



VOL. 1

NEWS AND FEATURE STORIES OF THE NAPA VALLEY

ISSUE 4

PUBLISHED BY HIGHWAY 29 MEDIA - JANUARY 2024

# Napa Valley Gold

*Valley-wide Mustard Celebration  
brightens our winter days*

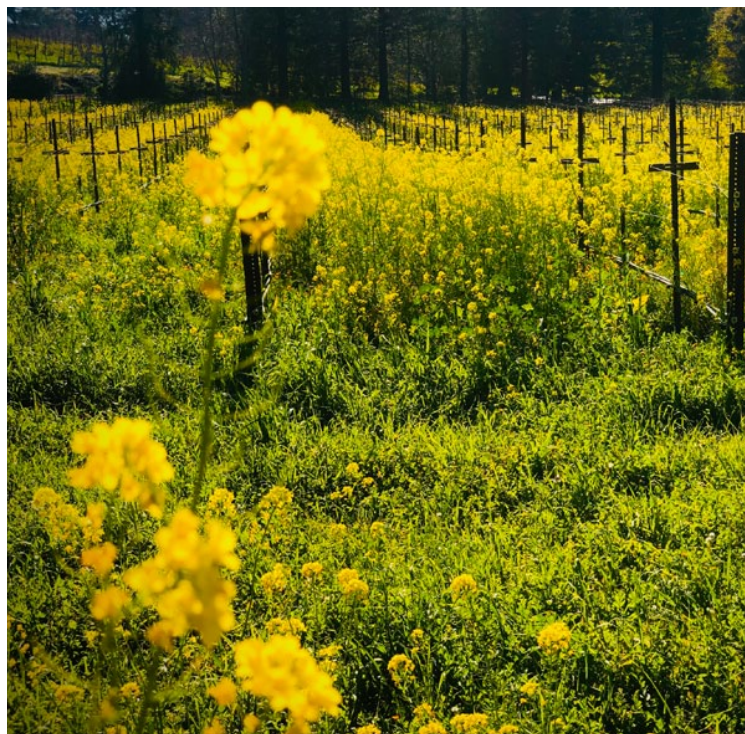


PHOTO BY MARISSA CARLISLE

*The annual Mustard Celebration pays homage to the humble weed that blooms throughout the winter and play a vital agricultural role in the valley.*

**By Rosemarie Kempton**

For NapaLife Extra

In winter, when much of the world is shrouded in winter gloom, the Napa Valley landscape explodes with cheerful color as the bright yellow flowers of the mustard plant appear everywhere - from between rows of grapevines to vacant lots.

Although mustard's vibrant beauty blanketing the hills and valleys lifts the spirits of winter weary residents as well as visitors, this plant is more than just another pretty face.

Mustard plays an essential role in wine country agriculture far beyond its aesthetic appeal by protecting the soil, replenishing soil nutrients, attracting beneficial insects, preventing erosion and warding off grapevine pests.

So, it's little wonder that people living here are honoring the mustard plant from January through March with the Napa Valley Mustard Celebration.

Throughout the valley, from

American Canyon to Calistoga groups of artists, business leaders and other civic minded people are preparing for this celebration with a wide variety of special events and activities.

For example, there was a flurry of activity at Jessel Gallery in Napa this week as three artists - brushes in hand - painted a "live set" for the celebration. This painting will serve as a background for a "living painting" in homage to Michael Fitzpatrick's "Golden Days," the art that was chosen to brand this year's Napa Valley Mustard Celebration.

A model, dressed as the woman in Fitzpatrick's painting, will be standing with a bicycle in front of the enormous reproduction, providing an element of theater to mustard-themed events at the gallery on February 3 and 4.

"It was the most amazing experience first to create a huge 7-foot by 7-foot canvas from a painters' tarp by John Stem-

mer, my framer," Jessel Gallery owner, Jessel Miller said. "John Roos and Michelle Moore, two of my professional students from my acrylic class, worked side by side up and down ladders honoring and reproducing Michael Fitzpatrick's background of the 2024 Napa Valley Mustard Celebration Painting."

"John Stemmer spent three days renovating my old bicycle to match the bicycle in the painting as well," Miller continued. "We have never collaborated like this before, and all of us were so exhilarated - and exhausted - by the art dance we did all day."

Fitzpatrick's original "Golden Days" painting is being auctioned through Jessel Gallery through March 31. Miller maintains the bid sheet and will announce the final bid and winner. The current bid is \$10,000. Bid amounts must be \$200 more than the current bid shown on

See **MUSTARD** page N2



## Green Screen film series debuts

**By Chris Benz**

For NapaLife Extra

In January, the Green Screen Film Series debuts at the Napa County Library. Free to all, these monthly screenings will alternate between the Napa branch and the American Canyon branch.

The series begins at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 28, at the Napa Library when it will show the documentary *2040*, a hopeful vision of the future of our planet 16 short years from

now.

Napa Climate NOW!'s Green Screen Team looked for films that highlight effective, sustainable ways to address toxic climate pollution.

All the team members—Ginger Gregory, Carol Glaser, Linda Dietiker-Yolo, and Susan Crosby—are retired educators and longtime Napa residents. The films they chose cover a range of solutions.

Crosby explained, "We don't

See **GREEN** page N6



PHOTO BY ALLISON WATKINS STUDIO

*Tish Wiggins moved to Napa to launch her business designing custom wine tours.*

## Getting around town with Tish Wiggins

**By Danielle Wilde**

For NapaLife Extra

Tish Wiggins, aka "Tish Around Town," is creating customizable Napa Valley wine itineraries that, based on client preference, can be built to specifically feature under-represented communities in the wine industry.

Less than a year ago, Wiggins, who is also a project manager for a Texas-based financial software company, moved from Dallas to Napa to launch her new business

venture, which helps Napa-bound vacationers navigate the more than 400 wineries the valley has to offer. Already, Wiggins has received accolades from her peers; most recently she was named a 2023 Wine Industry Leader by Wine Business Monthly. Her tours often highlight BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) wine professionals, female-led wineries and small producers.

"I think that people are get-

See **WIGGINS** page N8



## MUSTARD

from page N1

the website. <https://www.napa-valleymustardcelebration.com>

The "living painting" that visitors can experience at Jessel Gallery is one of many events and activities taking place throughout the valley during the Napa Valley Mustard Celebration.

Representatives of the upval-

bers and made it easy for us to step up and build on."

"When all of this started out there wasn't a lot of funding for it," Liberté continued. "We're putting money into it for future years."

"It is very clear to me that this valley wide event is picking up steam in the most positive and productive ways for retail, visitors and locals alike. The heartbeat of this happening is infectious, and I can tell you from firsthand experience that this year is igniting a flame that will only grow more powerful each coming year," Miller said.

Mustard celebration planners hope that this year's event as well as future celebrations will bring visitors to the valley during "the shoulder season," a quiet time of year, as the original mustard event did.

Created in 1994, it was billed as the Napa Valley Mustard Festival and for 16 years it brought visitors to the valley who filled the hotels, shopped in the stores, ate in the restaurants, drank the wine and bought the art they discovered.

They also took photos. Posing for pictures alongside the tall mustard plants in bloom was popular and some of the best photos were entered in Photo Finish, a mustard themed exhibit created by Michael Schaer. This event, held at Mumm attracted over 500 entries a season.

Photo Finish as well as other popular events in the original mustard celebration have returned.



PHOTO BY MARISSA CARLISLE

*An artist applies yellow paint to a "living photo" in preparation for Napa Valley Mustard Celebration.*

ley chambers of commerce, Visit Napa Valley and the Downtown Napa Association, along with leaders in art and business put months of planning into this year's mustard celebration.

"All of us saw the value in the mustard celebration," said Downtown Napa Association executive director, Bill La Liberté. "Jessel is the driving force behind this. She connected with different cham-



PHOTOS BY MARISSA CARLISLE

*Above: Michelle Moore, John Roos and Jessel Miller take a break from painting a background for a "living photo" in homage to Michael Fitzpatrick's "Golden Days" the art that was chosen to brand this year's Napa Valley Mustard Celebration. Right: John Roos works on a reproduction of "Golden Days" in preparation for Napa Valley Mustard Celebration.*

*In addition to mustard-themed events and activities scheduled for celebration, each community within Napa Valley has created its own mustard celebration for different weekends. To see all the information about the events go to <https://www.napavalleymustardcelebration.com>*



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# The voice

*Behind the scenes at Napa High School's A Cappella Extravaganza*

By Lisa Adams Walter  
For NapaLife Extra

When the curtain opens for the 18th *A Cappella Extravaganza* on Saturday, Feb. 3 at the Uptown Theatre, Napa High School Vocal Music Workshop Director Dave Ruane can finally take a breather as he finishes the introductions and hands the mic over to his vocal students who manage and emcee the show.

The break for Ruane however is short, just a few hours, maybe a day at most. The day after this year's *Extravaganza*, he will begin working on the next show. "Acquiring a venue that can accommodate our show and booking a professional, headlining act must happen far in advance," he said.

The format of *A Cappella Extravaganza* is a fully vocal (no instruments other than the human voice) benefit concert experience that features a professional headliner and "opening acts" including semi-pro, college and groups from

years Yountville's now dark Lincoln Theater was a fitting venue. This year marks the third at the Uptown Theatre in downtown Napa, which Ruane describes as an ideal location adding that he has "immense gratitude" for John and Michelle Truchard of the Uptown for providing the venue for a "highly-sought Saturday night date."

In addition to the intensive work Ruane puts in with his students in Vocal Music Workshop, an elite ensemble comprising 12 singers, his multi-dimensional role with this benefit concert has dramatically grown. "I am the producer, director, administrator, grant writer, coach, hospitality director and talent scout," he explained. In the weeks leading up to the show, he is managing rehearsals, finalizing sponsorships and donations, confirming all acts and the program, paying off deposits, and closely watching the ticket sales.

Directing Vocal Music Work-



PHOTO BY DAVE RUANE

Members of the Napa High School Vocal Music Workshop include, from left, Isabella Christman, Maya Prouty, Julia Bui, Jean Perez, Olivia Hall, Luke Simon, Carly Pennycook, Everett Butler, Olivia Bui, Seth Daniel, Mia Hernandez and Matthew Corrigan.

hours of personal time, including lunch hours and part of a class period up to eight times per academic year, to travel to Napa elementary schools. There, they perform for the next generation of Napa High singers, recruiting them via song and teaching them via song and an engaging way.

"I remain grateful to Duncan Cooper, director of choral activities at Napa High, for his work in musically educating all of the vocal music students, especially those who audition for one of only 12 spots in Vocal Music Workshop," said Ruane who understands the commitment it takes to begin with freshmen, and then teach them vital musical skills, before they are ready for the rigor of Vocal Music Workshop or another elite group such as the school's Chamber Choir. "There have been so many cuts to visual and performing arts that most of our incoming freshmen have little to no prior musical training."

Ruane is deservedly proud that there is no other show that brings together and features so many different genres of a *cappella* music. "The students gain inspiration from each other. They watch, listen and learn. There is so much we can all learn from each other in this amazing collective atmosphere. We want our choir students at Napa High to remain involved in music well past their high school years." Napa High alumni in college and semi-pro groups have such warm memories of performing at this show that several have returned to take the stage later in life year after year.

The biggest reward for Ruane, who remembers that choir was his

safe place where he made most of his friends in high school, is "making amazing memories for everyone involved. My students know I can get a little intense in the weeks before the show, but at our last rehearsal before showtime I tell them that we will all work together and have fun. I am surprisingly calm the minute the show starts. They do such a great job in their roles as performers and ambassadors for Napa High Choir."

Outstanding vocal harmonies and beatboxing performed by high-school, college, semi-pro and professional vocal groups are the hallmark of *A Cappella Extravaganza*. A ticket to see the headliner alone would typically range from \$60 to \$70 per ticket, according to Ruane who says that the show is for all ages beginning at age 5 on up.

Everyone who sings in the show is also rewarded with a seat in the house to watch the other groups in the show for free, learning from both their idols and their peers. Backstage at the Uptown Theatre is a tight space, with groups warming up in an outdoor greenroom, then shuffling on and off stage.

and camaraderie backstage. The groups are so great at encouraging each other. It's a little crazy, but always seems to stay in control."

Ruane, wearing his critically important fundraising hat, says his gratitude is vast for sponsors whose donations range from \$100 to \$5,000. The Platinum event sponsor is the Gasser Foundation, with signature event sponsors including Jean-Charles and Gina Gallo Boisset, Napa Valley Presents and The Edward L. Anderson Foundation.

The final piece of success is the support and involvement of the community. "There are very few events that are affordable for our community. The student ticket price has remained low for many years, and we work very hard to keep it that way," Ruane concluded, "While it is awesome to live in a town that thrives on tourism, it is even better for the locals to have the opportunity to come out and support the arts, simply by buying a ticket and attending this show."

The full line-up of performing acts for the 2024 *A Cappella Extravaganza*: Naturally 7, Stanford University Fleet Street Singers, The



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Dave Ruane, director of the Vocal Music Workshop, shown here with his wife, Christine.

three local Napa Valley public high schools.

This year the entire cast will total around 70 singers, with the headlining act Naturally 7, an all-male, seven-member group that tours around the world. Ruane admits that he stalks a *cappella* pros on Instagram year-round, always seeking something a bit different from years past for the steadfast local audience.

The event began at, and quickly outgrew, the Napa Valley Unified School District Auditorium. Today, without a local non-profit arts venue in the Napa Valley, it has become even more challenging to present the show. As *A Cappella Extravaganza* grew, for several

shop is not Ruane's only job; he also teaches weekly piano lessons to more than 24 children and adults and is the piano accompanist for all Napa High School and American Canyon High School choirs, as well as a professional pianist who plays all over the Bay Area.

A sell-out of the venue is just one of his goals, as a significant portion of the funds raised at *Extravaganza* are used specifically to continue the Napa High Vocal Music Workshop, as well as the group's mission to expose local elementary schools to vocal music as part of education.

In addition to performing at both public and private functions countywide, the singers also spend

## A Cappella Extravaganza

18th Benefit Concert  
hosted by the Napa High Vocal Music Workshop

Saturday, Feb. 3, 7 p.m.

The Uptown Theatre, 1350 Third St., Napa

Tickets \$20 to \$35

Visit [NapaChoir.org](http://NapaChoir.org) or [UptownTheatreNapa.com](http://UptownTheatreNapa.com)

"One would think that an event that has seven or eight performing groups sharing the same stage all in one night would be purely chaotic," Ruane said, "Quite to the contrary, it runs like a well-oiled machine. I am backstage playing quarterback while my students run offense. Each performing group has a Napa High Vocal Music Workshop student in charge of making sure they are backstage and on deck when the group before them is performing. I love seeing the teamwork

UC Berkeley California Golden Overtones, Western Addition, Napa High School Vocal Music Workshop, PDA (American Canyon High School) and Vintage High School Vocal Music Workshop.

*A Cappella Extravaganza is set for Saturday, Feb. 3, at 7 p.m. at the Uptown Theatre in Napa. Tickets \$20 for students with ID and \$35 for others, are available by visiting [NapaChoir.org](http://NapaChoir.org) or [UptownTheatreNapa.com](http://UptownTheatreNapa.com).*



## Ken's Napa Kitchen

# Considering vegetarianism and Michael Chiarello



PHOTO: BUSINESS WIRE

The late chef Michael Chiarello celebrated seasonal local ingredients in his popular Napa Valley Cookbooks.

By Ken Morris

For NapaLife Extra

After the excess eating at Thanksgiving/Winter Solstice/Hanukkah/Christmas/Kwanzaa and New Year's Eve each year, I always start thinking about becoming vegetarian. Of course, that thought quickly fades away after a few meals, but at least it's a good excuse to make a vegetarian dish.

This led me to start looking through my cookbooks for something new and seasonal, and I rediscovered *The Tra Vigne Cookbook: Seasons in the California Wine Country* by Michael Chiarello, which lists vegetables or fruits for each season, instead of organized by meal or protein.

What people now think of as Wine Country cuisine or Napa style was shaped by the sheer force of Chiarello's restaurants, cookbooks, TV shows and even his own olive oil and wine. He was one of the first Napa chefs to turn away from classical French and champion Californian-Italian cuisine focusing on local, in-season produce.

He credited his mom, Antoinette, as his first culinary instructor, teaching him the cuisine of his family's native Calabria, Italy. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America and Florida International University, where he earned a degree in hotel and restaurant management, Chiarello opened his first restaurant in Miami in 1984 and was named *Food & Wine* magazine's Chef of the Year in 1985. This attracted the attention of Cindy Pawlcy, who was already famous for her restaurant, Mustards Grill. She was opening a new restaurant in St. Helena named Tra Vigne, Italian for "between vineyards," and she chose the handsome and outgoing chef to lead the kitchen. He was 24 years old.

The restaurant, and Chiarello,

were a hit. The San Francisco Chronicle obituary for Chiarello quoted restaurant critic Michael Bauer from his 1992 review: "Perhaps no other restaurant captures the spirit of the Wine Country better than Tra Vigne." The Chronicle also cited Meadowood chef Christopher Kostow, who took over the building in 2017 that had been Tra Vigne and reopened it as Charter Oak. "*Seasons in the Wine Country* was one of the top few books I read as a young cook that made me want to be a chef," Kostow said. "He was so far ahead of others in relation to expressing seasonality. He did it before other people did it."

The restaurant connected Chiarello to the major influencers of Napa Valley and his introduction to The Tra Vigne Cookbook gives thanks to a veritable Vintners Hall of Fame who were his steady customers. Just some of the names dropped were Bart and Daphne Araujo, Francis Ford Coppola and Doug Shafer plus many famous vintners who have passed away, such as Robert and Peter Mondavi, Jack and Jamie Davies of Schramsberg, Dan and Margaret Duckhorn, Koerner Rombauer, Andre and Dorothy Tchelicheff... and that's just a partial list.

Chiarello used the restaurant and these connections to springboard to national fame. Leaving the restaurant in 2001, he became known as the authority of the Wine Country lifestyle on his cooking shows, starting with *Season by Season* on PBS in 2001, and *Michael Chiarello's Napa* and *Michael Chiarello's Napa: Casual Cooking* over the next two years. He switched to the rapidly growing Food Network for his *Easy Entertaining* in 2003. In 2004, the Fine Living Network was home to his *NapaStyle*. This led to his store of the same name in Yountville and other cities, which sold his wines, books, cookware

and primarily Italian tabletop pieces, and in a catalog and online sales. It closed in 2016.

He returned to the kitchen in 2008 with Italian restaurants *Bottega* and the casual *Ottimo* in Yountville, and *Coqueta*, a Spanish tapas restaurant with locations in Yountville and San Francisco's Pier 5. Chiarello also maintained his national presence on TV as a contestant on Bravo's *Top Chef* and the Food Network's *Next Iron Chef*.

In October 2023 Chiarello passed away at the Queen of the Valley hospital where he was being treated for an acute allergic reaction that led to anaphylactic shock. He was only 61 years old. Chiarello was so well known that his death warranted an obituary in the *New York Times*. Times reporter Kim Severs wrote, "Mr. Chiarello wrote eight books, one of which, *The Tra Vigne Cookbook* (1999), was at one point as popular in Bay Area bookstores as Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*, which came out shortly after."

Despite eating in his restaurants and attending events in the valley where he was appearing I never got to know him, so I can't address the charges of sexual harassment and whispers of erratic behavior. I do know that his work has influenced a generation of chefs and home cooks to cook in a more relaxed style and that he attracted countless visitors to the Napa Valley in search of the Wine Country lifestyle that he so consistently promoted.

### Fettuccine with Lemon-Braised Artichokes (Serves 4)

Adapted from *The Tra Vigne Cookbook: Seasons in the California Wine Country* by Michael Chiarello with Penelope Wisner

½ pound dried fettuccine  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
12 garlic cloves, skin removed,

lightly crushed with the side of a knife

2 cups chicken stock (if you're using stock from a can you'll need to boil 4 cups down to 2 cups to concentrate the flavor)

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh oregano

4 artichoke hearts in marinade (or 16 quarters) thinly sliced (The book also has a recipe for making Lemon-Braised Artichokes but demands some planning ahead.)

¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus 2 tablespoons

Bring a large pot of water to boil, then add a tablespoon of salt. Add the fettuccine and cook until al dente, about 12 minutes.

While the pasta cooks, heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat until slight ripples appear in the oil. Add the garlic and tilt the pan to collect the oil in a pool against one side. Push the garlic into the oil and cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes.

Slide the pan on and off the heat so the garlic just turns golden and does not burn. Place the pan over the kitchen sink, tilt the pan away from you so the oil is away from you and then slowly add the stock to the side nearest you. THIS WILL SPLATTER, which is why you are now positioned over the sink.

Return the pan to the burner, bring the stock to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook until the garlic is soft and the stock reduced some, about 5 minutes. Taste for salt (depends on your stock) and add a few grinds of black pepper.

Add the butter, oregano and artichoke slivers. With any luck, your pasta should be done now. Reserve

See **CHIARELLO** page N6

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# Paul's Picks

for **JANUARY** and **FEBRUARY**

*It may be cool, even cold, and raining, but exciting things to do don't end during the "off" season in Napa Valley. Some would argue that it's a better time to enjoy activities, as there are fewer visitors in the valley than the rest of the year.*

**January-March:** The Napa Valley Mustard Celebration showcases the wild mustard plants with their bright yellow flowers that bloom during the rainy off season in Napa Valley. For a list of events, visit [www.napavalleymustardcelebration.com](http://www.napavalleymustardcelebration.com)

the impact of St. Helena food writer M.F.K. Fisher, who elevated cooking from a chore to a study of life itself. [festivalnapavalley.org](http://festivalnapavalley.org).

**Jan. 20 to Feb 18:** Downtown Napa hosts its annual Napa Lighted Art Festival using light and light technologies as an art medium. This walkable outdoor tour in Napa features 10 lighted art sculptures

**Jan. 18:** As the first event in the Mustard Celebration, Yountville Arts presents the reception for *The Heart of Friendship*



*"The Dragon Artist" by Frank Trozzo is one of the featured works in The Heart of Friendship, a new show at the Steve Rogers Gallery in the Yountville Community Center.*

Gallery Show in the Steve Rogers Gallery  
at the Yountville Community Center, 6516  
Washington St. [www.yountvillearts.com](http://www.yountvillearts.com)

**Jan. 19 to 28:** Napa Valley's Restaurant Week Jan. 19 to 28 is aimed at locals, hoping to entice them out of their warm homes in the cold, rainy season in Napa Valley where daytime temperatures in the 50s are considered frigid here and rain is actually welcome. Don't forget to make reservations. They've become necessary even on off nights in the off season as people snap up the bargains. Check the details, changes and late additions at Visit Napa Valley, [www.visitnapavalley.com/events/annual-events/restaurant-week/](http://www.visitnapavalley.com/events/annual-events/restaurant-week/)

**Jan. 20:** Festival Napa Valley will screen *The Art of Eating: The Life of M.F.K. Fisher* at the CIA at Copia in Napa with a wine and food reception following. It explores

for five weeks and projection artwork on three iconic downtown buildings for the first nine nights of the festival. On Jan. 20, the first night of the event, several artists will visit the festival from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at Arena Gallery to share the story behind their installation. [donana.com](http://donana.com).

**Jan. 21:** The White Barn in St. Helena hosts members of Napa Valley Writers who will read from its just-published *Opus IV Anthology*, a collection of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. It starts at 3 p.m. at 2727 Sulphur Springs Road. The \$10 entry fee includes snacks.

**Jan. 26 to Feb. 11:** Lucky Penny Productions presents the quirky comedy, *Almost, Maine* by John Cariani. It features four actors in multiple roles, in nine vignettes about love imbued with magical realism. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday

Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday at the Lucky Penny Community Arts Center, 1758 Industrial Way in Napa. Thursday performances are Pay-What-You-Can. Reserved seats at [www.luckypennynapa.com](http://www.luckypennynapa.com) or by calling 707-266-6305.

**Jan. 27 to April 21:** Di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art inaugurates a new video projection series with Jock McDonald's *We the People*. The installation, displayed on Di Rosa's exterior nightly, features portraits of San Franciscans morphing and blending into one another in an illustration of our connection and shared humanity. A tailgate opening reception is on Jan. 27. [www.dirosaart.org/2023/12/we-the-people](http://www.dirosaart.org/2023/12/we-the-people)

**Feb. 1 to 4:** Yountville International Short Film Festival focuses on the shorter films that rarely get their due. The festival will screen more than 100 films at two pop-up cinemas, the Yountville Community Center's Heritage Room and The Estate Yountville. Films include animation and suspense, fantasy, science fiction, drama and foreign films, in 20 dedicated screening blocks. Filmmaker Q&A sessions and wine tasting events are also scheduled. Passes are now on sale, beginning at \$15 for individual film blocks to \$99 for the All-Access Pass to the All-Access VIP Pass at \$199. Visit [www.YISFF.com](http://www.YISFF.com) to review all ticketline options.

**Feb. 17:** The quarterly Napa Valley Writer's Forum at Jessel Gallery features local writers. It's 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. for readings, and meet-and-greets with the authors. The February line-up includes works from Lenore Hirsch, Mary Holman Tuteur, Paul Wagner and Iris Jamal Dunkle. The Jessel Gallery is at 1019 Atlas Peak Road, Napa. [jesselgallery.com](http://jesselgallery.com)

## Community crab feeds

A beloved local tradition, the crab feed fundraiser for local schools and fraternal groups returns this winter, though for now the crabs are from the Pacific Northwest and Alaska due to delayed crab season.

They typically serve fresh crab, pasta, bread, salad and wine family style. They also often have auctions, raffles and music.

**Jan. 20:** The Vintage High School Athletic Boosters at Chardonnay Hall at Napa Valley Expo. Entertainment this year is The Cheeseballs and they'll also offer tri-tip as well as pasta and crab for those who aren't into eating shellfish. \$95<https://vintage.ejoinme.org/ticketsales>

**Jan. 20:** Kiwanis Club of Yountville in Yountville Community Center. Tickets are \$95 at <https://yvillekiwaniscrabfeed.weebly.com>. [www.kiwanisyountville.com](http://www.kiwanisyountville.com).

**Jan. 27:** Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa Valley Crab Feed at Napa Expo. \$100 [begreatnv.com](http://begreatnv.com)

[org/events/napa-valley-crab-feed/](http://org/events/napa-valley-crab-feed/)

**Jan. 27:** American Canyon High School Choir at the Boys and Girls Club of American Canyon. \$85 at [achsc.betterworld.org](http://achsc.betterworld.org).

**Jan. 27:** St. Apollinaris Catholic School will have a crab feed. \$95, [stapolls.ejoinme.org/MyEvents/2024StApollinarisCrabFeed](https://stapolls.ejoinme.org/MyEvents/2024StApollinarisCrabFeed)

**Feb. 17:** Napa Sons and Daughters of Italy host an Italian Gala at Napa Elks Lodge without the crab. \$75 [www.napasonsanddaughtersofitaly.com/fundraiser](http://www.napasonsanddaughtersofitaly.com/fundraiser)

Paul Franson is the editor and publisher of Napa Life, a weekly newsletter. Learn more at [napalife.com](http://napalife.com) or email [paul@paulfranson.com](mailto:paul@paulfranson.com).



PHOTO BY MELISSA CARLISLE

*Lighted art installations can be viewed on a walking tour of downtown Napa during the annual Lighted Arts Festival Jan. 20 through Feb. 18.*



*di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art inaugurates a new video projection series with Jock McDonald's We the People, Jan. 27 through April 21.*





Find hidden hearts in Yountville on weekends during February.

## Hearts and Art in Yountville

From the Napa Life Extra staff

In 2023 Yountville Arts created some fun by scattering glass hearts to be found around the town's Art Walk Sculptures. It was so popular — and even a little competitive — that the Arts Commission decided to bring their treasure hunt back in 2024.

This year, they will scatter 37 glass hearts, signed and numbered, on each Saturday and each Sunday in February, among their Art Walk sculptures.

Napa Valley glass artist Patti Wessman created 300 glass hearts for the treasure hunt.

"Glass hearts will be 'hidden-in-plain-sight,'" Ronda Schaer, chairwoman of the Yountville Arts Commission, said. "Hiding is likely to be done in the dark of night or break of dawn, and glass heart-seekers won't know until they get out Saturday and Sunday mornings and start looking along the length of the Art Walk and its 38 sculptures.

"The glass heart you find is yours to keep as a keepsake from Yountville, the heart of the Napa Valley," Schaer said.

On Saturday, Feb. 17, a larger, yellow glass heart will be hidden to celebrate Yountville's participation in the 2024 Napa Valley Mustard Celebration. A prize will be awarded to the finder of this special heart.

Art Walk maps are available at the Yountville Welcome Center, 6484 Washington St. For more information, visit [www.yountvillearts.com](http://www.yountvillearts.com), call 707-948-2627 or email [yountvillearts@yville.com](mailto:yountvillearts@yville.com).

### The Heart of Friendship

While guests are hunting for hearts, they are also invited to visit The Heart of Friendship Gallery Show at the Steve Rogers Gallery in the Yountville Community Center, Schaer said.

It opens with a reception on Thursday, Jan. 18,

from 5:30 to 7 p.m., which features official 2024 Mustard Celebration products such as wines by Bougetz Cellars, nuts by Napa Nuts and Vintage Sweet Shoppe chocolates.

For this show, Yountville Arts invited Napa Valley artist friends to pair up and create a work of art that tells the story of their friendship.

"This show accentuates the value of both art and friendships to all of us," Schaer said. "We are all busy and we often forget to reflect on a very valuable part of our lives that may matter most, our friends.

"It's been my hope that participating artists have enjoyed the experience with each other as much as we have enjoyed working with them. The pairings are beautiful and the stories heartfelt."

Among the artworks, Napa Valley landscape artists BJ Thrailkill, who sees beauty in ordinary objects, worked with Anne Garden who loves to paint landscapes and animals, Schaer said. "The two tell their friendship stories around their passion for protecting our trees."

In another instance, two artists, Frank Trozzo and Michael Fitzpatrick, both former graphic designers, worked together to incorporate a painting from each into one artwork as an homage to their friendship. Trozzo chose Fitzpatrick's painting for the 2024 Mustard Celebration, and Fitzpatrick chose Trozzo's painting, "Dragon Bathtime."

"When guests visit, they'll see many other wonderful artists pairings such as Traci Sanderson and JD Miller, Michael Schaer and Jean Cullinane, Marissa Carlisle and Rosemarie Kempton," Schaer said.

The Heart of Friendship Gallery Show runs through March 29. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with weekends and evenings available by appointment.

### CHIARELLO

from page N4

a cup of pasta water then drain the pasta and add to the sauté pan with the Parmesan.

Stir the pan and add a bit of the pasta water if it seems dry. Stir the

pasta again until the liquid thickens a little, then divide between four pasta bowls. Top with more Parmesan and serve immediately. All you need is crusty bread to dip into the sauce.

Ken Morris is a food writer and home chef who lives in Napa. Contact him at [macmore@sbcglobal.net](mailto:macmore@sbcglobal.net).

### GREEN

from page N1

want viewers to feel discouraged by extreme weather and carbon pollution, but instead to feel inspired and encouraged to take action in their homes and community."

Team leader Ginger Gregory was motivated to educate herself and others about climate change through her love of gardening. "I just love digging in the dirt and watching things grow. I got active with Napa Climate NOW! when I retired because I wanted to reduce plastic pollution, but then I heard about the Regenerative Practices team led by Carol Glaser, a UC Master Gardener. I learned how vital healthy soil, plants and trees are in drawing down carbon."

Carol Glaser has been a Master Gardener for more than 15 years. A visit with her grandchildren in 2019 inspired her to join Napa Climate NOW! to learn about ways to reduce carbon pollution.

"My grandchildren and I made a commitment to each other to do everything we could to protect and preserve our beautiful environment. I took the 'Kiss the Ground' course during Covid to learn about regenerative agriculture. It was a wonderful exploration that led to

the films will help people see solutions and a positive way of working on climate pollution."

The Napa Library films are aimed at older youth and adults. The films will present different areas of climate action such as plastic pollution, water conservation, ideas for sustainable living and energy use, along with regenerative agriculture and gardening practices.

When time allows, the programs may include a time to chat about the ideas in the film with a local expert and with each other. Gregory said 2040 is now her favorite climate solution film.

"It's made by an Australian dad for his daughter who will be an adult in 2040. He traveled around the world, visiting sites where actions to address climate change are being put into practice. My favorite segment features a little village in Bangladesh where households set up their own clean electricity supply using solar panels they installed themselves. The filmmaking style is also very fun and youth-oriented."

The American Canyon series is intended for families with younger children and includes shorter films followed by child-oriented activities. The first showing in American Canyon is on Saturday, Feb. 3, from 1 to 2 p.m. and will feature *Waste is a Verb*, a short film about the Napa

## Green Screen Film Series

Sundays • Jan. 28, March 24 and May 19, 2 to 4:30 p.m.

Napa Library  
580 Coombs St., Napa

Saturdays • Feb. 3, April 6, and June 1, 1 to 2 p.m.

American Canyon Library  
Crawford Way, American Canyon

the Master Gardeners' program on soil health and climate change, 'Soil is the Solution.'

Gregory, Glaser, and Dietiker-Yolo had all been interested in a film series. Crosby joined them to work out what films to show, where. Dietiker-Yolo said, "I'm excited that we're showing films to families with children, as well as adults, and in American Canyon, as well as in Napa. I think

Recycling and Waste Services state-of-the-art recycling and composting facility, with a lively trash/recycling sorting challenge afterward.

Crosby said, "The films for the children have a light touch and will be followed up with fun, easy games to reinforce the learning. We really need to protect our kids at the same time as we are enlisting them to engage with the most unenvying problems of our day.

"Children are often the conscience of the family—they notice if you don't put the recycling in the right spot. As soon as they know, they can be agents of change."

The Napa and American Canyon libraries invite you to join them, in partnership with Napa Climate NOW!, for these documentaries on the perils of plastic use and climate change. And, most importantly, to find solutions together.

Chris Benz is a retired winemaker and co-founder of Napa Climate NOW!

Napa Climate NOW! is a local nonprofit citizens' group advocating for smart climate solutions based on the latest climate science, part of 350 Bay Area. Info, [napa.350bayarea.org](http://napa.350bayarea.org)

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# Napa Valley teenagers bring Latin flair to Idol NV

By Mariela Gomez

For NapaLife Extra

Over the past two months, Napa County students ages 12 to 17 have been auditioning for a spot to compete at the upcoming Idol NV finals taking place on Jan. 20 and 21 at the Napa Valley Community College Performing Arts Center. Spanish melodies are anticipated to take center stage as they did throughout auditions.

"I might sing 'Curucucu Paloma' at the finals," seventh-grader Maya Ortiz said, referring to a song by the late Mexican singer and composer Tomás Méndez. "I still don't know if it will be a song in Spanish or English."

Ortiz said she was in the "in-between" state of her Mexican American background as she decides between genres and artists to perform at finals.

"Talent doesn't have a stereotype, language or budget," said Evy Warshawski, co-director of E&M Presents, which is bringing back the event after several years in hiatus. "There is a plethora of diverse, talented teenagers here but not many outlets where they can showcase their talents. You also don't need to be the next Celine Dion to participate. We just want to see passion."

Warshawski started producing Idol NV in 2007 when she was the executive and artistic director of the Napa Valley Opera House. Her goal was to create an inclusive, cost-free event for young performers like Ortiz, fostering a space where diverse, bilingual talents could flourish.

As Idol NV 2024 approaches, Ortiz stands among other student singers faced with a plethora of English and Spanish song choices. Ultimately, many decide to audition with a song that highlights their bilingual heritage, bringing a collective flair and presence to the event.



PHOTO BY MARIELA GOMEZ

**Yahir Cervantes Saucedo from American Canyon Middle School at auditions for Idol NV.**

Jareli Baeza, a Valley Oak High School student, auditioned by singing "Dos Arbolitos" (Two Little Trees) in Spanish – one of her grandmother's favorite songs. Yahir Cervantes Saucedo, 12, sang "La De La Mochila Azul" (The One in the Blue Backpack), a song by Pedrito Fernández that Saucedo has been singing since he was 5 years old. Alejandra Hernandez Lopez, from Vintage High School, performed "Sabor A Mi" (Taste of Me), a song she grew up listening to in her home.

"There are not many things like this in Napa," Ortiz said of Idol NV. "I have never been part of a singing competition. I am nervous and excited."

The aspiring singer has been harmonizing notes since she was 7

years old, her mom, Elba Marquez, said. "She sings different genres from Mexican regional to pop songs by Doja Cat."

Although Ortiz never had a professional singing coach – as many contestants have – Warshawski encourages all students to participate in the event, regardless of their singing background.

"Think about how many well-known artists have been discovered locally," Marquez said. "As a mother, I'm nervous for my daughter Maya but I know this will help her step into something new."

But as Ortiz navigates the feelings of an everyday teenager who is stepping out of her comfort zone to share her voice and personality on the front stage, her mother is encouraging her to tap into her dual background.

"Being a part of two cultures is beautiful because you open your horizons even more," Marquez said. "Her life is a book where she is the author. She has the opportunity to showcase either culture."

Ortiz, a former cello player, is

## E & M Presents: Idol NV

Jan. 20 and 21, 2 to 4:30 p.m.

Napa Valley College Performing Arts Center

Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased at EventBrite.com

pacifying her "finals" nervousness by spending a few hours a day practicing her vocals on top of being an active league soccer player.

And, Marquez has joined forces with Warshawski to act as the Spanish language liaison for Idol NV. Marquez leads outreach within the Latine community to bring in more Latine student talent to Idol NV.

"Animate (go for it)!" Marquez said. "Sometimes, as parents, we are caught up in the everyday routines: paying the bills, rent, and making ends meet for our children. But this is the time when we need to break our everyday routines and encourage our children to do something new with opportunities like this one. They have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

The gain for the winners of Idol NV includes tickets to BottleRock, La Onda and cash prizes of up to \$1,000.

Three winners will be announced at the end of performances on Sunday. Two winners will be chosen by a panel composed of professionals with a background in arts and a capella. One winner will be chosen by the audience.

The semi-finals are slated for Jan. 20 where the Napa High Vocal Music Workshop will perform. Devon Hadsell, the 2007 Opera House Idol winner who went on to perform in Broadway musicals, will sing at the finals on Jan. 21.

Both competitions take place from 2 to 4:30 pm, at the Napa Valley Community College Performing Arts Center. Tickets, starting at \$12, can be purchased on EventBrite.com.



PHOTO BY MARIELA GOMEZ

**Alejandra Hernandez Lopez from Vintage High School performs "Sabor A Mi" at her audition for the 2024 Idol NV from E & M Presents.**

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# Olives: Napa Valley's other harvest

By Rosemarie Kempton  
NapaLife Extra

Marissa Carlisle and her husband, Lorenzo Mills, dipped their bread into the "Tuscan style" extra virgin olive oil in small, individual containers and invited us to do the same.

"What do you think of it?" Mills asked during the first sampling of their 2023 blend in early January.

Several of us coughed and reached for glasses of water as the olive oil touched the back of our throats. Our reaction was a common one, Mills explained. The sensation of a slight throat burn is caused from the abundance of polyphenols in high-quality extra virgin olive oil.

"Try it on the salad. It tastes better on salad when mixed with balsamic," Carlisle said. The flavor of the oil varies each year, depend-

ing on the blend of olives harvested from other growers who take their olives to a collective community crush at The Olive Press.



PHOTO BY MARISSA CARLISLE

These mature olive trees yield between 33 and 44 pounds each of olives each year.

ing on the blend of olives harvested from other growers who take their olives to a collective community crush at The Olive Press.

The distinctive peppery flavor was perfect with salad.

In late fall, as the olives ripen on their Coombsville property, the couple line up what they'll need for harvest – ladders, rakes, drop cloths, buckets and a band of friends

to help them pick olives. This year, on a sunlit November day, they led their volunteer harvesters to their small olive orchard on a hillside next to their home.

The goal of the annual harvest is to convert the olives into high-quality extra virgin olive oil, rich in flavor as well as nutrition, for themselves and their amateur olive pickers.

The couple's interest in olive oil started 27 years ago when Carlisle gave nine Manzanillo and Mission olive trees to her husband as a surprise birthday gift. They planted them alongside two olive trees already on the property and another olive tree self-sowed, so they now have 12 trees. Though it usually takes three years for an olive tree to begin producing fruit, some of their trees produced olives within a year because the Napa climate is conducive to olive tree growth.

bor intensive, taking eight amateur pickers three hours to gather between 100 and 150 pounds of olives.

"The trees have more to offer but we can't climb to the top anymore," Carlisle said. "Neither can our friends—ladders or not."

Because the couple planted the trees on a hillside, it is easier to rake up and gather the olives from the sheets or tarps, where they have fallen.

"The camaraderie with friends helping makes it like play and it's very

helping makes it like play and it's very said. "It's organic and you feel like you've given birth to a whole new aspect of harvest. From opera singer to picker, it seems everyone loves olive harvesting."

Harvesting with friends is always cause for merriment, Carlisle said as she recounted amusing stories such as the year one of their friends came to visit as a picker but instead strolled around reciting poetry to those who were working.

The couple said that their trees will produce 33 to 44 pounds each of olives each growing season.

Maintenance, pruning and fertilizer costs around \$500 each year.

"You appreciate the price you pay for a quart of olive oil after you've picked them," Carlisle said.

They took 150 pounds from this November's harvest to The Olive Press in Sonoma, which charges \$1 a pound to press them. As in past years, their olives were mixed with those of other ol-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Olive farmer Marissa Carlisle starts the fall harvest.

ive growers. Their portion of olive oil, picked up in December, was just over one and a half gallons.

"The Olive Press is a collective community press, so we just trust that everyone involved loves their trees as we do and keeps them organic," Mills said.

Harvesting one's own olives is growing in popularity, according to The Olive Press general manager, Teresa Hernando.

"This was our biggest year," Hernando said. "Over 150 people brought in 10 tons of their olives to the annual community press. Some people bring in as much as 500 pounds of olives while others bring in as little as one to five pounds."

"Extra virgin olive oil is like liquid gold," Hernando said. "Throughout Napa and Sonoma counties landscapers are planting more olive trees. There is a growing awareness in the health benefits of extra virgin olive oil."

The Olive Press operates the collective community press twice a year – one or two weeks before Thanksgiving and on the Sunday before Thanksgiving. This year the community olive press will run on Nov. 24.

"We tend to pay attention to source. Local (olive oil) is best

due to issues with compromised quality of adulteration and substitution," Mills said. "Some brands, even labeled 'California,' are misleading and may be sourced from elsewhere."

Some extra virgin olive oils, sold at high prices, are misrepresented, Mills said, referring to a recent seizure of 68,000 gallons of unfit olive oil not suitable for consumption in Italy and Spain where much of the world's olive oil is produced.

"We use glass bottles because they provide an airtight seal that prevents oxygen from entering the bottle and causing the oil to oxidize," Carlisle said. "Plastic storage bottles are porous, which means they allow air to pass through, leading to the breakdown of the oil."

According to Napa County Agricultural Commissioner Tracy Cleveland, the data for 2022, which is collected from commercial growers, shows that 109 acres in the county were devoted to olive production, averaging 1.53 tons per acre, with a total of 166 tons at a value of \$283,100. Data for the 2023 olive harvest will be reported in April or May of this year. This report does not include data for hobbyist olive growers.

## WIGGINS

from page N1

ting very particular about how they spend their money, where they want to spend their money, and who they want to spend their money with," Wiggins said.

"I try to place people in spaces that they're comfortable in that are within their price points."

Ten years ago, while living in Atlanta, Wiggins, a self-proclaimed "foodie," created her blog, "Tish Around Town," to write about her interest in food and travel. The more Wiggins wrote about food, the more she became engrossed in wines paired with the meals.

To become a better consumer and steward of wine, Wiggins pursued Wine and Spirit Education Trust (WSET) courses and earned WSET Level 1, then Level 2 certifications. When she was living in Dallas, Wiggins began working part-time at a wine bar where she was able to share her newfound wine knowledge with customers. From there, a wine educator was born.

"Education is a big backbone be-



PHOTO BY WILLIAM BECKNELL PHOTOGRAPHY

"I want to show people Napa from 'Tish Around Town' eyes," Tish Wiggins says.

hind Tish Around Town," Wiggins said. "I think when people become educated in wine, it helps in expanding their palate and their interest. You watch people's eyes light up when you just tell them a little bit more information about what they have in their glass."

In 2022, Wiggins was selected to partner with wine importer De-meine Estates, through its Dream It, Live It initiative, which provides

opportunities for minority-owned and socially responsible businesses committed to bringing change to the wine industry. Through the project, Wiggins launched the Celebration of Women in Wine tour, a four-day wine trip that showcased some of Napa Valley's premiere female wine professionals. She said the success of that tour helped her to realize her dream of moving to Napa to pursue a wine tourism business.

"That tour is what opened my eyes to this side of the business," she said. "I realized I wanted to land on the lifestyle side of things, and I want to show people Napa from Tish Around Town eyes."

True to her moniker, Wiggins can often be found around town. She moved to Napa in February 2023 to launch the Tish Around Town customized wine tours and

concierge service business, and since she moved, she said she has visited more than 70 wineries.

"I don't send anyone anywhere I personally haven't been," Wiggins said. "That was one of my main goals for moving out here. I want to place people in places and spaces where I know exactly how those environments and those tasting rooms feel."

In addition to creating itineraries for Wine Country visitors, Wiggins hosts "Sip, Socialize and Learn" events that she hopes will get people excited about wine, remove the stigma that wine is an unapproachable topic and make wine education more accessible to different audiences.

"If I'm having an event, I'm not, you know, all dressed up and stuffy, I'm going to have my Nikes on, just to help in setting the tone," Wiggins said. "I want to bring down the intimidation, and what better way to bring down the intimidation than to have a little bit of fun."

Wiggins said she hopes that her services will encourage a new and more diverse clientele in the

wine industry. With this in mind, she said she understands that not all tasting rooms are alike when it comes to accepting visitors who are only beginning to learn about wine. Some wineries, she said, may be skewed to serve more knowledgeable clients and buyers who are looking to purchase wine for their home cellars.

"I get that," she said, "But I also try to let the wine community know that we have got to educate them, and we have got to create and curate, and we have to build our buyers too. Someone may not be a buyer today, but they can be your buyer in three, four, five or six years from now."

In the future, Wiggins said, her sights are set on expanding her business into other California wine regions, including Sonoma, Paso Robles and Temecula. For now, though, she is focused on further-developing Tish Around Town in the Napa Valley.

"This place is beautiful," Wiggins said. "Come out here, take some pictures, drink some good wine, eat some amazing food. Enjoy. Life is grand."