

# Upscale vegetarian cuisine at Greens



The view from  
Greens  
Restaurant.  
Photo/Kathryn  
Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

SAN FRANCISCO – Faced with the task of picking any restaurant I wanted to go in San Francisco for my birthday, I went with the one I knew would not disappoint – Greens.

Sept. 25 was the third time I had dined at this vegetarian wonder at Fort Mason, the old fortified military base first established by Spaniards.

What keeps me wanting to return to Greens is the incredible food that proves eating a vegetarian meal goes so far beyond a cardboard tasting burger, scary tofu dishes, bland and mushy vegetables, portabella mushrooms and pasta.

As a vegetarian, this is one of those rare moments where I have a difficult time deciding what to order. The only criticism I have of Greens is there isn't a sampler platter.

Early dinner reservations because of going to see the San Francisco Symphony that evening prove fortuitous. It means

everyone with 5:30pm reservations gets a window seat.

Sailboats rock gently. Windsurfers jump the waves of the bay. Fog rolls in over the Golden Gate Bridge. Like a movie script, it dissipates as sunset arrives.

I have a hard time focusing on the menu as I notice a seal swimming below the window – adding that San Francisco touch.

But my stomach growls, saying, “Let’s get on with ordering.”

Leslie, the ever-so punctual waiter, brings almonds to start with. What a nice change. Scrumptious bread with organic butter follows.

Sue and I each have a cup of Moroccan Lentil Soup (\$7.50).

“I would say this is one of the best soups I have ever had,” Sue says.

The seasonings were perfect – spicy, but not overpowering.

I order the Mascarpone Leek Risotto Cake with chanterelle mushrooms, sweet 100 and sungold cherry tomatoes, roasted Walla Walla onions, Savoy spinach, herb cream and grana padano. (\$24)

It didn’t matter, and still doesn’t, that I don’t know what all that is.

I didn’t want to put my fork down, but at the same time I didn’t want to inhale my entree. I tried to pace myself by taking sips of the Sonoma Cuvee Russian River Valley Pinot Noir that complemented both of our meals.

I can’t do justice in describing this meal. Superlatives seem trivial. The nuance of flavors, the presentation, the marrying of flavors – it’s as though Executive Chef Annie Somerville created a concerto for the palate.

Sue and I traded a bite. Good thing we each liked what we had

ordered because I really didn't want to share.

She ordered the Provencal Eightball Squash with Japanese eggplant, peppers, roasted onions, asiago, pine nuts and basil; served with roasted tomato sauce, grilled fingerling potatoes and torpedo onions on rosemary skewer, summer beans with shallots and pepper flakes. (\$23)

She marveled at the sweetness of the sauce being balanced by the salt on the potatoes. She called the sauce killer.

"I think most people are afraid to order vegetarian because it's boring and empty," Sue said. Nothing was boring this night.

When Somerville came by the table I told her I wanted to order more items – not because I was hungry, but because everything sounded good.

She seemed a bit jealous that we live in South Lake Tahoe. The chef said she would love to take off from late August through October to be in the mountains. She likes being among the 10,000-foot peaks along Highway 395.

Maybe a lodging for food trade needs to be worked out.

I have two cookbooks written by Somerville. In 2004, I saw her demonstration during the annual Yosemite Chef's Holidays at the Ahwahnee. She will be in Yosemite for the 2010 event during the last session, Feb. 3-4. Yosemite Chefs Holidays at the Ahwahnee is Jan. 10-Feb.4. It's an event I highly recommend.

The meal wasn't over. My sister, Jann, had prearranged to pay for my birthday dessert. Sue and I split the Roasted Pear with cardamom cream mille feuille and amaretto caramel. (\$9) Next time I'll order my own.

Greens is online at [www.greensrestaurant.com](http://www.greensrestaurant.com) or call (415) 771.6222.

# Butternut Squash Soup and Narrow Gate wines

**Publisher's Note:** *This is reprinted from the February 2009 Tahoe Mountain News with permission.*

**By Kathryn Reed**

Ingredients I don't know and complex steps are two reasons for me to ditch a recipe. Even though the recipe below looks complicated, it's not. The work involved will have those at the table begging for more.

Because the recipe makes so much, we were happy to be eating it for the better part of a week. Sue took some to work for Hedy. The three of us rate it as one of the best soups we've ever had. We have Teena Hildebrand of Narrow Gate Vineyards in Placerville to thank for this fabulous ensemble of flavors.

"I traditionally make a seasonal soup for many of our wine pairing events and personal dinner parties. It's a great way to start the evening and an opportunity to show off white wines," Hildebrand said. "I put all of my favorite flavors (looking for a balance of sweet, salt, acid, etc.) that will highlight, rather than flatten, the flavors in the wine. The slightly natural sweetness from the seasonal vegetables and the intensity of the fresh apple cider reduction balanced the pungent, nutty, savoriness of the fresh sage leaves crisped in brown butter."

I swung by the winery during the annual Barrel Tasting

festivities that were going on throughout El Dorado County the weekend of Jan. 24-25. There I was able to taste some of the wines Hildebrand recommends for this flavorful soup.

Now I will be able to pour a glass or two of the Melange del Sol Blanc when I make this soup again. We'll see how long the bottles last. I may have to go back during another fun event – Passport Weekend (March 28-29 and April 4-5). Of course wineries are happy to have people visit on non-event days as well.

Hildebrand isn't for giving up on white wines in winter.

“There are so many wonderful, seasonal dishes that really bring out the warmth, white floral aromas (orange blossom, plumeria, honeysuckle) orchard flavors (sweet, ripe, late harvest apples) and spice that are characteristic of the white Rhone varietals like Narrow Gate Vineyards' 2007 Estate Viognier Roussanne,” Hildebrand boasts. “This pairing is a sensory explosion and a delicious ushering in of winter.”

Hildebrand also suggests serving Narrow Gate Vineyards' Chardonnay, Melange de Sol Blanc (blend of Chardonnay, Viognier and Roussanne) and Cotes Rose (Grenache Rose) with this soup.

She uses homemade veggie stock and says it makes a world of difference. I used store bought and was more than satisfied. All the comments below are from Hildebrand.

### **Butternut Squash, Golden Delicious Apple & Sweet Potato Soup**

8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter, divide into 2T and 6T

2½ lbs butternut squash, peeled, seeded, cut into ½ inch pieces (about 6 cups)

1 lb sweet potato or yam, roasted and removed from skin

2 cups chopped white or yellow onion

1/2 cup chopped carrot

1/2 cup chopped celery

2 small golden delicious apples, peeled, cored, chopped

1½ teaspoons dried thyme or 1 tablespoon fresh

½ teaspoon crumbled dried sage leaves or 1 teaspoon fresh

6+ cups vegetable stock (can also use chicken stock)

1½ cups fresh or unfiltered apple cider (I use Boa Vista unpasteurized from Apple Hill)

2/3 cup creme fraiche (can substitute good quality sour cream)

½ cup heavy whipping cream (optional, can also use half&half or tempered sour cream)

12 to 24 fresh small (1/2-inch long) sage leaves

Melt 6T butter in a heavy large stock pot or saucepan over medium-high heat. Add butternut squash, sweet potatoes, onions, carrots and celery; saute until slightly softened, about 15 minutes. Mix in chopped golden delicious apples, dried thyme and dried sage. Add stock and 1 cup of the cider; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer until squash and apples are tender, stirring mixture occasionally, about 30 minutes. Remove from burner and cool.

Puree soup in blender, food processor or with a hand held stick blender to a smooth consistency. Return soup to stock pot or saucepan and whisk in ½ cup whipping cream, thin with more stock if too thick. Season with sea salt and white pepper (optional).

### **Apple Cider reduction Creme Fraiche:**

Boil remaining ½ cup of cider until reduced to ¼ cup. Cool. Place creme fraiche in small bowl and whisk in reduced cider.

## **Crispy Sage leaves in Brown Butter**

Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in a small saute pan over med-high heat. Heat until butter just starts to brown (do not burn) and add fresh sage leaves, cook until crisp and remove to paper towel lined plate.

Bring soup to a simmer, ladle into bowls, drizzle with apple cider reduction creme fraiche and top with a crispy brown butter sage leaf.

Soup and apple cider creme fraiche can be made up to 3 days in advance, covered separately and refrigerated.

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# **Winemaker dinner at Fresh Ketch**

South Lake Tahoe's Fresh Ketch hosts an Oct. 21 Winemaker's Dinner with Raymond Vineyards of Napa Valley. The dinner will feature a five-course dinner with a pairing of five varietals from Raymond Vineyards.

Bob Cooper will host the dinner and describe the various wines served with the courses. Each course will feature the freshest ingredients.

Seating is limited. Call (530) 541.5683. Cost is \$65/person.

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# Eating extravaganza in Vegas

*Reprinted with permission from the August 2009 issue of Tahoe Mountain News.*

**By Kathryn Reed**

When I lived in Las Vegas from 1993-96 I seldom went to the Strip. I'd tell friends where to go, what to see – even loan them my car. I'd go for the occasional show or maybe a meal.

Casinos don't do much for me. I seldom gamble. I don't like the toxic smoke, the noise, the artificial make-believe over-the-top one-upmanship of it all. I'd rather go to the real Paris, Venice and New York.

But one thing Vegas is definitely good for is scrumptious food. The dining options could get me to go back in a Southwest hour. Well-known chefs keep hanging their shingles in this desert outpost.

When I was in Vegas in June I ate out a lot, saw the hyper-energetic Bette Midler and stayed on the Strip at Caesars Palace. Frolicking pool-side in near 100-degree temps was another worthwhile indulgence. This is better people watching than the casino floor.

First up was Hubert Keller's Burger Bar. This is a veggie burger you won't find in the frozen food section. The concoction is a close second to the "homemade" one I've had at Moody's in Truckee. This is what we vegetarians call a true veggie burger.

Sue had a buffalo burger that she raved about until she got the bill. She hadn't realized how the build-your-own-burger gimmick would translate to build-a-bigger-bill.

Next night was Gandhi – truly authentic Indian food that had this vegetarian wondering if her stomach was going to



obscenely protrude at the pool the next day.

My final night of dining in Vegas was at Trevi in the Forum Shops next to Caesars. Location (walkable from the hotel room and to see Midler) and ethnicity (Italian) were the primary reasons for choosing this restaurant.

It more than satisfied our diverse taste buds, since Sue is likes that meat stuff. An array of dishes steadily flowed from the kitchen to our table for our sampling pleasure. Nothing was bad or even slightly undesirable. We could have easily eaten here every lunch and dinner.

Eating outside at Trevi's means being on a patio of sorts cordoned off from shoppers who are coming in and out of places like Tiffany, Gucci and Estee Lauder.

Instead of traditional garlic bread the restaurant offers Pizzetta Trevi, which is a rosemary flatbread with garlic and Parmesan cheese. It was a fun twist to get the night going. I'm not a big eggplant fan, but the Eggplant Parmigiana appetizer could convert me. The Caprese Salad (homemade mozzarella, tomatoes, basil, olive oil) was light and flavorful – an ideal summer starter.

The recipe for my favorite entree is below. The rich mushroom sauce is balanced by the spinach and cheese. The flavors meld to form a mouth-watering feast that isn't too heavy, despite the ingredients. All of Trevi's pastas are made fresh at the restaurant.

### **Fazzoletto Bertolini by Trevi Chef Peter Scaturro**

1 6×6 sheet pasta

3 ounces sauteed spinach

3 ounces Ricotta

2 ounces Bacchamel

1/8 teaspoon chili flakes

Salt to taste

Pepper to taste

1 T shaved Parmesan

4 ounces wild mushroom sauce (made from a mixture of portabella, crimini and porcini mushrooms and vegetable stock)

Mix ricotta, spinach, salt and pepper in bowl. Cook pasta sheet in salted boiling water until tender, then drain well. Heat spinach-ricotta mix in sautee pan with Bacchmael. Add pasta sheet to spinach ricotta mixture and toss well. Place in a pasta bowl and ladle mushroom sauce over the top. Garnish with shaved Parmesan.

This is for one serving.

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## Special Bread & Broth meal

The Bread & Broth Program at St. Theresa's Church in South Lake Tahoe is observing its 20th anniversary of serving by celebrating its volunteers through the years with a special dinner Oct. 26 from 4-5:30pm in the Church Hall.

Every person who has volunteered their time to the program since it started in 1989 is invited to join other community members at the regularly scheduled Monday serving.

"Bread & Broth is here today due to the dedication and love of its volunteers," Director Diane Weidinger said in a press release. "We're so grateful to have such a wonderful group of people devote their time and energy to this much needed

community service. This meal is a small token of our appreciation.â€”

Along with the special invitation extended to the Bread & Broth volunteers, Mondayâ€™s meal is open to all members of the community, just as it has been every Monday at Grace Hall since 1989.

This month the kitchen staff is expected to reach a bittersweet milestone by exceeding 12,500 meals served since it started 20 years ago.

Contact Diane Weidinger to find out how you can help Bread & Broth as a sponsor, donor or volunteer at (775) 588-3993 or [dianeweidinger@yahoo.com](mailto:dianeweidinger@yahoo.com).

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## **Soroptimist gearing up for annual wine tasting**

Fifteen local restaurants and 25 Northern California wineries are onboard to serve the throng of people expected to turn out of the 39th annual Soroptimist Wine Tasting.

More than \$63,000 was raised at the 2008 event. Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe uses the money to help groups like the SLT Womenâ€™s Center, Boys and Girls Club, OPEN, Special Olympics, A Fighting Chance, Lake Tahoe Community College and others.

Formerly called An Evening of Food and Wine, the event is Nov. 13 at Harrahâ€™s Lake Tahoe.

The service club still needs silent auction and raffle items.

For information about donating or buying tickets, contact Valerie Conners at (530) 544.8545 or email [valerieconners@yahoo.com](mailto:valerieconners@yahoo.com).

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# The Beach House in Kauai – food that rivals the sunsets

**Publisher's Note:** *This first appeared in the January 2009 issue of the Tahoe Mountain News and is reprinted with permission.*

**By Kathryn Reed**

Ambiance, service, food – those are the three main ingredients for a memorable dining experience. The Beach House in Koloa, Kauai, nails it on all three.

December was my first trip to this Hawaiian island, therefore my initial visit to the Beach House. My sister, Pam, first told me about the restaurant – it's where she and her husband, Bob, had their wedding dinner three years ago.

It is the only non-resort beachfront restaurant on the Garden Island. Owners Roy Dunn and Mike Hooks used to own the Big Water Grille in Incline. The building has been built three times. The last time was after Hurricane Iniki leveled it in 1992.

We had reservations for 5:30pm in order to witness the sun sinking into the Pacific. With the temperate climate, window seating takes on a new meaning. The view is unobstructed by glass. Diners leave their seats to take pictures of themselves, the setting sun framed by the palm trees and

enhanced by tiki torches.

General Manager Jordan James admits this can create havoc for the kitchen because food may be ready but no one is at the table. Still, with seating for 240, the staff seems to have figured out how to make it all work.

Sue's seafood corn chowder was piping hot. My watermelon salad was exquisite. I was more than satisfied with the one vegetarian entree – a portobello mushroom ensemble. Sue still talks about the roasted garlic black truffle ono entree she devoured.

The restaurant is one of those where you don't know the waiter is there, but the water glass is never empty, the wine is poured without interruption in conversation, napkins are folded when you're off taking pictures.

It's a good idea to make dinner reservations right after booking your flight.

Pam and Bob dined at the Beach House a couple nights after us. Pam tried the recipe that is below. She raved about the dish and said the \$30 she spent was well worth it. Bob had the macadamia nut crusted mahimahi, which is the restaurant's best seller.

Save room for dessert – the molten chocolate desire is outrageously phenomenal.

Fresh fish is guaranteed because the restaurant hires people to fish for them locally. Other fish comes from the surrounding islands.

Chef Todd Barrett said he doesn't have one fish that he likes to work with more than another. Much of his time is spent on perfecting sauces for them. He hails from the Bay Area. Barrett will be on the South Shore this month to celebrate a friend's 40th birthday, to ski a little and show his 8-year-

old daughter snow for the first time.

## **Wasabi Crusted Snapper**

Serves 4-6 people, leftovers of butter compound can hold a couple weeks. This is good on any white fish.

1 lb unsalted butter

6 T wasabi powder or premade wasabi paste

Salt and pepper

Panko (Japanese bread crumbs)

If using wasabi powder, make it into a paste. Then whip butter and wasabi in blender to make smooth paste. Season with salt and pepper. Whip in Panko so it is evenly distributed. Mixture should be pliable, but thick.

Butter Sauce:

$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$  C dry white wine

$\frac{1}{2}$  shallot, diced

Fresh thyme sprigs

Several white or black peppercorns

$\frac{1}{2}$  C fresh lemon juice

$\frac{1}{2}$  C fresh passion fruit juice (lilikoi)

$\frac{1}{2}$  C heavy whipping cream

1 lb butter

In sauce pan, add the first six ingredients. Bring to a boil so the liquid is reduced in half. Then add up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  C cream to double the volume. Taste. If more lilikoi is needed, add 1 tsp at a time. Then over medium heat reduce the cream mixture by

half so it is bubbly and thick. Then add about 1 T of butter at a time to double the amount of liquid so it comes  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  C of liquid in pan. Stir constantly while adding butter. Once butter is melted and desired amount of liquid is created, strain out shallots, peppercorns and any pulp. It's imperative to keep liquid warm, but not over heat so the butter doesn't burn.

Fish

4-6 white fish fillets

Olive oil

Salt and pepper

Use sautee pan that can go under a broiler. Put in a liberal amount of olive oil. Get it hot. Season fillets with salt and pepper. Throw them in pan. Sear first side so it gets color – 1.5-2 minutes. Flip the fillet. Spoon the wasabi mixture on top in an even layer. When the fish is still medium raw, finish cooking it under a broiler so the butter is cooked out and the wasabi is melted into the top of the fish. This should be 3-4 minutes. Fish should be 6-8 inches below the fire. Keep an eye on the fish.

The Beach House serves this dish with a vegetable medley and steamed rice.

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## Fall Food Fest

The Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation is sponsoring a Food Fest on Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-10pm at Harvey's Convention Center, Stateline.

The fundraiser pays for enrichment programs in all schools in Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

This community activity will feature food by local restaurants, beer and wine tasting, a silent auction, and music. Since school funding has been dramatically cut for the coming school year, the enrichment programs provided by LTEF offer many students opportunities to participate in art, music, science, math, marine biology, health education activities that would not otherwise be available.

Tickets are \$35 in advance and \$40 at the door, and are available at all elementary schools, the LTUSD office and Fox Gas.

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## **Tapping into Reno's brew pubs**

**By Mike Dunne, Sacramento Bee**

Reno's food culture, long identified with all-you-can-eat casino buffets and steak-and-egg specials, is maturing and diversifying.

Aside from restaurants, Reno offers food enthusiasts a small and quiet but industrious community of entrepreneurs who produce specialty foods and beverages of uncommon creativity and quality.

They're scattered all about Reno and Sparks, often tucked into blank-faced industrial parks or cookie-cutter shopping plazas.

While readily accessible, they aren't so numerous or centralized to justify on their own a trek to Reno, but they will provide a diversion for food enthusiasts who happen to be visiting the "the Biggest Little City in the World."



# Weight Watchers leaves South Shore

By Kathryn Reed



Weight Watchers is scaling back.

The national weight loss machine has stopped operating on the South Shore even though dozens of people regularly attended meetings at South Lake Tahoe Rec Center.

“It gave me my life back,” Pam Wheeler said of Weight Watchers. She joined a handful of years ago. Over time she lost 65 pounds. “It was the beginning of getting myself back, putting myself first.”

Wheeler and Virginia Boyar had been running the meetings the last few years. Both needed to move on because of other commitments. The national organization has chosen to stop offering sessions here.

Barton University had offered a Weight Watchers program to its staff twice a week. When Barton’s Amber Tanaka learned the community would be without Weight Watchers she tried to resurrect the class. She said the national organization said no.

When Boyar inherited the group more than four years ago about dozen people attended meetings. She more than quadrupled attendance.

“For me, the weekly weigh-in was important,” said Boyar, who lost more than 40 pounds. “We talk a lot about the comfort zone. You have to think about what food means to you.”

Men, women, kids, middle age, seniors, all ethnicities attended the meetings. Some wanted to lose a few pounds, while others set a goal of 100 pounds.

“Weight Watchers is a judgment-free zone,” Boyar said.

People have excess pounds for a variety of reasons “all of which were addressed during the meetings.

Weight Watchers is about eating what you want, but keeping track. The emphasis is on healthy food. Exercise is called activity.

For those left behind, online programs are at [www.weightwatchers.com](http://www.weightwatchers.com).