



Getaway: Nick's Cove by Tomales Bay by Daniel Yaffe



Sometimes you just need to escape. A couple of weeks ago, we packed a small suitcase and headed up to [Nick's Cove](#) on Tomales Bay. I know you've driven by it a dozen times, but next time you're pining for oysters and driving down Highway 1, you've got to make time to swing by. Even if you're just taking a pit stop for a warming *Bourbon Rosemary Apple Cider* (\$11), or a dozen of their famous BBQ oysters, you'll forget that you're only an hour and a half from San Francisco. The space is a homey, heavily wooded, elegant lodge with dozens of taxidermied moose and deer heads posted on the walls. It's everything you want from a warm winter lodge without the hokey-ness. In fact, the restaurant has a rich history – it's been in the same spot perched on Tomales Bay for over

80 years – and, legend has it, Nick's was the first restaurant to serve BBQ oysters. Although it was remodeled in 2007 and refreshed in 2011 by new owners, it still has a feeling that everyone behind the scenes is steeped in the place's history. We were joined for dinner by Dena Grunts, the General Manager whose warmth and humor welcomed us into the family. She seems to know all the staff personally, even telling us stories about their kids . . . many of the staff even have direct connections to the area (Dena's husband grew up going to Tomales Bay and proposed to her on Hog Island).

We've been to a handful of the little restaurants that dot Highway 1 – most with mediocre drinks and a menu that taints the gorgeous views. Nick's Cove was anything but your standard fare. The night started off of course with a few seasonal drinks – the Bourbon Rosemary Apple Cider (rosemary in drinks is my new seasonal go-to ingredient), Negronis (they've got a nice classic cocktail collection), and cocktails to match the ambience (*Smokey Sunset* - Knob Creek bourbon, St. Germain elderflower liqueur, orange juice, and cayenne). Keep an eye out for winemaker and (soon to come) beer dinners.

While taking our places around the table and sipping on our cocktails, we were reminded that the restaurant sits on the heels of local farms that bring a new meaning to "locally sourced." Beyond the oysters that are harvested literally in their backyard, a wide array of their ingredients (from [Cowgirl Creamery](#) cheese to [Fallon Hills Ranch](#) Beef) are sourced from within earshot of the restaurant.



It was followed by several shared plates (which I didn't really want to share with anyone)... one of the freshest *Frito Misto* (\$14) I've had in years, melt-in-your-mouth *Roasted Veal Marrow Bones* (\$13), and *Pumpkin Maple-Cinnamon Arancini* (\$12). The apps were paired with a Palace 1915 Sauvignon Blanc from nearby Napa Valley. For the main course, I ordered the rich Brioche Stuffed Quail special, with goat cheese, port reduction, quail egg and mushroom ragout – our mains were accompanied by a delicious Merry Edwards Pinot Noir. My mouth waters just thinking about it. Since there was group of us, we got to taste through a large portion of the menu; I was impressed with the varied dishes, and even more impressed that all were executed with flying colors. Moving on to an array of pastry chef Gillian Helquist's famous home inspired desserts, we topped off with an eggnog cake, pomegranate granita, and a persimmon cake.

Nick's Cove has 5 cottages that sit on the water and 7 others across the road with water views- a tempting and easy retreat after indulging at the restaurant. No need to hop back on the winding Highway 1. Rather, grab your robe (that is waiting for you in the room) and turn up the heat. The cottages are both elegantly rustic and romantic and come with full amenities to have a magical getaway, including an incredible bathroom with a huge shower and heated floors, king size bed, kitchenette (with a fully stocked bar), comfy couches and a fireplace ready to ignite.

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Our cottage, Ruthie's (they all have specific identities and features), had two sides facing the water – which presented a completely surreal dawn while waking up in our most

comfortable bed. We pre-ordered our breakfast of a *Dungeness Crab Omelette with Mascarpone and Spinach* (\$18) and *Lemon Ricotta Pancakes* (\$12), fresh juice and a french press of fresh coffee – all of which were brought to our door by 9am. By 10am we stepped back out into the fresh air and were on our way back to work, feeling like we were gone for weeks.

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