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■ BOOKS

Comfort & Confidence

Within two blocks of Fillmore, two stars of the food world launch new cookbooks

PAGES 10 & 11



THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ DECEMBER 2012



One-of-a-kind dolls in a one-of-a-kind shop

Photograph by
CARINA WOLDENBERG

For more than three decades, Narumi on Fillmore has offered a unique selection of Japanese antiques, including porcelain and pottery, kimonos, tansu and tea ceremony utensils — but it specializes in restoring and selling one-of-a-kind dolls.

STORY & MORE PHOTOGRAPHS | PAGE 6

A Change of View

Ambassador From Pacific Heights on Duty in Hungary

By MARKOS KOUNALAKIS

BUDAPEST, Hungary — Many of my Saturdays used to start out with a saunter down Fillmore Street for an early morning cup of coffee while the rest of my family was still in bed.

Budapest is also a coffeehouse city, but more famed for the conversations and art that grew out of that culture than the coffee in the cups.

It has been three years since we left the neighborhood and moved to a country that only a generation ago was behind the Iron Curtain. As I look outside my office here, I see the Statue of Liberty — not the one in New York harbor, but the one atop Gellert Hill in Budapest, erected by the Soviets after World War II. From her office window, my wife looks toward a Soviet monument in the middle of Szabadság tér — Freedom Square — a golden star topping the prominent stone memorial.

From our apartment in Pacific Heights, we looked out on the bay, the sailboats and the container ships crossing under the Golden Gate Bridge. President

Obama marveled at the view during the couple of times he visited our home before assuming office. He later appointed my wife Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Hungary — a complex and demanding job that brought our family to beautiful Budapest.

Early on in our tenure here, we went through a Hungarian national election and a change in government, a revised constitution and a six-month European Union presidency. We've had many official visitors from President Obama's Cabinet, topped by two memorable working visits: one from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the other from our own congresswoman, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and now minority leader Nancy Pelosi.



The Kounalakis in their apartment on Steiner Street.

TO PAGE 3 ►

CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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Sunday, December 2, 16 & 23
WORSHIP AT 8:45 AM & 11 AM

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A jazzed-up reading of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" for the entire family

Friday, December 14, 8 pm, free
CHANCEL CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT
& AUDIENCE CAROL SING-ALONG WITH ORGAN & ORCHESTRA

Saturday, December 15, 10 am-Noon, free
MESSIAH WORKSHOP, led by Alden Gilchrist
Warm up for Calvary's Sing-it-Yourself Messiah

Sunday, December 16, 4 pm
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LETTERS



Robert Bell: "I don't think anyone can know everything about the piano."

A Fabricated Flight of Fancy

TO THE EDITORS:

THANK YOU for your recent article about the Piano Care Co. ["A Portal to Another Time," November.] Unfortunately, your reporter's imagination exceeds her journalistic skills, and the resulting article is strongest in upholding the tradition of factual error, misrepresentation and fabrication that is a common feature of writing when the goal is to romanticize the arts, artists or artisans.

While I could fill up the page with a long list of examples, I simply point out that the article begins with a fabricated flight of fancy (our front door is neither "hand carved" nor "antique") and ends with a misattributed quote (my wife, not my daughter, is the source of "dancing on the music"). The majority of what is placed between these bookends is of similar quality and nature, being either erroneous, imaginatively created or a confusion of the few facts you do get right.

The article didn't even manage to get my relatively simple name correct. It is Bell, not Del. See what I mean?

While the accompanying photographs are flattering, and I thank you for that, I was genuinely shocked to see a picture of myself over a supposed "quote" that is a total fabrication, namely that "I know everything about the piano except how to play." Allow me to deal with the two parts of this absurd creation in reverse order.

1. The last sentence of the paragraph that begins with this fabrication is "To get into the school, he'd had to pass a difficult set of tests he calls 'the piano barrier.'" The piano barrier is labeled as

such by the school I graduated from — not by me — and is a degree requirement, not an entrance exam. If the exam is so difficult, how can it be that I don't know how to play? When asked, my standard response is that I play poorly, like so many other piano technicians. An overactive imagination is also evidenced in the preceding line, which describes me as a "rock star." While I did play in a band in the late 1970s, I never achieved "star" status — whatever that is — much less local notoriety.

2. I have never said and never will say, "I know everything about the piano." The piano is a far too complex set of changing relationships and a field that offers an opportunity for lifelong — and I emphasize lifelong — learning. I don't think anyone can know everything about the piano, and there are many whose knowledge exceeds mine greatly.

I repeat, I understand it is a common feature of this type of writing to be excessively creative, and was quite willing to let most of that stuff slide. But to have those arrogant and absurd words put into my mouth is distasteful, offensive and a complete misrepresentation of myself and my attitude about my work.

I have no desire to appear ungrateful and truly appreciate your efforts to give us more exposure, but I would also appreciate whatever you can do in terms of retractions, corrections and apologies. One of the major assets in any business is reputation, and I have no desire to be known as the idiot who thinks he "know(s) everything about the piano."

ROBERT BELL

THE NEW FILLMORE

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Connecting the neighborhood

Every month, 20,000 copies of the New Fillmore are delivered to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and encouragement and welcome your ideas and suggestions.

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LOCALS ABROAD

In Hungary, an Ambassador from Pacific Heights

► FROM PAGE ONE

High-level working visits are a normal part of embassy life and during last year's opening of the Lantos Institute, Congressman Tom Lantos's extended family all came to celebrate in Hungary. The Lantos Institute inauguration coincided with the unveiling by the Hungarian government of a large statue of former President Ronald Reagan.

Reagan is looked on with great admiration by the Central Europeans for his role in confronting the Soviet Union. His legacy — along with that of Pope John Paul II and Mikhail Gorbachev — is considered instrumental in ending the Cold War.

Our upstairs neighbor back in San Francisco, avid Democratic supporter Susie Tompkins Buell, was visiting when the new Reagan statue was unveiled — an event also attended by those on the other end of the political spectrum, including former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, former Attorney General Ed Meese and former California Governor Pete Wilson. We kept a close eye on our neighbor, but everyone peacefully broke bread together in the ornate halls of the Parliament building.

I was regularly in Hungary from 1989 to 1991 covering the fall of communism in the region for *Newsweek* magazine, then moved to the Soviet Union in 1991 and stayed there for a year. I quickly learned to join any queue I spotted. In a place where goods were scarce, a queue was usually a good sign there was something to be had at the front of it. Unfortunately, the habit has not died; I still find myself slowing down to jump into any queue in Hungary, no matter how long.



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with Markos and Eleni Tsakopoulos-Kounalakis.

Everywhere there are signs of the communist past, from the massive apartment blocks to the unexploded bomb uncovered in front of the U.S. Embassy left over from World War II. Sometimes we find ourselves in Monument Park, where only Stalin's boots remain on a pedestal that once held a mighty statue. Even the types of movies we watch are not likely to be found at the Clay Theater. Our kids watch training films produced by the Hungarian secret police in the 1960s — black and white footage teaching citizens and agents how to spy on each other.

While our time here is fascinating and the work

demanding, at every turn I am reminded that San Francisco is far away, and we still have moments of longing for home.

Our kids' names are on the children's playground tiles at Alta Plaza Park; Calvary Presbyterian Church is where their scout troops meet; and film director Christopher Columbus's house on Jackson Street is a place they approached with trepidation during their Halloween trick-or-treating.

The Mayflower Market at Fillmore and Jackson was a local touchstone for us. Three brothers from Greece run the market and we would regularly go down to the store so our kids could chat in Greek with our local grocers, who were always looking out for our guys as they grew up.

I used to ride my Ducati motorcycle all year in San Francisco, a great way to get around town without ever worrying about parking. I had it shipped over to Hungary, but now it stays in a garage about half the year, since the winters are a lot colder than at home.

The neighborhood around upper Fillmore Street is a glorious and privileged one. We have been able to live in Pacific Heights because of the opportunities America and California made possible for me and my immigrant family. This type of social mobility and educational opportunity is available in few places in the world and nowhere more than in our country. You see this to a greater degree when you live overseas.

During our tour of service in Europe, we have experienced a change of views, but we have not lost sight of our love for our friends and neighbors and our life back home.

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Evening Prayer: 5:00 pm (daily)

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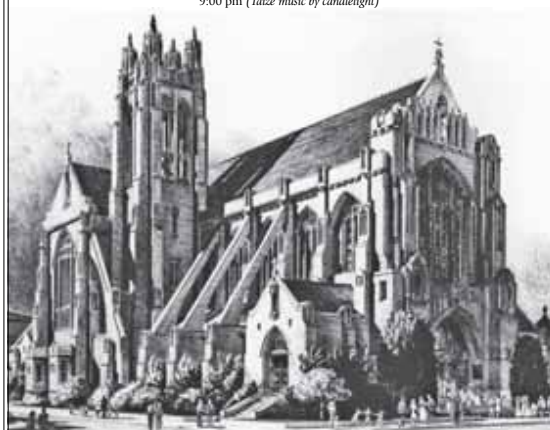
Mondays & Wednesdays: 8:30 am & 6:00 pm • **First Fridays:** 9:00 pm (Sign-up required)

Sunday Masses:

Saturday evening: 5:30 pm (Vigil), 7:30 am (Quiet), 9:30 am (Family), 11:30 am (Solemn)

1:30 pm (St. Jude Pilgrim Mass in Spanish), 5:30 pm (Contemporary music)

9:00 pm (Taizé music by candlelight)



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Come Join Our Advent Celebrations!

Advent Lessons & Carols. Sunday, December 2
7:30 pm, Church Nave

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (A Holy Day of Obligation)
Saturday, December 8, Masses: 8:00 am, 9:30 am
Vigil Mass on Friday, December 7, 5:30 pm, 7:30 pm

Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrations. Sunday, December 9
1:30 pm Mass (en español), Church Nave
Reception follows in the Parish Hall

Parish Advent Party & Caroling. Thursday, December 13
6:00 pm, Parish Hall

Family Christmas Pageant. Sunday, December 16,
3:30 pm, Church Nave

Annual Christmas Concert. Monday, December 17, 7:30 pm
Church Nave, St. Dominic's Solemn Mass Choir with strings & harp

Advent Twilight Retreat. Tuesday, December 18, 7:30 pm
Lady Chapel (Preparation for Confession)

Confessions. Wednesday, December 19
12:00 Noon – 1:00 pm & 7:30 – 9:00 pm, Church Nave

Come Join Our Christmas 2012 Celebrations!

Christmas Eve. Monday, December 24

Advent Masses: 6:30 am & 8:00 am

Christmas Eve Vigil Masses:

4:00 pm (Mass for Families with Toddlers)

6:00 pm (Mass for Families with Children)

11:15 pm Carol service followed by Solemn Mass at Midnight

No confessions today

Christmas Day. Tuesday, December 25

Masses at 7:30 am (Quiet Mass with Carols),

9:30 am (Parish Mass with Carols),

11:30 am (Solemn Mass with Choral Music), 1:30 pm (en español)

No confessions today and no Masses at 5:30 pm or 9:00 pm

Solemnity of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

Sunday, December 30

Masses at 7:30 am, 9:30 am, 11:30 am, 1:30 pm, 5:30 pm & 9:00 pm

Vigil Masses on Saturday, December 29, 5:30 pm

Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God

Tuesday, January 1, 2013

(A Holy Day of Obligation) Masses at 9:30 am & 5:30 pm

Vigil Mass on Monday, December 31, 5:30 pm

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CRIME WATCH

Methamphetamine, Probation Violation Fillmore and Clay Streets October 29, 3 a.m.

Officers on patrol spotted a man crossing the street outside the crosswalk and stopped to advise him of the violation. The man was on probation, so the officers conducted a search. After they found a baggie containing methamphetamine in one of his pockets, he was placed under arrest.

Driving Under the Influence Fillmore and Post Streets November 2, 2:30 a.m.

Two officers observed a car stopped in the middle of the intersection. Officers smelled a strong odor of alcohol on the driver's breath and observed that his eyelids drooped. Then they saw three open beer cans on the back seat. They asked the driver to exit the vehicle. He responded, "When I'm done with you, you'll be working in Alaska." The officers continued their investigation, conducting a field sobriety test. When the driver failed, he was placed under arrest. A computer check revealed he was on probation for a past arrest involving driving under the influence. There was also a court order mandating that his vehicle have an ignition interlock device, and he was driving with a suspended license. He was booked at county jail.

Possession of Fraudulent Checks Resisting Arrest Van Ness Avenue and California Street November 2, 12:20 p.m.

A bank called police concerning a man attempting to pass a forged check. When officers arrived, bank employees advised them the suspect had run into the restroom. When the officers opened the restroom door, the suspect ran out, pushing past them. After a struggle, the officers subdued him. Investigating, officers learned the suspect had opened two separate bank accounts using false names. He was booked on 10 felony charges.

Possession of Stolen Property Resisting Arrest Franklin and Elm Streets November 3, 9 p.m.

Officers received a call concerning a man who was peering inside vehicles, and set up surveillance. While they watched, a man shattered the window of a parked car, then reached inside and pulled out a backpack. The suspect walked away from the vehicle, carrying the backpack over his shoulder. When the officers pursued him, the suspect ran. Gradually the officers caught up to him; one officer injured his hand while taking him into custody. The suspect was 16 years old.

Petty Theft Webster Street and Geary Boulevard November 5, 4:30 p.m.

A security guard at Safeway saw a man putting packages of meat in his backpack along with several candy bars, deodorant and rolls of toilet paper. Then he walked out of the store. The security guard followed the suspect, detained him and called the police. The stolen items were valued at \$89.44. The man was cited, given a court date and released.

Petty Theft Eddy and Laguna Streets November 9, 8:30 p.m.

A woman was riding a Muni bus when her iPhone was snatched out of her hand. An off-duty officer on his way home heard the description of the suspect on his police radio. Soon afterward, the officer saw a man matching the description walking with four other individuals. The off-duty officer called for assistance. Responding officers stopped the individuals, and one man dropped the backpack he was carrying. During their investigation, the officers located an iPhone in the backpack. They were unable to unlock the phone and the suspect said he did not know the pass code. He claimed that he had found the phone. The suspect, who was 15 years old, was listed in the system as a runaway. He was booked at the Youth Guidance Center.

Possession of Switchblade and Narcotics Paraphernalia Van Ness Avenue and Hemlock Street November 13, 1 a.m.

Plainclothes officers came upon a fight between a man and a woman. The male suspect approached the officers in their unmarked car and shouted profanities at them. The man told the officers he had a switchblade in his pants pocket. When the officer seized the knife from the man's pocket, he felt what he believed to be a meth pipe, and he took this as evidence. The man had no identification, so the officers transported him to Northern Station for further investigation.

Parole Violation Laguna and Eddy Streets November 15, 3:30 p.m.

A man who saw an individual harassing people at a bus stop flagged down the police. The officers approached the suspect, who appeared to be intoxicated. A computer check revealed he was on parole. The parole agent informed them that the suspect has a "no drinking" clause as part of his release condition. The parole agent advised the officers to revoke his parole. The officers then placed the suspect under arrest.

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RETAIL REPORT

Prana Brings Yogawear, More Born in a Southern California garage, now on Fillmore

THOSE FAMILIAR with the Prana label probably associate it with the environmentally conscious yoga apparel found in many sporting goods stores.

But during the last 15 years, the company has expanded so that Prana is no longer just for the pretzel-minded — and its new store at 1928 Fillmore Street offers prime evidence of that.



Prana's new store is located at 1928 Fillmore.

There's a small section on the upper level dedicated to yoga pants, tops, mats, towels and

stores — and the ubiquitous-again headbands. But the rest of the shop is stocked chockful of cozy clothing perfect for San Francisco winters and summers: cords and jeans, sweater dresses, coats and jackets, knit hats, scarves and sweaters fashioned from washable wool.

"Prana makes interesting clothing — and does it as sustainably as possible, using fair trade factories," according to store manager Kai Shane, who says the company chose Fillmore for its sixth store after being beckoned by the "community and human feeling" of the street.

The company was born in 1992 in Carlsbad, California, in the garage of Pam and Beaver Theodosakis. After being intro-

duced to climbing and yoga, the couple was inspired to create a line of clothing and accessories for yogis and climbers looking for functional, comfortable activewear with an eye toward sustainability.

Fillmore resident Chuck Smith was the store's first customer. He reports:

Asayogastudent, my interest was piqued as soon as I saw the signs go up a few months ago touting the new arrival. And as I walked by on the morning

of November 7, the windows were finally unpapered, revealing a store filled with much more than yoga clothes and mats. As I pulled on the door, a gentleman said, "11 a.m." I had breakfast, then headed back.

Prana is one of those inviting stores where you just want to hang out. So I did. Megan, a friendly sales associate, helped me, explaining with great knowledge the details of each piece I tried.

As I checked out, Kai, Megan and another employee gathered around and told me I was their very first customer. Very cool. After a commemorative photo, I was on my way.

But I'll be back. Besides, my yogi wife hasn't seen it yet.



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In a Tiny Shop, a Shrine to Japanese Culture, History

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARINA WOUDEMAN

HERE'S BEEN A San Francisco resident for more than 30 years, but Jiro Nakamura still makes a yearly trek home to Japan to search for treasures for his shop on Fillmore Street.

The treasures include dolls — crafted hundreds of years earlier in many cases — and puppets, tea ceremony gear and kimonos fit for all occasions. They are offered at Narumi, a tiny shop at 1902 Fillmore that Nakamura named for a bakery his parents started in Japan.

He says he prefers antique Japanese dolls because they contain far more detail, especially in the hands and faces.

"In old times, they had more time to make each piece," Nakamura says.

Shortly after settling into the city decades ago, Nakamura, now 61, studied fine art at San Francisco's Academy of Art.

Previously home to a furniture store and a record shop, the space on Fillmore was transformed when Nakamura took it over in 1981 and gave it his own flair. He painted the portrait of the elegant Japanese woman who stands in the front entrance. He sews the decorative obi fabric constructions used as wall art and in some of his displays. And he makes the stained glass creations that playfully reflect the light in the shop's front window.

"I wanted to put something I made in my store," he says.

In addition, Nakamura also cleans and makes any necessary repairs on the dolls he sells and — when he's not in the shop — leads classes in the traditional Japanese tea ceremony from his home a few blocks away.



Jiro Nakamura, owner of Narumi at 1902 Fillmore, also leads classes in the traditional Japanese tea ceremony.

Three nights a week a small group of students take part in an elaborate three-hour lesson in how to prepare both the thick and thin Matcha tea traditionally used in the ceremony.

Students also learn how to make flower arrangements, to put the required utensils together properly and to perform all the ceremonial rituals.

Jay Cowan and Kotaro Sugimoto, owners of Kohshi, a shop specializing in aromatherapy and essential oils in Japantown, are both Nakamura's students.

Cowan says it was curiosity and appreciation for the culture that brought him to the tea ceremony classes.

"I've been to Asia many times, but never got the chance to involve myself in the tea ceremonies," he says.

As a former member of the military, Cowan says he appreciates the structure as well as the beauty in the event.

"Like military marching, there's a right way to do it," Cowan says. "When the teacher shows the right way to do it — oh, that is so cool. And when you get the right Matcha tea, your senses really prick up."

Nakamura gets the tea, and the sweets served with it, from Japan.

Sugimoto also looks forward to the one or two nights he spends at Nakamura's tea ceremonies each week. Having studied with Nakamura for four years, he often helps assist the newer students, yet he says he still learns from the process himself.

Sugimoto and Cowan say their teacher's home resembles his store, with Japanese antiques sprinkled throughout.

It can be hard to part with some of the great things he finds, Nakamura admits, especially since Japan is running out of its greatest gems.

"So much went all over the world," Nakamura says.

The same is true in the neighborhood, Nakamura says. He has watched as Japanese-owned businesses have disappeared from the neighborhood over the years as their owners retire. Where there was once a fish market, a bakery, a butcher shop and a sushi-to-go restaurant, among others, now it's just him and his antiques.

BY PATRICIA UNTERMAN

AS AN immersive traveler, I adopt the diet of everywhere I go. When I get back to San Francisco I actually feel homesick for the food, the air, the pace, of the places I visit. This happened when I recently returned from villages and provincial cities in southeastern Turkey along the Syrian border. I just wanted to eat Turkish.

So I walked over to Troya on Fillmore, the new branch of a spare, stylish restaurant that identifies itself as Turkish-Mediterranean. I adjusted my hopes, knowing that I was not going to find the same kind of rustic Turkish cooking I had fallen so hard for. But what I ate at Troya delighted me. The hospitable spirit felt the same and the kitchen embraced vegetables, spices, yogurt and lamb. California-style leafy green salads that I never saw in Turkey were on the menu, of course, and some fuselony items like dolmas stuffed with pre-braised lamb.

When I caught a glimpse of a little Turkish woman in a head scarf and apron in the partially open kitchen at the back, who looked like the women who cooked for me in their homes in small villages near Antalya and Gaziantep, bingo. The accommodating Turkish wait staff at Troya told me all the things she prepared and I started right there.

It turns out that this woman has a delicate hand with pastries and dough as evidenced by her Anatolian flatbreads (\$11). Troya's lahmacun, the ubiquitous Turkish-style pizza, was one of the best I've tasted, a small, thin round of tender, almost puff pastry-light dough evenly

paved with a succulent topping of minced beef, roasted peppers, onions, garlic and Turkish chile. Another flatbread, folded over a velvety filling of smoky roasted eggplant and fresh white cheese, is also a must order.

As a dumpling lover, I can't resist manti, small meat-stuffed dumplings, a dish constantly served in eastern Turkey and throughout Central Asia. Troya's thumb-nail sized manti (\$17), made of toothsome, hand-rolled dough plump with onion-scented minced beef filling, come swathed in warm yogurt drizzled with spice-sizzled butter — Turkish genius.

Vibrant meze from Troya's western

chef, Philip Busacco, a six-year veteran of Terzo, can also constitute a meal. Start with Turkish red lentil soup (\$6), a delicious puree enlivened with a drizzle of olive oil and mint and a squeeze of lemon. (Busacco uses fresh mint; it's better with dried mint and Maras pepper heated in sizzling butter). Order dill-scented Persian cucumber salad (\$7); tender zucchini fritters with minted yogurt (\$8); and warm green beans in an aromatic sweet and sour sauce with raisins and a bowl of yogurt on the side (\$8). Always include a big plate of roasted cauliflower (\$8) fragrantly coated with charred spices, dark Urfa chile flakes and scallions.



At Troya, the Turkish woman in a head scarf has a delicate hand with pastries and dough.

A Taste of Turkey

The authentic flavors of Troya on Fillmore

Then have a little plate of Adana kebabs (\$10), very soft, juicy, minced lamb with a perky fennel salad and yogurt sauce. A bigger plate of marinated lamb kebabs (\$17) are equally juicy, skewered with fire-blackened onions and zucchini, accompanied with smoky eggplant puree. A huge terracotta casserole of moussaka (\$17) can be shared. It's a dreamy dish with layers of aromatically seasoned minced lamb, satiny eggplant and creamy bechamel.

I end every meal with baklava, so crisp, light, nutty and buttery, some of the best I've ever tasted anywhere. Even if you think you don't like baklava, try it here. Guess who makes it — the Turkish woman. Troya's kunefe, layers of buttery shredded filo and melted white cheese baked in the oven to order and sweetened at the end with sugar syrup, is a restrained and excellent version — if you haven't been spoiled by the one I had in the market in Antalya. Western and eastern palates equally will like a strong coffee-flavored chocolate custard served in a mini-mason jar topped with labneh, a dollop of thick yogurt.

Drink moderately priced Turkish wine. Finish with mint tea in glasses. And count yourself lucky that you can get an authentic taste of this lush cuisine right here in the neighborhood.

Troya, at 2125 Fillmore (between Sacramento and California), is open daily for lunch and dinner. Call 563-1000 or visit troyas.com for more information.

Neighborhood resident Patricia Unterman has been a restaurant critic, chef and food writer in San Francisco for more than 30 years. Subscribe to her newsletter at untermanfood.com.



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99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall

At least — plus wine and liquor at a re-envisioned corner store

ALES UNLIMITED, the tiny neighborhood shop on the corner of Webster and Jackson, stocks more than 900 beers and ales on its shelves and in its coolers. And owners Steve and Betty Smith don't cater to the couch potato crowd or the party-throwers who buy six-packs of a mass-manufactured bland brand for backyard bacchanalia.

The couple would much rather sell a single 12-ounce bottle of Rigor Mortis ABT, inspired by beer made by Belgian Trappist monks and brewed only once a year. Steve will recommend that you slowly savor, not quaff, this barely bitter beer that is intensely malty with a complex sweetness of chocolate, caramel, red fruit and spice. The cost is \$6.95 for a beer scoring 99 percent from ratebeer.com. His counsel is on the house.

Ales Unlimited is more than a Never Never Land for passionate lovers of rare ales and craft beers. While 80 percent of the inventory is devoted to limited production domestic and foreign brews, much of the store is filled with unusual wines you won't find in most other liquor stores. And some of the stock is the more popular premium spirits and one-of-a-kind American bourbons, ryes, gins and Scotch whiskeys in unique sizes. Example: The alcohose sells a half-pint and a "tenth" — 375 ml — of Grey Goose vodka for someone who might want a short shot before the cocktail hour.

And here's something that could take the edge off a tough day or make an unforgettable gift: a fifth of Death's



Door gin made from wild juniper berries, coriander and fennel, priced at \$39.95. At 94 proof, garnished with a poisoned olive, a chilled martini could find its way into the next James Bond script as the perfect final cocktail for his next archenemy's last supper.

"A customer walks in here and wants something unique, rare or very difficult to find," Steve Smith says.

That pretty much describes the stock of the shop itself. But only recently has it had any personality. From what Smith has unearthed from city records, the 900-square-foot retail space was built in 1900 as part of a structure that includes a Victorian home and four flats. All are still standing; the Smiths live in one of the flats.

He contends the space is the oldest existing corner store in the area and says it opened as the Pacific Heights Market around 1920. A sepia-tinted photo displayed inside the front door shows two stout women standing in front of canned goods and behind bushel barrels piled high with fruit.

When the Smiths bought the space three years ago, Steve says it was in a shabby state, a "visual thorn in everyone's side in the neighborhood." And back then, the new entrepreneurs had no real retailing experience.

"We had lived in Dublin for 12 years where I was setting up call centers for Gateway Computers," he says. "Then I was importing wheels and suspension systems from Europe to the U.S. for Mercedes, Audi and BMW building and modifying show cars."

He adds: "One day we asked ourselves what we could do that was different, and started looking around to buy a little store."

Originally, Betty Smith thought the Webster and Jackson location would make a good neighborhood coffee shop, but Steve disagreed. "Why would we want to go up against Starbucks and all the other coffee shops down on Fillmore?" he asked. Another idea was rejuvenating and upgrading the grocery store, stocking it with more imported foods and delicacies that would appeal to the appetites of sophisticated neighbors. Smith liked the



thought of catering to a well-traveled clientele but was wary. "When we lived in Europe, corner markets were always going down the drain," he says. And having Mollie Stone's, Whole Foods and Trader Joe's not far away wasn't exactly comforting.

"But when you have a great neighborhood, you listen to your neighbors and they had been so neglected for so long, we decided to keep it as a grocery store and upgrade the quality of everything," Smith says. Striking up conversations with customers, the Smiths asked for suggestions of what they would like to see on the shelves.

"I can tell you they weren't asking for Budweiser," he says. "They wanted Belgian beers and, of course, German beers — maybe because the German Consulate is just up the street."

Globetrotting neighbors would come home and ask the grocers if they could find a delightful drink they had in Heidelberg or Hawaii. It dawned on them that most of the requests were libational, especially small-batch ales and

beers rather than canned, frozen, packaged foods. Then the light bulb — make it a klieg light — went on.

"We realized then it was all or nothing and focused on nothing but specialty brands — and only the rarest of the rare ales, beers, wines and liquors," he says. The only foods that survived the cut were items that could be speared on a toothpick or floated in a cocktail.

The Smiths transformed 2398 Webster into an ale emporium, with its 15-foot ceiling, two new gleaming chrome and glass coolers and handsome wooden shelves. The store is festooned with discreet neon signs for different ales that would make any collector salivate. Aisles are narrow but easily navigated. And Steve and Betty are on the job seven days a week, skillfully answering questions on ale and food and wine pairings and pointing out which whiskeys would make a velvety smooth Manhattan.

Ales Unlimited's customers are also good sources for tips on what to quaff.

"I started out drinking Coors Light in college," says

Dave Mickle, a recent visitor to the shop. His palate these days is quite discriminating and he said the best ale in the store for the money is Grimbergen Double Ale, brewed in Belgium and sold here for \$2.99.

For those thirsty for a stout, Old Rasputin Russian Imperial Stout brewed by North Coast Brewery in Fort Bragg is \$2.49. Or for something hoppy and malty, try St. Feuillien Triple at \$2.99 for a nine liter bottle. But check first to make sure it's on the shelf; another customer drives in regularly from Sacramento to stock up.

Christine Gardner, who walked in purposefully one recent afternoon, raves about the wine selection. "This is the only place in town where I've found a wine I really love to drink," she says. Her discovery? The Stuhlmuller Vineyards estate chardonnay from Alexander Valley, \$22.95.

Too bad the Smiths can't squeeze in a couple of stools and section off a mini tasting area. As it happens, they have the same idea. And so do a couple hundred neighbors who've recently signed a petition lobbying for just that. Stay tuned.

At Ales Unlimited, 80 percent of the inventory is devoted to limited production domestic and foreign beers. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIK ANDERSON



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BOOKS

Cheese Wiz Takes on a Classic

By LAURA WERLIN

ON ANY given morning, I can usually be spotted sprinting somewhere in the neighborhood. As the author of six books about cheese, exercise is the non-negotiable part of the daily regimen. Besides, jogging takes me past houses, gardens and other local features I wouldn't otherwise see.

So just after landing an assignment to write a book showcasing 50 recipes for mac & cheese nearly a year ago, off I sprinted — armed with a shopping list a mile long of getting-started mac & cheese ingredients. Writing the recipes before attempting them allows me to have a framework from which to operate, not to mention a shopping list. Once in the kitchen, the recipes invariably get tweaked or outright scrapped.

Unless you're Rachael Ray, the advance money cookbook authors get is usually a pretty paltry sum. So I had to be judicious about where to shop for which ingredients.

Safeway became the go-to for pasta. ("Club card customers! Two for one!") Whole Foods offered the needed variety of cheeses and produce and Mollie Stone's was a best friend because it was always nearby when I forgot something — which was often. The bread for my breadcrumbs mostly came from La Boulange, as did the cannelles to provide a sweet break. And the myriad cafes along Fillmore Street provided safe havens and lots of tea while I was slogging through the text and recipe-writing.



Laura Werlin's new book on mac & cheese, born in the neighborhood, is simple yet playful.

But home is where the oven is, and there began the real work. All those words on paper had to translate to great-tasting food. Invariably, I would schlepp bags of groceries up my stairs, pretend to organize their contents and get to work. That meant putting pots of water on the stove to boil for the pasta, opening cartons of milk and cream for the sauces, grating pounds of cheese and prepping the rest of the ingredients that would make a genuine 50 recipe book, rather than one recipe 50 ways.

Because my sister Andi works a few blocks away at the Mt. Zion campus of UCSF, she and her colleagues at the Cancer Resource Center received many of the spoils from my experiments. In return, their mandate was to answer the simple question: "Did you like it?" With my sister leading the charge, they steadfastly provided invaluable observations that informed the final recipes. An official recipe-tester did the heavy lifting.

In four short weeks, *Mac & Cheese, Please!* was born. But finishing the recipes and the accompanying text was just the first part of the process. After that, there were innumerable backs and forths with the editor, photo shoots with San Francisco-based photographer Maren Caruso

and countless t-crossings and i-dottings.

At last, my new baby has arrived. And as with parenting, it takes a village. So it is that the Fillmore village helped birth this simple yet playful little book by providing all the provisions any mac & cheese lover — and fortunate resident — could want.



Tips for great mac & cheese

What I've learned:

- Use cheeses that you love to eat on their own, preferably ones that have a lot of flavor and melt well. A flavorless cheese won't taste better when it's melted.
- Use a variety of cheeses for different flavors and textures. Certain cheeses like blue, goat and brie become creamy but they never become oozy. So think about combining a good melter like Gruyère or Fontina with a creamy cheese like goat or blue for maximum cheesiness and texture.
- Salt the pasta water — a lot. Cooking pasta in unsalted or undersalted water results in bland, useless carbs. Instead, add plenty of salt — about one tablespoon for every three quarts of water — and you'll find your mac & cheese has a lot more flavor overall.
- Finally, make sure the pasta size is small. Think small elbow macaroni, small or medium shells and the like. If it's larger than that, the pasta will become the focus. Great mac & cheese should always be about the cheese.

— LAURA WERLIN

Helping Answer the Recurring Question: What's for Dinner?

By JOANNE WEIR

WHILE gathering fodder for my 17th cookbook, I decided to canvass people and find out whether they like to cook — and if not, why not? I kept hearing the same answer over and over again: "I don't cook because I don't have confidence."

As a chef, I take a lot for granted, but I was shocked to find out that people thought the word "temper" had only to do with anger and "ribbon" was something tied around a present.

How to boil an egg

For a perfect hard-cooked egg with a golden center: Bring a pot of water to a boil. Lower the eggs into the water and boil for exactly 8 minutes. Remove and place in a bowl of ice water. After 5 minutes, remove the eggs and crack the shells against a work surface. Place the eggs back in the water for 5 minutes. Peel the eggs. See? Perfect!

— JOANNE WEIR

Most people don't go crazy thinking about what to make for breakfast or lunch; it's dinner that's the daily dilemma.

Even as a professional chef, I struggle with that issue. Like you, I'm incredibly busy. This year, I launched my own wine label, opened my first restaurant — Copita in Sausalito — created an iPad app, pre-

miered a new cooking show and started an online retail store via Open Sky. That's on top of cooking classes in my kitchen, culinary journeys to the Mediterranean and writing for magazines.

But the question still arises: What's for dinner? I want something that's easy, delicious, healthy and doesn't break the bank.

If your own business leaves you in this quandary, you might find the help you need in *Cooking Confidence: Weeknight Dinners Made Simple*, just published by Taunton Press. The book is filled with 100

recipes simple enough to make for a home meal on Tuesday night but "wow" enough to serve for company on Saturday. For every recipe I've added wine suggestions, as well as suggestions on what to serve as a simple first course and for dessert.

Importantly, there are lots of photographs that take you through the steps in many cooking techniques —

the idea being that once you master a new technique and have success making a new recipe, you realize there's no reason to be intimidated. You'll have the confidence to try another recipe. You'll soon discover that cooking isn't rocket science.

Start by stocking your pantry and wine



In her new book and public television series shot here in the neighborhood, Joanne Weir offers both recipes and techniques.

cellar. The book offers a fun list of items to include. We've got some great places in the neighborhood to shop like Whole Foods, Mollie Stone's, Vino and D&M Wine & Liquor. You can also order some of my newly released Joanne Weir Wines online at shop.joanne weir.com and have them delivered right to your door.

Then get yourself into the kitchen, tie an apron around your waist and try cooking

something you might never have cooked before.

I've wrapped up all the confidence-building tips, tricks and recipes for making delicious home-cooked meals into this book. With this book in hand in your own kitchen, it will be like having me by your side, whispering in your ear, encouraging you, guiding you — and giving you confidence every step of the way.

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The Story of the Movies, By an Eminent Film Critic

By MARK MITCHELL

DAVID THOMSON'S *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* is considered a must-have reference by almost all serious movie buffs. But Thomson is more than just a film critic, more even than a film historian. His works include a biography of novelist Laurence Sterne, an account of the Scott Antarctic expedition and a brooding meditation on the state of Nevada, along with a few novels and some autobiographical works. In his ambitious *Have You Seen...* Thomson presents his take on 1,000 films, pointing out the wonderful ones like a favorite uncle showing you something shiny.

Born in London in 1941, but a neighborhood resident for the last three decades, he still speaks with a soft English accent. Farrar, Straus and Giroux has just published Thomson's 23rd book, *The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies* — a good time to catch up on his ruminations about life, film and the future.

How did you find yourself living near Fillmore Street? My wife, Lucy Gray, got a job in San Francisco. We had resolved to move to California and we thought that it would be Los Angeles. She came out ahead of me, looking for a job, and went to L.A. first, but nothing clicked. Then she called about a job up here, and got it. She called me and said, "Would it be okay if it was

San Francisco?" — which is a city I'd never seen — but I said, "Sure." Everyone says San Francisco is a wonderful place to live.

Your newest book, *The Big Screen: The Story of the Movies*, is both a reference book and a history of the movies. Is it meant to be read straight through? There's no way to tell how someone will read a book these days. And it's about more than just the movies: It's from Muybridge to Facebook. It's a book about media, really, through moving imagery. It's meant to be read through. But once you get the hang of it, you can read this book how you like.

In the past, movies came out and then went away. Now everybody can get everything on demand. How does this affect how we look at the history of movies? There was a time when you had to wait years, literally, to see certain movies because they didn't really make old movies available. The classic example, for me, is *Citizen Kane*, which didn't make itself available to me until 1955. And looking back on it, while it was frustrating in those days, it was also a trade-off. There was a kind of treasure hunt to it, because you kept your eyes open for it and we were listening for news of it.

But in recent years, we have been in a position to see nearly anything we might want. If you use places like Le Video and Netflix, and you have friends with collections — which is a very valuable asset,

because some things go out of print — you can get just about everything.

But of course the trouble is, you see it in a different form. You see it on your television set; maybe you see it on your computer. It's a different size image, it's a different quality image, and it's a whole difference between the image and the image. So yes, we're blessed in one sense. But we have a problem — and the problem is only going to get greater, because it's getting harder and harder to see good prints, 35 millimeter prints, of the classics on a big screen. So you get to my age and you say to yourself, "This may be the last time I get to see this film on a big screen." Because you know that the

distributors want to put things on digital. So we lose and we gain.

Does watching a film at home, on whatever type of device, differ from the communal experience of a movie theater? Well, it's no longer the awesome experience it once was. When I was growing up, you often saw movies in large, decorated theaters. You were packed in the dark with a group of strangers and the picture was as big as a house and you experienced the powerful feeling that it was out of your control. The movie would roll over you. There was a magnificence that overawed me.

Now you are bigger than the image. The



light is not reflected light, it is light coming directly toward you and that's a big difference. And you are in control of the experience, in control of the device. There will be interruptions, simple household interruptions. You can pause the movie. Many people just skip to the scene they want to see and hop over the rest of the movie.

But technology is bound to change. You can try to resist it, you can say, "I don't want this technology." At the beginning of the talkies people said, "We don't need the sound; the pictures are so expressive as they are." Of course, the marketplace wasn't having any of that.

Are there any movies that you would say have to be experienced on the big screen to be appreciated? When you see *Psycho* with an audience it is scarier, because the rest of the audience is scared. It is also funnier and more tender. But any movie you see, if you have the option, see it on a big screen with an audience. Certainly anything by Terrence Malick or Fritz Lang. Of course, the opportunity to prefer that is running out on us.

We obviously have movie stars these days — you have written your own love letter to Nicole Kidman in a biography of her — but not in the same way that we had in the days of the studio system. Back then you could think of a part as being a "Jimmy Stewart part" or a "Bette Davis role." Do any of our contemporary stars have a distinctive screen persona? No, I don't think so. Back in those days, stars existed as the property of the studio, which thought of them as types of automobiles. Being your own make and model seemed to be the definition of stardom. When the studio system broke down, the stars got much more control; many of them became

producers, which they never were before. And each movie became a new one-off. It became much harder to have a character or type carry over from one movie to the next.

Today, George Clooney has achieved a certain "George Clooney-ness" that he can slip into. Tom Cruise used to have that, but he has gotten a bit too old for it. But there is no way anyone is going to be like, say, John Wayne again.

Is television using up talent, or is it educating that talent? Television is much closer to the studio system. Actors work long days on tight schedules with the same core of writers and the same crew. A lot of things we've seen on TV lately — in the last 10 years or a little more — are more entertaining, more human, more grown-up than what we see in the movies.

Do you ever get to turn off your inner critic and just watch a picture? I try, but it's hard, because if I get really interested in a picture, I want to write about it. That's the nice thing about flipping the dial on the television and coming across an old movie you haven't seen in 10 or 20 years. You get to just sit back and see what you remember.

I am a big fan of your novels such as *Suspects* and *Silver Light*. Any more novels on the way? I hope to write more fiction than non-fiction as I go along. I have written five or six fiction screenplays, but none of them have been produced. It still may happen. The only screenplay of mine that has made it to the screen is the documentary about the making of *Gone With the Wind*. I prefer to write books, though. When I write something, I like to see it, and it's nice to see it on a page.



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2211 California St #400	1	1	1	616	26	11/14/2012	499,000	545,000
1800 Washington St #415	1	1	1	681	19	10/19/2012	579,000	607,000
1730 Broderick St #1	1	1	1	828	37	11/9/2012	549,000	610,000
2999 California St #42	1	1	2	989	55	11/9/2012	689,000	685,000
1817 California St #304	1	1.5	1		28	11/7/2012	599,000	708,000
2801 Jackson St #301	1	1	1	1139	187	11/2/2012	729,000	710,000
2990 Jackson St #3	1	1	1		14	11/14/2012	749,000	766,000
3011 Jackson St #1	2	1	1	1000	35	10/26/2012	799,000	901,000
3295 Clay St #4	2	1	1	1132	44	10/26/2012	949,000	900,000
1900 Steiner St #A	2	2	1	1278	35	11/15/2012	899,000	935,000
2200 Sacramento St #607	2	2	1	1000	67	11/8/2012	1,100,000	1,100,000
3563 Sacramento St	3	2	1	1485	56	10/26/2012	1,185,000	1,300,000
2206 Vallejo St	2	2	3	1736	21	10/26/2012	1,295,000	1,320,000
3049 California St	3	2	2		21	10/31/2012	1,195,000	1,335,000
2612 Post St	3	3.5	1	2061	33	11/14/2012	1,495,000	1,495,000
2000 Baker St	3	2.5	2	2334	11	10/31/2012	1,495,000	1,625,000
2170 Vallejo St #101	3	2	1	2145	41	11/14/2012	1,850,000	1,650,000
2847 Baker St	3	2	1	2101	61	11/14/2012	1,995,000	2,050,000
2462 Broadway	3	2.5	0	2896	100	11/9/2012	2,699,000	2,600,000
1940 Vallejo St #11	3	3.5	2		37	10/29/2012	4,995,000	5,500,000

Prices up 15 to 20% over last year

We are in what appears to be a significant and continuing upward trending market, with October sales practically leaping tall buildings in a single bound. During the past year, there has been a 15 to 20 percent increase in median home prices in the neighborhood, and historically low inventory continues to drive prices upward.

NEW LISTINGS: Not new, but an interesting re-entry to the marketplace is the Heller mansion at 2020 Jackson, which originally came on the market in September 2011 for \$20 million, then became the 2012 Decorator Showcase house, and is now back on the market for \$14.9 million. This fully restored, grand mansion with iconic bay views in the hub of north side living delivers on every front. Single family home inventory is low after a busy fall market, exacerbated by the end-of-the-year slowdown in new listings.

For the entry level buyer, 360 Locust #3 offers a charming classic Edwardian two-bedroom TIC in Presidio Heights for \$660,000. The thoughtful upgrades, flexible floor plan and exceptional location make this a great value. The south-facing views from light-filled 1901 California #10 are exceptional. This centrally located, half-floor cooperative apartment is elegant and grand for just under \$1.3 million. Also noteworthy is 3353 Jackson, offered for \$2.8 million, with architect C. A. Meussdorffer's elegant execution and period detailing beautifully maintained. This full floor flat offers a good condo conversion opportunity for a buyer willing to go through the process.

— Data and commentary provided by MARIA MARCHETTI at Sotheby's International Realty. Contact her at maria@mariamarchetti.com or call 699-8008.



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BODY & SOUL

By CHRISTINE LUNDE

WORKING its way into the local fabric, Attention to Detail Barber Gallery on Sutter Street may soon rival sports bars as the hippest place for men to fraternize. Flat screen TVs broadcasting sports and news, generous servings of beer and champagne — and, of course, stylish cuts and shaves — make the shop at 2180 Sutter a convenient congregating place for clients of all ages.

On one recent afternoon, owner Anton Cura saw his youngest client, a 3-year-old blonde boy, walk by. He waved. A group of women pushing strollers yelled into the shop for stylist Ken El-Armin and he dashed out to say hello. The clientele is mostly male, and on this particular day friends are waiting, browsing through magazines, watching television and joining the conversation. The space is sleek and open, yet intimate enough to encourage conversation.

Cura is bringing back the golden age of the neighborhood barbershop. But Attention to Detail, which opened last year, is the spruced-up post-dot-com version. It doesn't look like a traditional barbershop because it's not; it's a hybrid between a place to get a haircut and a high-end salon.

"I had to think progressively and with the times — where everything in San Francisco is going," says Cura. "ATD is new and something progressive, and suitable to the audience here."

ATD is a one-stop shop where clients can come to get ready for a date, meeting or business trip. After a precision cut and shave, they can have their shirts pressed, call a car service and even buy one of Cura's



ATD owner Anton Cura is aiming to bring back the golden age of the local barbershop.

A Gentlemen's Club

Attention to Detail is more than a barbershop

socker squares or ties if they don't have time to run home. The black floors, chandeliers and leather chairs give off the modern aesthetic Cura says he derives from his own life and travels.

"I've been fortunate enough to bottle up my lifestyle and share it with my consumers," he says.

Too many times during his travels, he says, he's seen uncomfortable-looking men in salons who settle for a cut by someone who doesn't know how to use clippers and he's witnessed stylists who have no dialogue with their clients. He believes a barbershop should be like a gentlemen's club, which is

what he's bringing to San Francisco.

In addition to Cura, there are three other stylists on staff — Ken El-Armin, Armando Martinez and Brandon Dorsch, who he says all have the skills and professional experience to deliver the service his clients covet.

Cura grew up around the hair styling business; his mother is a retired beautician. But he says that unlike a lot of the guys in the business, he wasn't the one in high school who gave the football team haircuts. He grew up going to barbershops and enjoyed the experience of sitting in a chair and getting pampered.

"It's all about the experience. I don't believe in a haircut being a tax, or little kids dreading getting their hair cut," he says. "Getting your hair cut is a luxury and you should look forward to going, to hanging out with the guys."

Celebrity clients are not out of the ordinary at his shop. A Dodgers fan who's particularly boastful rolled up one day during spring season with an L.A. sticker proudly affixed on his car while Giants pitcher Sergio Romo was getting his hair cut. The fan, who usually makes his presence known, sat down across from Romo without uttering a word. The stylists played into it, asking him about the game, to his chagrin. Nothing is out of the realm of conversation here: politics, sports, women, business.

Attention to Detail stylist Brandon Dorsch specializes in men's cuts, but previously styled women's hair.

"My friends always ask me whose hair is harder to cut, men's or women's," Dorsch says. "If you give a woman a good blow out they're happy. But guys, they're hard. They're like 'Ooh, can you curve that out?'"









A month ago, Cura put up a barber pole to mark the shop's spot on Sutter. Business has picked up and people see the red and white stripes as an invitation to drop in.

"I didn't know what to expect when I opened a year and a half ago," he says. "I knew this was a good location in terms of my target consumer, but I didn't know how receptive the community would be. They've been great. I love what's happening over here. It makes me feel good."

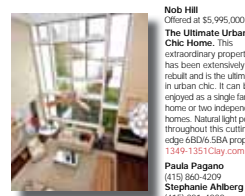
Attention To Detail is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Thursday until 8. For appointments, call 932-6904.

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Photo by Horace Chaffee

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