

HOME DINING RECREATION TRAVEL COMMUNITY HEALTH STYLE

# 805 LIVING

SEPTEMBER 2012



FOOD  
& WINE



At Carmel Valley Ranch, on-site gardens supply produce for the “sophisticated rustic” cooking of executive chef Tim Wood (left); there’s also beekeeping on the property (far left), with guest tours led by apiarist John Russo.



## FRESH FOOD, BUSY BEES



The all-suite **Carmel Valley Ranch** ([carmelvalleyranch.com](http://carmelvalleyranch.com); suites from \$300) sees itself as a sort of luxury summer camp: Tree swings dot the property, golf and tennis clinics help guests up their game, suites have stone accents and patios or balconies with verdant wooded or valley views, and s’mores are available around the fire pits every night.

The words “summer camp” and “haute cuisine” don’t usually go together, but executive chef Tim Wood has created destination dining (he likes to call it “sophisticated rustic”) at the Lodge Restaurant. Wood is passionate about supporting local business and finding stellar-quality ingredients, from fish to produce to locally made salt, and many of the restaurant’s vegetables and herbs hail from an on-site two-acre organic garden.

Guests can experience Wood’s enthusiasm firsthand in the monthly Garden Walk Chef Series (\$95; check the website for upcoming dates). Chef Wood and gardener Mark Marino lead guests on a tour of the garden before heading to the exhibition

kitchen for a cooking demonstration and lunch. On a visit last spring, I dined on bacon-wrapped grilled asparagus, a beet and citrus salad with shaved fennel, and local salmon with seasonal vegetable risotto while Wood led the demonstration. He made a robustly flavorful asparagus soup using shockingly few ingredients (asparagus, onions, water, a bit of butter) in a fun class that included personal anecdotes, food history tidbits, and cooking tips.

A more family-friendly from-the-farm adventure is the innovative beekeeping experience (\$50 adults; \$35 children ages 4 to 15) and fresh honey tasting led by apiarist John Russo. Three hives just a few steps away from the garden are home to more than 60,000 Italian honeybees. After a brief overview of the bees’ quest and process of honey-making, Russo leads guests (appropriately attired in beekeeping suits) into the apiary to observe the very specific activities of different bees, then offers them a fresh honey tasting straight from the honeycomb. >

**Foodie fairytale:** At the palatial Hotel Castello di Casole in Tuscany, guests can enjoy a range of epicurean experiences both on- and off-site; rooms are furnished with European antiques and modern amenities like HDTVs, WiFi, and luxury bathrooms.

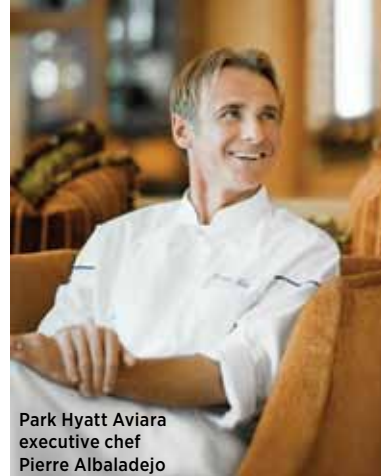


## Mangia!

Though it's a little farther afield than our usual travel coverage, a notable, new property opened in July in Tuscany, a 45-minute drive southwest from Florence. **Hotel Castello di Casole** ([castellodicasole.com](http://castellodicasole.com)) sits on 4,200 acres dotted with ancient buildings that were painstakingly restored using as many original elements as possible: The 10th-century castle and many of its outbuildings are now a 41-suite hotel, the estate's wine cellar (vaulted ceilings and all) has been transformed into a spa, and farmhouses and villas are available to rent or own. A pool, fitness center, and bocce courts offer on-site entertainment, and Italian- and English-speaking concierges know the best of what the region has to offer as they regularly coordinate truffle hunting, wine tasting, and trattoria itineraries in the surrounding countryside. Foodie experiences are an integral part of the resort, which has 88 acres of vineyards and 13 acres of olive groves that produce private label wine and olive oil exclusively for resort use. Chef-led classes include pizza making at the on-site pizzeria (which also includes a *gelateria* and espresso bar) and three-course meal preparation using Tuscan ingredients.

The five-night "Divine Food and Wine" package (about \$4,900 for two; through 2012) includes a one-bedroom suite, breakfast daily, a cooking class plus wine pairing with a private chef and sommelier, a chef's tasting menu dinner for two, and wine and olive oil tastings from the property's vineyards and groves.

BY MALLORY MCCREARY



**Park Hyatt Aviara  
executive chef  
Pierre Albaladejo**

## A DAY IN THE VINEYARDS

Four times a year, Park Hyatt hotels ([park.hyatt.com](http://park.hyatt.com)) around the world host the **Masters of Food & Wine** series to introduce guests to local food and wine purveyors. In March, I joined other guests at the **Park Hyatt Aviara** ([parkaviara.hyatt.com](http://parkaviara.hyatt.com)) in Carlsbad for a strawberry-picking experience. We picked berries at Aviara Parkway Farms, then learned how to make fresh jam in an engaging class led by executive pastry chef Franck Riffaud (complete with funny stories and a behind-the-scenes tour of the pastry kitchen). That night for dinner, chefs were matched with local farmers and fresh ingredients at stations around the room for tastings (two of my favorites were a shaved baby-turnip salad with peas and prosciutto flakes and braised pork belly served over fava bean risotto).

The Masters of Food & Wine series continues this month with a day at Orfila Vineyards & Winery in Escondido (September 22; \$95). Orfila executive winemaker Justin Mund and Park Hyatt Aviara executive chef Pierre Albaladejo lead a tour of the estate's Rhône-style wines followed by a food-and-wine tasting. A family-style lunch at the winery includes dishes using estate grapes, such as bowtie arugula salad with grapes and a quail ragout with a grape sauce (in addition to other dishes).

The luxurious Park Hyatt Aviara Resort (rooms from \$395) has wetlands views of Batiquitos Lagoon, a spa, golf course, tennis courts, and a beach butler for transportation to and setup at nearby Ponto Beach. ♦



**Park Hyatt  
Aviara  
executive  
sous chef  
Jason Poole**