











DANIEL OTIS

Cyclists ride eclectic bicycles down Ventura's oceanfront promenade.

## 6 SPOTS TO WINE AND DINE

Local seafood, farm-fresh produce, award-winning wine and delicious craft beer — it's all here. There are thousands of places to drink and dine along California's Central Coast. **Daniel Otis** shares a few that impressed



Monterey Red Abalone "Relleno Style" is served at Cultura Comida.

### Carmel-by-the-Sea

Cultura Comida y Bebida ([culturacarmel.com](http://culturacarmel.com)) is one of the newest restaurants in this sleepy, seaside town. Offering an artistic tapas-style twist on Mexican classics in a small and swanky space, must-tries include the Cultura Mole, which is crammed full of smoked pork and hunks of orange, and the Monterey Red Abalone "Relleno Style," which is delicately cooked in butter, garlic and dried chili. If you love wine, the Carmel Wine Walk by-the-Sea offers a wine-tasting passport that gets you flights in nine different tasting rooms. You can order yours online or pick one up at Carmel-by-the-Sea's visitor centre.



Arugula tops the "Ode To Dan Russo" pizza at Lucky Penny.

### Santa Barbara's Funk Zone

There is no shortage of places to wine and dine in delightful Santa Barbara. Chock full of watering holes and eateries, the city's walkable Funk Zone ([funkzone.net](http://funkzone.net)) arts and culture district is a great place to start. Decorated with a mosaic of shiny pen-

nies, the Funk Zone's aptly-named Lucky Penny ([luckypennysb.com](http://luckypennysb.com)) makes a mean wood-fired pizza (I recommend the arugula-topped "Ode To Dan Russo.")



Los Agaves is known for its simply sweet flan.

### Los Agaves in Santa Barbara

Don't let the thronged takeout counter or sparse and homely décor turn you away — this restaurant is so good it deserves its own mention. Cooking up Mexican fare with local ingredients, Los Agaves ([los-agaves.com](http://los-agaves.com)) is known for dishes like its delectably gooey Queso Fundido appetizer, fresh fish and shrimp-filled Agaves Enchiladas and simply sweet flan for dessert. Even the creamy housemade mango dressing that comes with its side salad is delicious. With two locations in Santa Barbara and one in Goleta, you have no excuse to skip this understated gem.



A flight of craft beer is the best way to sample suds at SLO Brew.

### San Luis Obispo

SLO Brew ([slobrew.com](http://slobrew.com)) is a massive brewpub with a menu that leans on savoury appetizers, hulking salads, big burgers and pizzas topped with greens. It also has nearly a dozen homemade beers on tap and it reg-

ularly hosts live bands. If you're more of a cocktail person, hip Sidecar Cocktail Co. ([sidecarcocktail.com](http://sidecarcocktail.com)) has an impressive and inventive menu. Try the "Bartender Roulette" option, where you can get a custom cocktail. If you need to pick up lunch or snacks for the road, SLO Provisions ([sloprovisions.com](http://sloprovisions.com)) specializes in salads, sandwiches and baked treats.



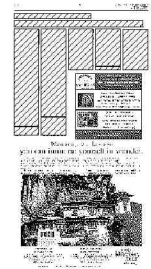
A brownie dessert special stands out at the Waterside.

### Oxnard and the Channel Islands

You'll need to bring something to eat on your trip to the isolated Channel Islands National Park. Channel Islands Provisioners ([cip.bz](http://cip.bz)) can pack you a custom lunch bag that can include everything from gourmet sandwiches made with locally caught fish to intricate salads, homemade pastries and organic trail mix in reusable containers. Once you're back ashore from your island jaunt, a short walk will take you to the Waterside Restaurant and Wine Bar ([thewatersiderestaurantandwinebar.com](http://thewatersiderestaurantandwinebar.com)), which dishes up seafood and meats on a patio that overlooks a marina.

### Moss Landing and Castroville

When I arrived in tiny Moss Landing, everyone I met told me I had to eat at Phil's Fish Market ([philsfishmarket.com](http://philsfishmarket.com)), a beachfront family business that has been around for more than three decades. I tried its speciality, Cioppino: a massive tomato-based stew crammed full of crab, fish, scallops, squid, mussels, clams and shrimp. A short drive away in Castroville, a town that calls itself the



"Artichoke Center of the Word," it's worth stopping at the Choke Coach



DANIEL OTIS PHOTOS

Cioppino at Phil's Fish Market is smothered in seafood.

([facebook.com/TheChokeCoach](https://facebook.com/TheChokeCoach)), an artichoke-themed food truck parked at Pezzini Farms ([pezzini-farms.com](https://pezzini-farms.com)). I recommend the French fried artichokes with its yummy garlic Dijon dip.

**Daniel Otis** was hosted by the Central Coast Tourism Council, which did not review or approve this story.