

# *edible* MARIN & WINE COUNTRY

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Celebrating the harvest of Marin, Napa and Sonoma counties, season by season



“NEW SCHOOL” LUNCHES  
NAPA LOCAL FOOD FORUM  
SPRING FARMERS’ MARKET AND CSA GUIDE  
VINEYARD MANAGERS—THE UNSUNG HEROES  
OF WINE COUNTRY

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# TO MARKET, TO MARKET

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**S**hopping the local farmers' markets for produce and other ingredients to use in my cooking as the Executive Chef at Piatti Ristorante in Mill Valley is my number one priority. To me, using what grows locally, in its season, simply makes sense. I consider this philosophy the authentic translation of Italian-inspired cuisine—cooking rustic, flavorful, thoughtful food from the very best ingredients that grow around you.

I am convinced that Marin County and Northern California have some of the best soil on the earth. Being a chef here is a blessing, as we have access to the best of the best, and shopping at the farmers' markets is how I like to get it. My favorite markets are the Thursday and Sunday morning markets at the Marin Civic Center in San Rafael. This is the highlight of my workweek—coffee and waffles with my sous chef, conversations with other Bay Area chefs, farmers and other frequent shoppers we have befriended along the way and gathering amazing produce and other food items from local producers to take back to our kitchen.

When people catch on from conversations I am having with the farmers that I am a chef, they start inquiring right away: *Where do you cook? What would you do with these Star Route Farm beets? How do you cook the Zuckerman's Farm asparagus? Who has the best favas?*—to which I will answer: Iacopi Farms. These are the interactions that connect the dots between farmer, chef and the community.

Even though it's a common practice for chefs—both professional and home—to bring long shopping lists to the market, I don't bring lists or recipes to the markets, *ever*. I let



Chef Shoberg



Chef Shoberg choosing beets.



Spring onions from County Line Harvest.

the whole experience of the morning, and the season, dictate what I bring back to the Piatti kitchen. Without wanting to sound too “new agey,” my selection process comes from actually strolling through the market and letting the produce and goods speak to me.

I start by seeing what the farmers and other producers have brought to the market that day and then consider what each item tastes like on its own. Right now, the local markets are full of, among many other things, beets of all colors, wild arugula (which is actually cultivated, but from a wild strain of the plant), Meyer lemons and spring onions. Red beets have a slightly sweet but earthy richness while wild arugula has a slightly peppery and bitter taste. Meyer lemons have a bright citrus and somewhat sweet flavor without the tartness of the Eureka lemons you commonly find in supermarkets. Spring onions also have a tender sweetness to them while exhibiting that wonderful raw bite that distinguishes all onions.

Once I have a sense of what is available that day, I then tend to rely on familiar flavor combinations: sweet and salty, bitter and sweet, sweet and spicy, sweet, salty and spicy—the list goes on—to assemble the ingredients for a particular dish. My recipe below for an early spring market salad combines some of the produce so prevalent in local spring markets, specifically Star Route Farms beets, County Line Harvest wild arugula and spring onions and De Santis’ Meyer lemons, together with some local goat cheese and, of course, a healthy dose of local extra-virgin olive oil, to create a salad that highlights bitter and sweet—one of my favorites.

So, my advice to you is to always start with the very best ingredients available, like the produce, meats, cheeses and other artisan-produced foods from our local farmers’ markets. Let the groceries speak for themselves, utilize basic flavor combinations, and you will be on the road to culinary success. Enjoy the very best our earth has to offer, right here in our backyard, and live a delicious long life!

And, when you can’t get to the market to cook for yourself, come see us at Piatti in Mill Valley. We have a special nightly market menu to highlight the produce and other foods we handpick from the market each week. It’s a great way for us to share our area’s beautiful seasonal market products while showcasing the flavors of the current season.

Cheers!

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*A newlywed, Chef Todd Shoberg is originally from Grand Haven, Michigan, and now lives in Mill Valley. Prior to being the Executive Chef at Piatti Ristorante in Mill Valley, Shoberg worked as a chef in Albuquerque, Boulder, Chicago, Grand Rapids and San Francisco. A former professional mountain biker, he still loves to ride his bike, especially on Mt. Tam in the early mornings before heading into the kitchen.*



Beets from  
Star Route Farms.

## Early Spring Market Salad

This simple recipe highlights the incredibly fresh and rich flavors of the ingredients.

YIELD: 6 servings

### INGREDIENTS

6 large beets (Chioggia, Golden or Red)

½ pound arugula

2 large spring onions

4 ounces soft goat cheese, crumbled

Juice of a large Meyer lemon

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher or fine sea salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

4 bay leaves (optional)

4 whole star anise (optional)

4 whole cinnamon sticks (optional)

4 whole cloves (optional)

### TO PREPARE

Preheat oven to 350°. In a roasting pan, toss the whole beets with extra-virgin olive oil, sea salt and black pepper and, if you are using them, the bay leaves, star anise, cinnamon sticks and cloves. The spices are optional, but I feel they perfume the beets to give them wonderful depth. Add enough water to just cover the bottom of the roasting pan. Tightly cover the roasting pan with tin foil and place in the oven. Roast the beets for about 45 minutes or until you can pierce them easily with a sharp knife. The amount of time needed will depend on the size of the beets. Cool, peel and cut into small bite-sized wedges.

Wash and dry the arugula.

Thinly slice the white parts of the spring onions into thin strips. Chop the green portions into wide rings.

### TO SERVE

Combine the beets, arugula, both the green and the white parts of the spring onions and the crumbled goat cheese in a bowl. Add the Meyer lemon juice and extra-virgin olive oil and gently toss, adding salt and black pepper to taste.