

THE FRUITS OF WINTER: POMEGRANATES, PERSIMMONS & PASSION

Freshness Guaranteed on the American Riviera®

Things get sweet in Santa Barbara every December as Red Wonderful and Early Foothill pomegranate varieties come to fruition on the coast. The Spanish Padres are credited with bringing pomegranates to Santa Barbara more than 200 years ago. The fruit is about the size of an apple with a deep red leathery skin. A pulpy cream-colored interior holds a multitude of gem-like sweet-tart seeds exploding with flavor.

Fresh Fare

How about pomegranate sauce instead of cranberry sauce on that turkey this season? In fact, fowl it up big and forego turkey for ostrich locally-farmed at **Ostrich Land**. The meat is high in protein and iron yet lower in fat, calories and cholesterol than turkey. Run, don't fly (ostriches don't), to this Solvang attraction and purveyor of fine meat, elaborate eggs and all things feathered. The 33-acre site is also a great family trek with emu feeding and acres of ostriches roaming in the wilds.

When sauces and desserts come to mind, Santa Barbara offers a reservoir of wonderful winter fruits for the home baker and saucier, including **persimmon**. Some varieties (like the local giant Hachiya) are astringent and inedibly bitter until fall's cool nights trigger ripening. A jelly-like softness indicates a delectably sweet and spicy interior with easily removed seeds. Other varieties grown in Santa Barbara County are non-astringent (Fuyu) and are crisp when ripe. Ripe persimmons may be substituted successfully for apples in most recipes. How about Caramelized Persimmon Charlotte after your holiday repast?

Passion for fruit? Lilikoi to Hawaiians and Granadilla to others, Santa Barbara **Passion Fruit** comes in purple and yellow varieties (or cultivars). Of South American origin, the Passion Fruit is a good source of vitamins C and A and is strongly but delightfully aromatic with a unique musky-guava flavor that blends well with citrus. It is sweetest when the outside skin is slightly shriveled and the fruit drops from the vine. Local restaurants throughout town turn this gem into a wonderful winter dessert. How about Warm Passion Fruit and Jasmine Rice Pudding?

Sweet tooth will also enjoy the annual **Winterfest in Solvang** every November/December. Peruse the local bakeries for a sinful kringle, dive into traditional smorgasbord and buckle down at Ingeborg Chocolates for a delightful array of Danish-style confections made on-site and a tour (by appointment) right out of *I Love Lucy*. For the armchair oenophile, take a village spin along the "**Solvang Wine Trail**" including 11 local winetasting rooms.

Culinary Travel Planner & Visitor Information

Foodies rejoice! Planning a culinary adventure in Santa Barbara County just got simpler. Contact the Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau (tourism@santabarbaraCA.com or 800.676.1266) for your copy of the 32-page **Get Fresh on the American Riviera®** culinary travel planner. The free-for-the-asking guide highlights culinary attractions and tours, including gourmet food product purveyors, regional seafood specialties, farmers' markets, cooking classes, food and wine events, wineries, and much more! Visitor and culinary travel information is also available via www.santabarbaraCA.com or www.santabarbarafresh.com.

Suggested Itinerary

Tap into all things fruity and sweet with a visit to Solvang and its environs. On Wednesdays, the **Solvang Farmer's Market** kicks in with fresh-from-the-fields fruits and vegetables including the season's pomegranates, persimmons and passion fruit. Take Highway 101 south to Highway 154 (San Marcos Pass), exit at Highway 246 to Solvang.

December is a great time to test the city's sweets. From the middle of town take Alisal Road and turn right on Copenhagen Drive to **Ingeborgs Chocolates**. From there, walk the town's many pleasures, including the annual **Winterfest** round-up of holiday events.

Finish off the day with a spin through the **Solvang Wine Trail** including visits to **Presidio Winery**, **Lucas & Lewellen** and **Morovino**. Tasting rooms are walking distance from each other in the heart of town.

From Solvang, return to Highway 246 and turn left toward Buellton. Along the highway on the left is **Ostrich Land**. Park and visit the curious store, feed the emus and gawk at the larger-than-life birds. Trek back through Solvang on Highway 246 until reaching Alamo Pintado Road. Turn left and find **Nielsen's Market** immediately on the right. The season's top produce and a fine selection of culinary offerings are front and center. It is the only store in the region offering Harris Ranch beef and Boar's Heads Meats...both out of this world.

Returning to Santa Barbara, continue back on Highway 246 and take the San Marcos Pass (Highway 154) to Highway 101 south.

Details

- **Ingeborgs Chocolates:** 1679 Copenhagen Dr., Solvang, 805.688.5612, www.ingeborgs.com
- **Lucas & Lewellen Vineyards:** 1645 Copenhagen Dr., Solvang, 805.344.3000, www.ilwine.com
- **Morovino:** 433 Alisal Rd., Solvang, 805.693.8466, www.morovino.com
- **Nielsen's Market:** 608 Alamo Pintado Rd., Solvang, 805.688.3236, www.nielsensmarket.com
- **Ostrich Land:** 610 E. Hwy. 246, Buellton, 805.686.9696
- **Presidio Winery:** 1539 Mission Dr., Solvang, 805.740.9463, www.presidiowinery.com
- **Solvang's Farmer's Market:** Wednesdays, Copenhagen Dr. & 1st St., Solvang, 805.962.5354, www.sbfarmersmarket.org
- **Winterfest in Solvang:** 1511 Mission Dr., Solvang, 800.468.6765, www.solvangusa.com