

2009 editors' choice

No Place Like Home

Embracing the best that Marin County towns have to offer



PHOTOS BY TIM PORTER

A PERFECT DAY IN: SAUSALITO * MILL VALLEY * TIBURON * LARKSPUR * CORTE MADERA * ROSS



★ **OUR EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS**

this year are all about thinking globally and acting locally—in this case, taking

on the global economic challenge we all face by spending our time, and our dollars, in our local communities. ★ **THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF MARIN**

are home to merchants as diverse as the communities they serve—wine shops, yoga studios, bookstores, restaurants, farmers' markets and more. All of us should support these local businesses. They are not just the economic foundation of our communities; they also provide the local color, character and context that make each of our neighborhoods unique.

★ **OUT OF ALL THAT MARIN OFFERS,** we've put together 11 different ways to enjoy a perfect day here at home. These are our choices to relax, invigorate and explore our various communities—and support our local merchants at the same time.

GREENBRAE * SAN RAFAEL * SAN ANSELMO * FAIRFAX * NOVATO * WEST MARIN SOUTH * WEST MARIN NORTH



Larkspur & Corte Madera



DID YOU KNOW? LARKSPUR WOULD HAVE BEEN CALLED LUPINE IF ONE OF THE EARLY FOUNDERS HAD BEEN BETTER AT IDENTIFYING THE NATIVE FLOWERS. * CORTE MADERA MEANS CHOPPED WOOD IN SPANISH.



This year Larkspur turns 100 and Corte Madera is less than a decade behind, but the Twin Cities share more than a long history; they have the same police department, Little League and great weather.

A choice day in the area starts with an early morning swim at Bay Club of Marin's indoor lap pool. For extra motivation, try the masters swimming program, which offers a structured training session with a coach.

Afterward, reward yourself with a focaccia dolce and a cup of coffee at Emporio Rulli. Owner and former Larkspur citizen of the year Gary Rulli's Magnolia Avenue location roasts and blends all its arabica coffee beans in house and offers eight blends in different strengths. Next, stroll Magnolia, with a stop at Bloomers of Larkspur for a hand-tied European bouquet; walk or drive a little farther on to Embodies for eco-conscious clothing, Item Shoes for women's accessories and footwear, and Folio for trinkets, stationery or a thoughtful housewarming gift. If you've got a few dollars left over, take in the sun on the outdoor deck at R'Noh Thai restaurant along with a giant helping of rice noodles and a house-made iced tea.

Then, on to Corte Madera for jewelry by Kathy Kamei at M Clothing and sushi-to-go from Paradise Foods to picnic on at Piper Park, where if you're lucky, the local cricket club will entertain with a game while the kids tackle the tunnel slide, monkey bars and swings.



Before heading home for the night, sink into a cherry leather booth and dine on brie-blue-and-goat-cheese fondue, steak tartare with capers and shallots and an entrée of sautéed halibut at Left Bank. The French brasserie, co-owned by Roland Passot, is packed with regulars most nights and has been a Marin mainstay for more than 15 years.

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QUICK PICKS

Larkspur and Corte Madera lure diners with alfresco options. The front patio at **Yankee Pier** is the perfect spot to keep the kids entertained in the sandbox while Mom and Dad enjoy fish and chips and people-watching. Down the street at **Picco Pizzeria**, the camaraderie you'll feel with fellow diners makes up for the cramped outdoor seating area. At Larkspur Landing, grab a bite at **E&O Trading Company**, where you can get cool summer breezes and occasional live music. When winter hits, sit by the fireplace at **Pacific Catch** in Corte Madera.

LARKSPUR LIBRARY'S FAMOUS PAPIER-MÂCHÉ MASCOT LARKY WAS BORN IN 1970, WHEN OVER 300 SCHOOLCHILDREN PARTICIPATED IN A CONTEST TO NAME THE HIPPO.

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LARKSPUR TOP 5

1 Rick's Wine Cellar Sample a wine flight and one of Rick's famous cheese plates at this neighborhood spot, run by Rick and his wife, Candy. Skip the corkage fee at select restaurants by picking up a bottle here and showing your receipt to the server. rickswinecellar.com

2 The Lark Theater Indulge in organic popcorn and a glass of wine while catching a new release, a forgotten foreign film or a live feed of the Oscars or a Met opera performance at this 1935 art deco theater. larktheater.net

3 Coquelicot Can't fly to Provence? Pick up hostess gifts, French chandeliers, linens and tablecloths at this reasonably priced downtown Larkspur boutique. Twice a year the shop has an unbeatable sidewalk sale. **415.924.0279**

4 Bryan's Fine Foods The advertising campaign is one of the best around, but it's Bryan's selection of prepared foods and butcher case meats that keep us coming back. Treat out-of-towners—Bryan's ships overnight. bryansfinefoods.com

5 Rustic Bakery Even with the long lines, it's a must for morning croissants and house-made vanilla pecan granola, but in-the-know locals also pick up tasty hospitality gifts like the organic cheese crackers and chocolate chip cookies. rusticbakery.com