A SUSTAINABLE RENOVATION
MONTAGE LAGUNA BEACH DEBUTS A NEW, REFRESHED LOOK
The rolling hills surrounding Jordan Vineyard & Winery in Healdsburg’s Alexander Valley

THE JEWEL OF SONOMA
Having undergone a transformation in the past few years, Healdsburg is the wine country destination on every foodie and oenophile’s must list.

BY JUSTINE AMODEO

At the entrance to the Armstrong Redwood State Natural Reserve, a primeval redwood forest that occupied much of the Sonoma Valley before logging operations took over in the 19th century, we are stopped by the park ranger. “You all should really be wearing a mask,” she says, referring to the dangerous air quality following the California wildfires that had blanketed the valley for over a week last November. The majestic grove seemed like a good place to catch our breath during a smoky, but otherwise perfect weekend getaway to Healdsburg, the quiet farm town just 65 miles north of San Francisco that’s nestled in the confluence of three of Sonoma County’s major viticulture areas—the Alexander, Russian River and Dry Creek Valleys.

Occupying less than 5 square miles, Healdsburg is also surrounded by hiking and biking trails, a lake where you can kayak or fish for bass, and more than 100 vineyards tucked into the vine-covered hills. With roots in agriculture (prunes) and preservation, Healdsburg has slowly become a pioneer of the sustainable food and travel movement—one of the many reasons master chef, author and hotel owner Charlie Palmer promised his future wife, Lisa, that if she agreed to marry him, they would one day move to the most beautiful place in America.

Ten years later, as the often-told story goes, they moved to Healdsburg, bringing their four sons from Manhattan and setting up shop in 2001 on the town’s main square, where Palmer and a partner opened the award-winning Hotel Healdsburg and its adjacent Dry Creek...
Clockwise from top left: tasting at Healdsburg’s holistically farmed Quivira Vineyards; the 110-acre Front Porch Farm is one of a number of growers focused on sustainable agriculture; nature’s artwork in Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve; charcuterie and other treats at Jordan Vineyard & Winery.
Top right: Master Chef Charlie Palmer in Dry Creek Kitchen; above: one of the restaurant’s dessert options, which are almost too beautiful to eat.
cabernet sauvignon with hors d’oeuvre pairings by Jordan’s winery chef in the cellar room. You’ll also be treated to a special selection of an older vintage cabernet sauvignon and Jordan’s Estate extra-virgin olive oil paired with a selection of artisan cheeses.

A PIONEER OF SLOW FOOD

Can a small town in Sonoma be a model of how to save the world? Farmers in Healdsburg would like to think so. Slow Food, a global grassroots organization founded in 1986 to preserve regional cuisine, encourages the farming of plants, seeds and livestock characteristic of the local ecosystem, and Healdsburg is one of the pioneers in the movement. The 110-acre Front Porch Farm, just 10 minutes from downtown, grows around 14 acres of wine grapes, 10 acres of vegetables and berries, 4 acres of cut flowers, 3 acres of Floriani flint corn and a variety of fruit trees using ecological farming principles. Along with heritage pork and lamb from the neighboring Acorn Ranch, Front Porch Farm grows for local chefs, grocers and residents and is one of a number of growers focused on sustainable agriculture.

As Doug Lipton, a soil scientist and co-owner of the Healdsburg Shed, explains, “what grows together goes together.” He’s referring to food and wine, of course, which in this region “has a history of two centuries growing grapes and farming,” he says. The Shed, now an online market and educational resource, is designed to bring together a community of ranchers, fishermen, home cooks, professional chefs, backyard gardeners, longtime farmers and artisan producers “closer to the way we grow, prepare and share our food.” Online, find beautiful housewares, thoughtfully considered pantry provisions of spices and powders, impeccably designed farm and garden tools that celebrate the bounty of the region, recipes and planting and farming advice.

To experience more local bounty, visit the Downtown Bakery & Creamery, which uses all-local dairy products and organic flour for its fresh-baked croissants and scones. Pair it with Flying Goat Coffee just off the plaza, whose ethically
sourced beans have won awards. At Spoonbar in the eco-friendly H2Hotel, enjoy house-made shrubs and cocktails adorned with edible flowers. Truett Hurst, Quivira and DaVero wineries all have sustainable practices that minimize their environmental footprints and have traditions of cultivating biodiversity. After a day of wine tasting, take a seat in the garden patio at Mateo’s Cocina Latina, where Yucatan-born chef Mateo Granados’ signature cuisine showcases local and sustainable Sonoma ingredients infused with the regional flavors of his homeland.

One of the main attractions of the Slow Food movement in Healdsburg is Barndiva, a big red barn where three decades of orchard farmers came together to build a restaurant around sustainably grown vegetables and healthy animals. As well as being a unique destination for farm-to-table fine dining, Barndiva’s next door property, Studio Barndiva, offers the casual, Mediterranean-inspired restaurant The Gallery, and an art gallery, event space and garden where SommTable, a monthly salon with local winemakers and some of their library wines featured at Barndiva, takes place. Upcoming wineries featured are Rootdown Cellars in April, Gail Wines in May and Arnot-Roberts in June. According to Barndiva’s owners, “We have explored the extraordinary food sheds of Sonoma and Mendocino Counties, seeking out farmers and artisan producers who believe, as we do, that truly nourishing food experiences start in the soil, the vineyard and the field; that great plates of food must reflect the passion of all who produce them.” A visit to Healdsburg does all that and more.

OPENING SOON: MONTAGE HEALDSBURG

The first Montage property currently under development in Northern California is set to open in 2020 near downtown Healdsburg, the 258-acre Montage Healdsburg, centrally located amongst wineries in the Alexander, Dry Creek and Russian River Valleys. Focusing on the heritage of culinary excellence in the area, guests can look forward to a gourmet-dining option featuring a treehouse-inspired private dining room and outdoor bar and grill. The environmentally sensitive contemporary design highlights the surrounding wine country and will include bungalow-style accommodations, custom home sites, single family homes and an infinity pool overlooking the resort’s 25 acres of producing vineyards.