



Excitement is building for the 3rd Annual NorCal Public Media Food & Wine Awards

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Exciting new speakers and fundraising have added to the excitement for the 3rd Annual [NorCal Public Media Food & Wine Awards](#), celebrating individuals and organizations that exemplify excellence, innovation, and a commitment to the betterment of our local communities and environment through agriculture, viticulture, sustainability, education and compassion. The event takes place Saturday, May 10th at the Jackson Theater, Sonoma Country Day School in Santa Rosa, CA.

CEO Darren LaShelle and State Senate President Pro Tempore Mike McGuire will address the critical role of public media for all Americans.

Fundraising will kick off with unique experiences donated by PBS stars and local luminaries in the food world:

- [Chef Duskie Estes](#), a former Award winner, offers *Farmer-Butcher-Chef-Unicorn*, a once-in-a-lifetime farm-to-table dinner for ten on Duskie's own farm that promises an epic evening of food, wine, storytelling, and hospitality—crafted and hosted by the chef herself.
- [Chef Joanne Weir](#) of PBS's *Plates and Places* offers dinner for 6 at her home with a cooking lesson in the same kitchen seen on her PBS programs.
- [Chef Martin Yan](#) offers a tour of historic Chinatown in San Francisco with Lunch for 10.

There will also be a Silent Auction at the event with works from local artists, wine, food and wine country stays offered. Chef Yan will be giving a cooking demonstration during the reception at the event and offering new cookbooks for sale with proceeds going to NorCal Public Media.

Tickets are open at [Norcalpublicmedia.org/Awards](#) and include a specially priced *Bring A Mom* ticket since the event takes place the day before Mother's Day.

NorCal is dedicated to shining a spotlight on environmental issues and their impact on our communities, and its [Center for Environmental Reporting](#) is supported in part by this fundraising event.

Local leaders and organizations within the agriculture, viticulture, food and wine industries play a pivotal role in fostering a positive impact on the environment, cultivating sustainable futures, and nurturing the well-being of people in our communities.

By recognizing these heroes and makers NorCal's hope is to instill lasting inspiration and positive change in our environments and communities.

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The NorCal Public Media Food & Wine Awards won the 2024 Public Media Award for Best Community Special Event at the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA) conference.

From an impressive list of nominations submitted, the 2025 categories and Award Winners are:

EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE



Susan Gilmore – North Bay Children’s Center Garden of Eatin’.

NBCC was among the first early childhood education providers to recognize that nutrition education has a place in the daily curriculum of a childcare environment. The Garden of Eatin’ Program instills healthy habits and weaves a culture of wellness into its preschool program by teaching children and their families, to make healthy food choices through a comprehensive, hands-on garden-based curriculum.

Susan Gilmore, founder and CEO, has led NBCC for 36 years and her innovative programs have spread to their multiple locations in Marin and Sonoma counties, always with the mission to ensure that all

children, especially the most vulnerable, have access to critical early learning experiences that build the foundation for life-long success.

Beyond the classroom, Susan has demonstrated exceptional leadership during times of crisis. During the 2017 Sonoma County wildfires, she led efforts to support families and teachers displaced from seven of NBCC’s locations in evacuation areas. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and schools closed, she worked closely with county emergency services to provide critical childcare for medical first responders and essential workers, ensuring NBCC adapted to meet the community’s urgent needs. Susan’s commitment to addressing emerging challenges led her to present to the Early Care Climate Task Force, where her contributions and NBCC’s innovative practices were featured in the Early Years Climate Action Plan. This plan highlights strategies to help children from birth to age eight thrive despite the growing impacts of climate-related events.

With a passion for collaboration and system change, Susan’s entrepreneurial spirit has inspired transformative progress in early childhood education, creating brighter futures for children across all income levels.

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LAND STEWARDS/REGENERATION

Elizabeth and Paul Kaiser – Singing Frogs Farm.

Singing Frogs is a small farm—just three cultivated acres—but the Kaisers are reaping BIG results using Regenerative Farming methods, with an impressive 5-7 harvests per year. Three basic principles guide what they do: 1) disturb the soil as little as possible, 2) keep a wide diversity of plants (about 140 different crops) in the ground as much as possible and 3) keep the ground covered and protected as much as possible throughout the year. The Kaisers have launched education workshops, consultations and farm tours to teach and share their successful practices.



Mimi and Peter Buckley – Front Porch Farm.

Established in 2010, Front Porch Farm is a 110-acre organic farm producing vegetables, fruit and cut flowers. They are an exemplary farm that highly values organic and regenerative farming principles as well as empowering their employees with competitive wages and benefits as well as an inclusive place for their family and friends. They are a model for soil health, high quality produce and cut flowers and most of all, empowering their employees with the same values and compensation for their contribution to making the world and community a better place.

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Lisa and Loren Poncia – Stemple Creek Ranch

Lisa and Loren Poncia and the Poncia family, proprietors of Stemple Creek Ranch, are awarded for their commitment to sustainability and regenerative agriculture in their production of beef, lamb, and pork of excellent quality. Stemple Creek Ranch is a fourth-generation family owned and operated organic ranch in Marin County, CA. They practice environmentally responsible carbon farming to raise their 100% grass-fed & finished beef, lamb, and pasture raised pork.

Their goal is to work in harmony with nature to promote optimal biodiversity that ensures the long-term health and productivity of the ranch. Most of their pastureland is Certified Organic, and their free-range Angus beef and lamb are 100% grass fed and grass finished. They rotationally graze their stock on open pasture from birth to harvest. They are never supplemented with grains, corn, or soy, and never receive artificial hormones, growth promotants, or antibiotics. Their pigs are humanely raised in large outdoor pens where they enjoy a vegetarian diet with plenty of room to socialize and express natural behaviors. They like to say that “their animals never see a feed lot. Ever.”



AQUACULTURE/SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

John Finger and Terry Sawyer - Hog Island Oyster Company

With John and Terry at the helm, Hog Island Oyster Co. is one of the nation's leading producers of certified sustainable shellfish and a pioneer in “bay to bar” restaurants and focusing on the long-term sustainability of locally produced shellfish. In 2011 Hog Island became one of the premier Food Alliance Certified Sustainable Shellfish Producers.

Since 2012, Hog Island has partnered with U.C. Davis, Bodega Marine Labs, in monitoring the levels and impacts of Ocean Acidification in Tomales Bay. In 2015, they joined a global community of businesses as the first B-Corp Certified shellfish company. Hog Island is also working with restoration scientists and shellfish growers and the Native Olympia Oyster Collaborative to bring back native oysters once beloved by the coast Miwok and other Native American communities, both in the wild and on farms and restaurant menus.

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FOOD EQUITY

Judith and Chanowk Yisrael - Yisrael Farms

Yisrael Farms started as a half-acre urban farm nestled in the heart of Sacramento and has now grown to multiple locations. Their farm is a sustainable community resource, a story of love, perseverance, and reverence for the earth's rhythms.

Their neighborhood is a historically working-class area now battling food apartheid, poverty, and gentrification. It's a familiar story for communities of color. The Yisraels decided to flip the narrative. In ten years, these city slickers transformed their yard into a half-acre farm, fed hundreds of people, taught thousands more and have found that the answers are in the soil.

Yisrael Family Urban Farm is located on a double lot in the South Oak Park neighborhood of Sacramento, at the home of owners Judith and Chanowk Yisrael. South Oak Park is one of Sacramento's underserved communities; it has been called a "food desert," with more fast-food outlets than places selling healthy food.

Yisrael Farms produces healthy food for the Yisrael family and their community. More importantly, Chanowk and Judith help to grow a healthy community by sharing their skills and knowledge, offering classes, workshops and programs for youth, and teaching others how to grow their own food and cook healthy meals. Their mission is to "transform the hood for G.O.O.D." (G.O.O.D. stands for "Growing our own Destiny") using urban agriculture as a tool for community engagement, empowerment and employment. They demonstrate the benefits of growing your own food and principles of cultivation of the soil which they share with their local community and the world.

Michael Dimock – Roots of Change

Roots of Change brings a diverse range of Californians to the table to build a common interest in food and farming so that every aspect of our food - from the time it's grown to the time it's eaten - can be healthy, safe, profitable, affordable and fair.

Michael Dimock is a strategist, organizer and advocate for food and farming systems change. He heads Roots of Change, a program of the Public Health Institute. Since 1996, Michael has been creating and facilitating community dialogues, pilot projects and policy campaigns with community, farmers, ranchers, and business leaders to advance food and farm policies and practices that make agriculture and food enterprises solutions to critical ecological, economic and social challenges. Since 2006, his leadership has helped render several local policies, one new law and funding program at the federal level and three new California laws that include two new funding programs sustained by ROC's many



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successful budget requests. He has been a player in passing regenerative agriculture policies that provide farmers with incentives to deliver ecosystem services. He is the host of the long-running podcast, *Flipping the Table*, featuring honest conversations about food, farming and the future. And he is currently writing a book about the history and progress of the good food movement and how it addresses numerous challenges facing our nation and world.

HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Chef Martin Yan

Chef Martin Yan, celebrated for his pioneering television show *Yan Can Cook*, has not only contributed to the global appreciation of Chinese cuisine but also dedicated significant efforts to philanthropy. Through culinary education, cultural exchange, and community support, he uses his platform to make a positive impact.



Yan frequently participates in charity events, cooking demonstrations, and fundraising activities to support causes like hunger relief, disaster recovery, and educational programs. His passion for education is evident in his efforts to mentor young chefs, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, by promoting culinary arts as a path to opportunity and empowerment. He partners with culinary schools, nonprofit organizations, and international cultural initiatives to teach the value of preserving heritage through food.

Additionally, Yan champions diversity and cultural understanding, leveraging his international influence to foster global culinary appreciation. His work has extended to advocating for sustainability in the food

industry, emphasizing the importance of respecting natural resources while celebrating traditional cooking methods.

Chef Yan's philanthropic spirit exemplifies his motto, "If Yan can cook, so can you!" encouraging not only cooking skills but also compassion and community engagement.

YOUTH VIDEO CLIMATE AWARD – Presented by Sonoma Water

A special addition to the ceremonies this year is the awards presented by Sonoma Water, which hosts an annual High School Video Contest. First, Second and Third Place winners for the 2025 contest will be announced. This year's contest theme is *Water Careers Unleashed: Navigating the Blue Path*.

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EARTH TO TABLE



The Hafner Family – Hafner Vineyard

Started in 1967 by Dick and Mary Hafner, the winery and vineyard in Sonoma County's Alexander Valley is now a third-generation family business, dedicated to sustaining the land they hold and the community in which they live.

The family takes a holistic approach to sustainability considering many different branches – the land, vineyard, winery, team, patrons and overall health of the business. For the Hafners, being sustainable isn't about "checking the boxes," it's a mentality that's deeply rooted. Over half the property is rolling hills and oak woodlands left for the health of wildlife, flora and fauna. A horse and some cows consume the tall

grasses to reduce fire risk, they practice natural beekeeping and contribute to the health of Sausal Creek as a fish-friendly certified property.

In the vineyard, the family pays close attention to soil health, combining organic, sustainable and conventional practices as well as modern technologies to ensure its regeneration and health year over year. In the winery, they use night-air cooling fans, caves for storage, solar panels and purchased green power, and a bottling process with zero waste (all recycled and reused lightweight glass).

Nearly 20 families of longtime employees are supported by their work at the winery, and individually and as a team they do community service works of many kinds, including the planting and cultivation of a kitchen garden on the property which is harvested and donated to Farm to Pantry (a previous Award Winner).

Chef Matthew Kammerer – Harbor House Inn

Matthew Kammerer is the Chef of The Harbor House Inn, an historic property on the Mendocino Coast built in 1916. Reopened in 2018 with Kammerer on the helm, it was transformed into a dining destination and became the region's first and only two-Michelin-starred restaurant. The daily changing menu is defined by the bounty from its own farm, along with seafood and vegetables sourced from the coastline and inland forests, animals raised by Mendocino County farmers, then cooked simply using fire, steam, and smoke.

As of 2023, The Harbor House Inn is 100% powered by renewable local energy resources, including geothermal and solar, in partnership with Sonoma Clean Power. Additionally, the property provides EV Charging Stations. The staff reduces its waste in many ways across the property. From the removal of plastic wrap in the kitchen to recycling single-use plastics at a local store. Water from the kitchen is reused to water the property's garden and plant life. A water filtration system reduces single-use plastic waste in guest rooms and during meal services. The kitchen team repurposes fryer oil to



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make candles for the dining tables as well as gifts for guests. They also use leftover solids from butter, which would otherwise be wasted, to create sauces and other dish components.

With his hyper-local cuisine and dedication to sustainability, Kammerer puts intense focus on conservation efforts. Notably, he incorporates sea urchins on the menus to highlight the impact of purple sea urchin on coastal kelp, and the removal of excess urchins to preserve California reefs. His thoughtful approach to fine dining and sustainability positions him as one of the most exciting and influential chefs in the country.

“Sustainability is all about preserving and protecting the places you love. For us, sustainability is a moral imperative, and one that we have ingrained into our ethos and team. We strive to be gentle and mindful in all of our business operations, treading lightly on the land, and protecting our oceans and nearby ecosystems. Given our remote and natural surroundings, we are hyper aware of our carbon footprint and take steps each day so we can all do our part to preserve the natural beauty of the Mendocino Coast.”

Omer Seltzer—Mt. Eitan Cheese

Omer Seltzer was born into goat farming and cheese making on a renowned family farm in Israel, where thousands of visitors came each weekend to learn about cheesemaking, goats and farming. Omer continued his studies and professional development at Cal Poly in SLO, apprenticed at goat farms and creameries in Provence and over the years mastered cheese making skills, before opening his Bodega creamery at the beginning of 2023. He has achieved international recognition. His cheeses are complex in flavor and unique in the California field of artisan cheeses.



Omer was drawn to Sonoma County's rich agriculture heritage, food culture and unique climate and felt it was the right place for his new creation. Mt. Eitan Creamery was specifically designed as an atelier to create cheese as a form of art. Discovering the characteristics of seasonally changing milk and pairing optimal artisanal cheese making techniques, Omer creates a unique and multi-layered taste experience. He embraces the variations created by the time of year, or even the time of day.

He's developed several varieties, cultivating synergy with other local produce...grape leaf wrapped goat cheese from Redwood Hill Farm goat milk, year-old goat cheese aged in crushed zinfandel grapes from a Sonoma vineyard, and Organic Jersey cow's milk cheese from a Bodega-based dairy which is part of Straus Family Creamery.

"You are not trying to imitate a cheese that already exists but you're trying to create a cheese that uses what is local here. Zinfandel grapes grow local here."

At the creamery, sustainability drives every aspect of operations. Mt. Eitan's team are committed to conserving energy by harnessing solar panels, utilizing a high-efficiency cooling system, and preserving energy within the heating and cooling cycles to minimize consumption. They prioritize water conservation through a closed-loop circulation system, collecting

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rainwater and using excess clean water to irrigate a young olive grove outside of the creamery. Pasteurized whey from cheese production is repurposed as high-quality animal feed.

“These initiatives reflect our dedication to safeguarding natural resources and promoting sustainability in all facets of our business.”

Omer delights in working many of their Farmer’s Market booths personally. “I want to have that contact with people. I don’t think it should be sold on a shelf. Cheese is a living thing and changes over time. It should be eaten fresh.”

GRAND AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

The Sterling Family - Iron Horse Vineyard & Winery

Audrey and Barry Sterling, partners in everything since meeting at Stanford University, first saw Iron Horse Vineyards in a driving rainstorm in 1976 with the vineyard development only partially completed. There was no winery, and the 19th century carpenter gothic house was dramatically listing to one side. Somehow they still decided their dreams had come true.

Today, three generations of the Sterling Family live on the property, ranging in age from 29 to 92. In the vineyards, winery, gardens, lifestyle, and community life, the Sterlings strive to give back more than they take out.



Iron Horse is certified sustainable and regenerative by the Sonoma County Wine Growers. They use all recycled water in the vineyards and are engaged in a multi-year, multi-million-dollar salmon habitat restoration project with Fish and Wildlife on their section of Green Valley Creek. Iron Horse is part of a pilot program with the California Land Stewardship Institute to study the positive role of vineyards in climate change and the benefits of regenerative agricultural practices – like planting cover crops and low till soil conservation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote healthy soils, and help sequester carbon.

For nearly 50 years, the Sterlings have considered both the vintage at hand and the long-term needs of the land, the employees and the community in everything they do.



ABOUT THE EVENT

Ticket sales for the NorCal Public Media Food & Wine Awards support the PBS, NPR and independent public television stations and streaming services provided to the Bay Area by NorCal Public Media, and their work in reporting on the environment, climate change issues and solutions.

At this year's event, attendees will enjoy a special menu of small bites sourced from local farms, prepared by Chef Daniel Kedan—awarded restaurateur, farm-to-table instructor at the Culinary Institute of America, and a previous Award Winner at the 2nd Annual event. He'll be assisted by a small army of culinary students from Maria Cabrillo High School and Santa Rosa Junior College culinary programs volunteering their help.

Starting with a welcome glass of sparkling wine and a Hog Island oyster on arrival, attendees will mingle with the Award Winners after the ceremony, and sample an array of wine, beer and craft beverages served by local producers donating their time and products.

Attendees can bid in a Silent Auction and a Live Auction with exciting food, wine and travel packages which will also raise money for the Center for Environmental Reporting at NorCal Public Media.

Ceremonies will be hosted this year by Clark Wolf, one of America's top restaurant consultants, food writers and speakers and the host of [Savoring Sonoma](#) on NorCal's NPR station, KRCB 104.9FM, with previous Award Winners presenting this year's Awards.

Tickets are open now at Norcalpublicmedia.org/Awards and include a specially priced *Bring A Mom* ticket since the event takes place the day before Mother's Day.

For more information, visit Norcalpublicmedia.org/Awards.

A limited number of press tickets are available on request. Images and further information are available.

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