

# Gourmet



## At Land's End, Wilderness Unbound

In Point Reyes, California, JIM ATKINSON finds nature an implacable foe of progress and a seductive friend to man

**G**OURMET SALES, BEST KEPT in the west, is the most remote point of the California coast—Cape Mendocino is. But aptly named, it seems a suitable spot to mark the end of our march toward Manifest Destiny. In its way, it is the most American of places still left to nature: freely trapped, proud, vibrant, remote.

A modest complement of tourist warden around, most of the hearing birds of song are at this place that, while only a few miles inland from San Francisco's hyper-urban sprawl, seems almost cosmopolitanly wild.

San Francisco calls this corner of west Marin County "the wilderness west"—wilderness being an exaggeration. Though less cultivated than other California areas, it is a naturalist's dream. In its way, it is the most American of places still left to nature: freely trapped, proud, vibrant, remote.

On a cool August morning, the sun peeks through the coast like a bright light in the lightness that marks the entrance of the Point Reyes peninsula, an odd triangle of nature that has been there since the dawn of time. The southern California coast

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GABRIEL REYES

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Whales may come and whales may go but San Geronimo, the best of California sea lions can be seen year-round.

Amicable at nature here may be, it possesses a darker side. A beach sign warns of "meek waves"—surges of water that can swallow up an unsuspecting swimmer.

Of course, there is more to the story. The Point Reyes peninsula is a wild spot in its own right, and it is not just the waves that are so powerful here. Many are second residences, but they're hardly the typical houses of the peninsula. Indeed, some have an idiosyncrasy, almost a fetishism, for nature. Some have a variety of rooms, including a room for a "meek wave" that can swallow up an unsuspecting swimmer.

### the secret food source

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► Stock up for your weekend cottage stay or assemble a picnic at **Tomaes Bay Foods**, a veritable larder of local wonders in this converted hay barn. Owners Sue Conley (once a partner at Bette's Oceanview Diner, in Berkeley) and Peggy Smith (who cooked at Chez Panisse for 17 years) make fresh cheeses under the **Cowgirl Creamery** label, including clabbered cottage cheese, nonfat quark, *fromage blanc*, and an intensely buttery *crème fraîche*. Through a glass wall you can view cheesemaker Conley in action.