



**FEAST** Bugs for breakfast. For lunch and dinner, too. **40**

# MONTEREY COUNTY WEEKLY



**MOVIES** *White House Down* gets a lot of action. **44**

**SPECIAL INSERT**

CSU Summer Arts  
EVENTS CALENDAR

## STARTUP ENGINES

INVESTING LOCAL CAN FEED THE ECONOMY—  
AND, IF YOU BET RIGHT, YOUR BANK ACCOUNT.  
HOW CAN IDEAS AND FUNDING FIND EACH  
OTHER IN MONTEREY COUNTY? [20]

By Kera Abraham

Jonathan Roberts, aka PigWizard, shows how the sausage gets made.



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## Stone Rocks

Stone Creek Kitchen celebrates two years with two main ingredients: salt and inspiration.

By Mark C. Anderson



## QUICK BITES

→ **The Wharf Marketplace** is hiring—and seeking vendors—for its historic Southern Pacific Railroad space by Wharf II. **Tanimura & Antle**, who won the lease from Monterey City Council over **Trailside Cafe's Sean Allen** in a decision that flew in the face of public input and staff recommendations, has installed former **Sardine Factory Chef Brant E. Good** as general manager, and is calling itself "the first fresh food hall in Monterey County featuring locally produced provisions at their seasonal best." More on the blog.

→ **Joullian Vineyards** (659-8100) pilots an interesting idea noon-5pm Saturday, June 22, with a summer open house at the winery and vineyards in Cachagua featuring tastings, cellar tours, vineyard walks, tractor tours and a light lunch. Pending turnout, they may attempt to team with other valley vineyards for a monthly wine open house happening.

→ Exec Chef **Tim Wood** of **Carmel Valley Ranch** delivered a tour de force Friday, dropping so many exquisite morsels on our private party I lost count—from the fingerling bacon grilled cheese to the tuna tartare to the avocado prawns to the burrata-heirloom tomatoes to the thunderous bread pudding. If you can ever leave his Lodge restaurant (625-9500 x345), elsewhere on the grounds this summer CVR's **River Ranch** (625-9500 x525) leads jam-making (\$80), pickling (\$80) and lavender-honey workshops all summer, while the bee experience (\$50) invites guests to roll up their sleeves—beneath bee suits—to tend hives firsthand.

→ While brand new **El Cantaro** (646-5465) packs them in for vegan a block away, **The Whaling Station** (373-3778) takes on a different diet Tuesday, June 25, with its Ultimate Steak Lovers Dinner Summer Series (\$120; \$170 with wine). Fortunately the five cuts come from the mindful likes of **Snake River Farms**, **Greg Norman** and **Durham Ranch**, paired with wines from **Chappellet Vineyard** (707-286-4219), including some unreleased treats.

→ **Lilify's** (207-1380) Sunday, June 30, summer pop-up dinner (\$97) enjoys five courses from **Sierra Mar's** (667-2800) **Amber Kirpes**, wine from **Pierce Ranch** (372-8900) and lush "tablescapes" befitting the craft boutique shop backdrop.

→ Olive oil stars Saturday, June 29, with **Meet the Growers Night** hosted by Carmel Valley's oil aficionados at **The Quail & Olive** (659-4288), where, for \$25, guests will hear from **Cima Collina Winery's** (620-0645) winemaker **Annette Hoff Danzer** and **Carmel Valley Olive Oil Co.** (659-1406) owners **Kathy** and **Alfred Herbermann**, and sample all the craft handiwork.

→ The **Monterey Wine Festival's** best element, the West Coast Showdown showdown, awarded firsts to **Louie Linguini's** in creative seafood chowder for its cioppino, while **Characters** took best in show and **LouLou's Griddle in the Middle** won People's Choice.

→ "I was never really insane," **Edgar Allan Poe** said, "except upon occasions when my heart was touched."

**N**obody sneeze. This is an order of sorts, coming at the start of a salt-tasting demo (\$10)—and a wise one at that.

An itchy beak could send eight tidy piles of stylish salts—light pinks, grainy rocks and flaky grays—flying. But sneezing in the vicinity of **Stone Creek Kitchen** (393-1042) any time is inadvisable, as it could mean missing any one of the cool culinary undertakings at play.

Cooking classes and dynamic dinners come up every couple of days, festive paella nights erupt every Friday (\$16.99/pound), fresh prepped barks, bites and salads fly off the Mediterranean deli counter six days a week and 5,000 square feet consistently host discoveries like the house-crafted Sexy Mayo with oven-roasted tomato (\$9.99/pound) and new BPA-free silicone pump by the gadget masters at Barcelona's **Lekue**. You know, the one that sprays fresh Meyer lemon juice directly from the citrus onto your greens or into your gin-and-tonic glass (\$16.99, with a lime pump too).

The salt tasting-tutorial materialized in the cute demo-dinner kitchen last week. Our group went by because it seemed a tasty way to celebrate Stone Creek's two-year anniversary—particularly since the Friday, June 21, smoked duck-lamb paella birthday party sold out, as do many events. (Upcoming tasting classes include "Serious Grilling," "Fish in a Flash," "Sushi American Style," "Light and Delicious Summer Salads," a beer tasting with brew-brain **Blu Whelan** and "Gluten-Free Goodies" with natural foods chef **Kari Bernardi**, \$55-\$65, [www.stonecreekkitchen.com](http://www.stonecreekkitchen.com).)

We figured we should do dinner in the relatively new tasting area while we were at it. (We would've grazed outside on the patio if it allowed wine.) The prepped food remains excellent—with thoughtful touches in seemingly every sandwich sauce, salad dressing or authentic paella input—albeit spendy, a la a local **Whole Foods**, where one of its co-founders once worked. An **Elvis** sandwich with peanut butter and bacon (\$5.99), a meatloaf

cupcake (\$6.99)—with savory whipped potatoes and a cherry tomato on top—and treats from a selection of salads like the summer corn-arugula, Point Reyes blue cheese-bacon and roasted poblano ranch salads (\$6.99-\$10.99/pound) provided adventurous appetizers, paired with a nice **Chateau de Lancyre** Rosé (\$22) and **Ginger People** lemon-ginger soda (\$1.70) from the cooler of upscale sippers. A quick obligatory kitchen equipment shopping session and we were settling into sneeze-free mode, a small but self-selected congregation ready for the enthusiastic salt sermon from Stone Creek co-founder **Kristina Scrivani**.

"We won't taste every type of salt there is," she says, "or we wouldn't fit out the door. But we can all plan on getting lightly puffy."

We try crystallized fleur de sel and imagine its petite flakes on cookies and empanadas. The tiny flat and mild Maldon sea salt beckons a baby tomato. Fine Himalayan pink salt provides contrast (and is better for baking), and a medium flake Maldon begs for good cheese and ripe peaches.

"People ask a lot, 'Why all the salts? Just so you can charge more?'" Scrivani says. "But there's such a huge history of special salts—and not even flavor as much as size, shape and mouthfeel."

Stone Creek house blends—Mediterranean, Tuscan and smoked serrano—create chicken- and lamb-grilling anticipation, and simpler staples like eggs, potatoes and rice.

"Party on a plate!" Scrivani says.

A surprise addition—on the heels of other surprises like the truffle and bacon blockbusters—a not-yet-for-sale espresso bravo salt, closed the sequence, all luxurious on a thick chocolate mousse.

Each salt—like a number of other spices—is available at Stone Creek pre-measured in bulk (\$9.99-\$52/pound) and ramekins (\$2 and up). Each often comes with an impromptu class—"we love to talk oils and salts and what people want at what price point," Scrivani says—and each acts as a reminder that salt shouldn't be a crutch, but a trampoline to bounce tastes higher and brighter.

"If we learn how to use it, we use less of it because we don't cook with it, we

Of the Earth: Good salt education involve delineating differences between mined and evaporated, wet and dry, blended and infused. And a bonus doses of indulgent house-cured bacon salt on avocado.

finish with it," Scrivani says. "We enjoy it more, and actually get to taste it and have fun with it."

If a given salt has a backstory—like **Monterey Sea Salt's** surfer inspiration or **Murray River's** eco consciousness—all the better. My favorite salt story might be that Stone Creek has a bacon-Marash chili salt in the works, or the unwritten dinner story that a session like this demands. (Check out Stone Creek's salted cheat sheet on everything from kosher to iodized to pink, at [www.mcweekly.com/edible](http://www.mcweekly.com/edible).)

And that all fits snugly with the wider mission here: something for everyone who likes to eat, not just epicures—"though foodies may find it a wonderland," Scrivani allows—and exploration designed to self-perpetuate.

"We're not claiming to be experts, or give you dogma," Scrivani says. "We're just a place to try a variety of things."

When they arrived in the wake of beloved **Clementine's Kitchen** they were a godsend, but, to most, a mystery. "It was our dream to have a place with a little bit of everything, but we didn't know if our taste would jive," co-founder **Linda Hanger** says. "Many came in and said, even as they're standing in the store, 'What is this place? What goes on here?'"

Two years later, they're a budding community institution built on familiar-yet-sophisticated comfort food and personal attention—the co-owners help set that tone with their constant presence—and an army of first-name-basis clients.

"We have such a group of loyal customers, and so many types of customers," Hanger says. "People have made it their own."

Stone Creek found that following because it first found an identity.

"It's about sharing," Scrivani says. "Whether it's our recipes or ingredients or inspiration, we all love to share hospitality." ☑

