our coffee beans. We only do single origins and use an extensive water filtration system because coffee is 99 percent water. Water really impacts the taste. It's not just a matter of filtering. It's also about the mineral balance in the water."

**"We worked with a Japanese family who taught us everything from how to cut the fish to how to train our employees." —Don Disraeli**

Hassi explains that coffee is naturally sweet because it's the seed of a fruit, the coffee cherry. "We want people to taste that. When you choose good coffees and roast them just enough to bring out their natural flavors, coffee is sweet." Ritual Coffee offers espresso beverages as well as regular coffee brewed by the cup so customers can choose which coffee they want to drink. Hassi says drinking coffee is the most important ritual in her life and confesses that she loves being part of the Oxbow community. "I've found like-minded people who are as passionate about their products as I am."

When Oxbow Public Market was just

getting off the ground a few years ago, Carlin contacted **John Finger and Terry Sawyer** of Hog Island Oyster Company about setting up shop there. Finger says they didn't move ahead because they weren't sure about downtown Napa. "There were two spaces that resembled our San Francisco Ferry Building Marketplace restaurant, and we know Steve Carlin from the Ferry Building. I started visiting the market in January and was really impressed with the project and the tenants. I guess it was inevitable for us to be there."

Finger confirms that the Oxbow location will keep its focus on oysters. "We're looking at putting in a grill so we can grill oysters. We're also going to narrow the counter so our shuckers can interact with customers more. Our farm in Tomales Bay is just over an hour away. That's close enough to ensure the quality of our oysters." Finger also notes that the Napa Valley itself is changing. "Today there's a south Napa Valley and a north Napa Valley. Downtown Napa is in the center of the southern region. A number of really good restaurants in downtown are doing well. When you elevate the food scene, it draws more people to all of us."

As Napa's summer weather entices visitors, expect to see an ever-increasing number of food lovers from the Bay Area and beyond. "I'm definitely looking forward to summer weather for a change," Finger admits. "We don't get that at Hog Island or in our Ferry Building location."

Here's a look at the rest of Oxbow Public Market's lineup of vendors.

## RESTAURANTS

Anchoring the front corner of the market

is the third location of Taylor's Automatic Refresher, the cult burger stand that got its start up the road in St. Helena. At Folio Enoteca & Winery, Michael Mondavi brings wine country inside the market with a micro-winery, wine bar and casual café featuring chef Sarah Scott's "market foraging" style of cooking. Pica Pica Maize Kitchen initiates novices to Venezuelan street food, including arepas (grilled corn flour flatbreads with various fillings), cachapas (sweet corn pancakes with cheese, ham, chicken or beef) and more. At Rôtisario, Thomas Odermatt serves the same delicious rotisserie grilled meats made famous by his Roli Roti trucks found at farmers markets from Davis to Sausalito and San Jose.

## WINE MERCHANTS

At Oxbow Wine Merchant you can taste, buy and learn about domestic and imported wine. Folio Enoteca & Winery offers samplings or bottles of domestic brands in the Folio family—Hangtime, Oberon and I'M.

## GOURMET FOODS AND SPECIALTIES

St. Helena's Model Bakery sells artisanal breads, pastries and ready-to-eat pizzas baked on site, as well as sandwiches and other treats. Fatted Calf, whose charcuterie products are considered among the best in the country, offers a wide selection of meat and poultry products, cured and aged using organic and hormone-free meats.

**"We're always trying new methods to make better coffee, whether it's in the roasting or the preparation."**

—Eileen Hassi

Oxbow Cheese Merchant carries an amazing assortment of domestic and imported cheeses presented by a friendly, well-trained staff. Five Dot Ranch offers sustainably raised, premium California beef. At Whole Spice Company, you'll find hundreds of spices and spice blends from around the world. Anette's Chocolates tempts candy lovers with its world-class truffles, fudge, and wine- and beer-flavored brittles. At The Olive Press, sample more than a dozen different olive oils and find everything olive- or olive-oil-related. Tillerman Tea carries a selection of rare loose-leafed teas as well as tea-making paraphernalia. Visit Three Twins Organic Ice Cream for certified organic ice creams and check out the human-powered milkshake maker (driven by pedaling a bicycle).

## GIFTS FOR FOODIES

Inside the Kitchen Library, world-renowned photographer Steven Rothfeld's assortment of culinary collectibles will please any food lover. Heritage Culinary Artifacts carries premium culinary antiques that are both captivating and functional. The boutique Fête features elegant, classic and witty merchandise that will charm hostesses and turn get-togethers into memorable occasions. ✱



For more information, visit [oxbowpublicmarket.com](http://oxbowpublicmarket.com).

Photos: Oxbow Public Market



Cheese from the Oxbow Cheese Merchant; a world of flavor from the Whole Spice Company; premium local beef from Five Dot Ranch all under one roof.