

## **MINCE AND MINGLE IN MAY**

### ***Freshness Guaranteed on the American Riviera®***

Magnificence marks May, as the top crops of strawberries and lettuce hit local markets, road-stands and restaurants in a vivid array of dishes. These fresh treasures herald summer's approach and underscore the American Riviera® diet of freshly harvested foods served with a light touch and paired to a fine pinot noir.

#### **Fresh Fare**

Strawberries are the County's largest revenue crop with annual gross sales reaching nearly \$200 million. As Englishman William Butler stated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, "Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did." In mediaeval times strawberries were regarded as an aphrodisiac and a soup made of strawberries, borage (a leafy herb with a cucumber-like taste) and soured cream was traditionally served to newly-weds at their wedding breakfast. Today, strawberry season means visitors can jaunt along any major road in Santa Maria or Goleta and cash in on a case of succulent rubies straight out of the fields.

Strawberries spell dessert throughout Santa Barbara, and these sassy little numbers can be counted on to deliver a truly ethereal finish to any repast. For a casual, beachfront meal, slither into the **Beach Grill at Padaro** for a sinful Strawberry Frittata with Roasted Vanilla Bean Asparagus. Another divine concoction using the tender berry is Rum-Soaked Strawberry Shortcake found at the ever-popular **Elephant Bar and Restaurant**. For the ultimate romantic romp, bask in the glow of **Emilio's** glorious Almond and Strawberry Tuille, set against an enchanting dining room across from the sea.

Keeping with the American Riviera®-style diet, locals thrive on fresh-from-the garden lettuces. In fact, you can find a variety of these greens in most backyards, alongside tomatoes, zucchini and a requisite batch of cilantro. Not surprisingly, lettuce is Santa Barbara County's third largest crop (after strawberries and broccoli) reeling in nearly \$70 million annually. Both head lettuce and leaf lettuce are grown countywide and are not just for salads. Dive into a Stir-Fry Lettuce with Ginger, Soy and Carrots at **Your Choice** or **Your Place**, both trusted locations for excellent Thai cuisine. Usually a starter on menus throughout town, micro-greens and all varieties of this leafy vegetable are a definite mainstay—served both cold and hot.

#### **Festivals**

May is also prime time for tapping into the annual **Downtown Art & Wine Tour**, a spectacular evening of art, wine and food. Grab a glass and wander through historic downtown art galleries as various vintners pull out all the stops.

#### **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](mailto: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](http://www.santabarbaraCA.com) or [www.santabarbarafresh.com](http://www.santabarbarafresh.com).

### **Suggested Itinerary**

Start with a spectacular strawberry scone at **D'Angelo Bakery** on Gutierrez Street, a half-block west of State Street. Or start the day with a freshly-made baguette, croissant or brioche still warm from the oven. Head down State Street to the ocean and turn left on Cabrillo Boulevard and left on Calle Puerto Vallarta to visit the **Gift Shop at Fess Parker's Doubletree Resort** which features locally-produced gourmet strawberry preserves, Santa Barbara Olives, biscotti, pistachios, a terrific selection of Fess Parker wines and wine-infused specialties.

For lunch, jump on Highway 101 south for about ten miles and then exit Santa Claus Lane (go straight at the stop sign for another block or so) and find the area's finest local strawberries and lettuces at **The Garden Market**, an organic coffee bar and café with a gourmet wine and gift shop. They often carry rare veggie and fruit produce from a few farmer friends nearby...like twelve different varieties of bananas and six kinds of avocados!

Chefs-in-waiting might want to sign up for *Sushi for Singles* or *Indian Vegetarian Cuisine*, just two of the many offerings of **Santa Barbara City College's Cooking Courses**. Classes require advance planning and are definitely hands-on, interactive and require no previous knowledge.

For dinner, head to **Roy** restaurant: from State Street, go west on Carrillo Street and find the late-night eatery on your left in the first block. Almost all Roy's fruits and vegetables, including strawberries and lettuces, come fresh from local farmers' markets. Try the signature mouth-watering Bacon-Wrapped Filet Mignon with Portobello Mushroom Sauce and hang out after dining for a liquid refreshment and a look-see at the colorful crowd of regulars.

### **Details**

- **Beach Grill at Padaro:** 3765 Santa Claus Ln., Carpinteria, 805.566.3900, [www.beachgrillpadaro.com](http://www.beachgrillpadaro.com)
- **D'Angelo Bakery:** 25 W. Gutierrez St., Santa Barbara, 805.962.5466
- **Downtown Art & Wine Tour:** Downtown Santa Barbara, 805.962.2098, [www.santabarbaradowntown.com](http://www.santabarbaradowntown.com)
- **Elephant Bar & Restaurant:** 521 Firestone Rd., Goleta, 805.964.0779, [www.elephantbar.com](http://www.elephantbar.com)
- **Emilio's:** 324 W. Cabrillo Blvd., Santa Barbara, 805.966.4426, [www.emiliosrestaurant.com](http://www.emiliosrestaurant.com)
- **The Garden Market:** 381 I Santa Claus Ln., Carpinteria, 805.745.5505, [www.gardenmarket.com](http://www.gardenmarket.com)
- **Gift Shop at Fess Parker's Doubletree Resort:** 633 E. Cabrillo Blvd., Santa Barbara, 805.884.8586, [www.fpdtr.com](http://www.fpdtr.com)
- **Roy:** 7 W. Carrillo St., Santa Barbara, 805.966.5636
- **Santa Barbara City College Cooking Classes:** 805.964.6853
- **Your Choice:** 3404 State St., Santa Barbara, 805.569.3730
- **Your Place:** 22 N. Milpas St., Santa Barbara, 805.965.9397