

SPA FOOD ELEVATED TO AN ART

BY ODOCHI IBE

THE
LUMINOUS
GLOW
OF THE
CUISINE AT
THE OJAI
VALLEY
INN



Pacific Yellowtail Crudo with Orange and Fennel is a highlight of the menu at Olivella, the signature restaurant at the Ojai Valley Inn.



Artfully placed lettuce leaves. Tomatoes carved into the shape of a rose. Chives propped up vertically. Let's face it, spa food isn't exactly known for being easy on the eyes or the palette. But 80 miles north of Los Angeles, is a spiritual oasis called the Ojai Valley Inn, where reality exists in a slightly altered, and altogether enhanced state. Settled by the Chumash people more than 10,000 years ago, the valley's original name, "Awhai" (which translates as "moon") is an homage to its splendid nighttime vistas. The Chumash people believed the mountain emitted a sacred, tranquil energy, and indeed, the rock formation is embedded with quartz which is said to generate positive vibrations. Each year, thousands of people flock to the Ojai Valley to witness a "Pink Moment" when the sun creates a luminescent sunset 6,000 feet above sea level on the Topatopa bluffs. But the area's chief attraction is the Ojai Valley Inn, a splendid resort with landscaped gardens, an 18-hole championship golf course, tennis courts, swimming pools, and award-winning dining—even in its spa restaurants.

Opened in 1923, the Ojai Valley Inn recently went through a months-long, \$5 million renovation, including the addition of a spa penthouse suite. "As part of our commitment to being a premier getaway destination in California, we took time during the resort's temporary closure to completely renovate several areas of the property," says General Manager Chris Kandziora. "We look forward to welcoming guests back to the resort to experience the Inn's warm hospitality amidst these reimagined settings."

Spa Ojai has five dining concepts including the signature restaurant Olivella, the only establishment in Northern California to hold

both the Forbes Four Star and AAA Four-Diamond designations. The 240-seat restaurant features several private dining rooms and a large patio which offer a perfect view of the famed pink sunsets. Olivella's three-course menu—developed by Chef Andres Foskey—features locally-grown produce and wines prepared with techniques borrowed from traditional Italian cuisine. The food constitutes more than a mere meal: it is a gastronomic experience. Each dish is concocted with a complex flavor spectrum in mind and plated with exquisite artistry. Highlights include Pacific yellowtail crudo with orange and fennel, black truffle risotto with wild mushrooms and estate herbs, and California squab in pickled gooseberry.

World-class food culture has never had a more picturesque home than The Farmhouse, a 50,000 square-foot gastronomy center at the Ojai Valley Inn, designed by Howard Backen and Silvia Nobili. The center, which was established in 2019, pays homage to notable chefs who specialize in sustainably produced ingredients and products created by the region's most meticulous food artisans. This spring, the center will be hosting Chef Christopher Kostow who is best known as the former proprietor of the Restaurant at Meadowood which was destroyed by wildfires last fall.

"While planned well before the Glass Fire that devastated The Restaurant at Meadowood," explains Kostow, "Our time in Ojai will serve as an opportunity for my team to continue to cook and

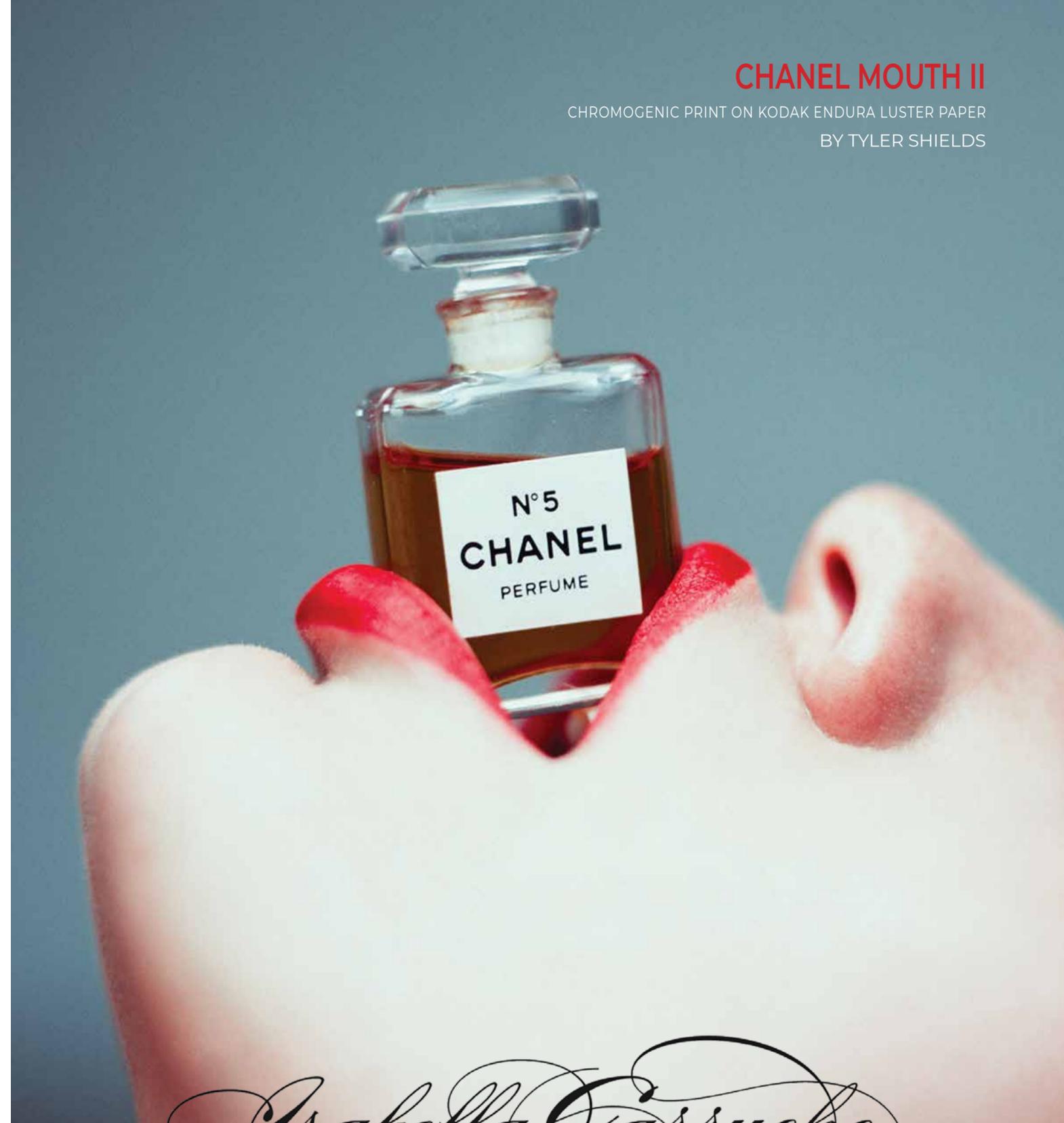
The Ojai Valley Inn is California's premier resort, with its landscaped gardens, championship golf course, tennis courts, swimming pools, and award-winning dining.



CHANEL MOUTH II

CHROMOGENIC PRINT ON KODAK ENDURA LUSTER PAPER

BY TYLER SHIELDS



Isabella Garrucho
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Pixie Tangerine on the rocks, anyone? Demonstrations from expert mixologists and chefs at the Farmhouse give spa goers the opportunity to learn something new. The venue maintains an active calendar of artisans in residence throughout the year, featuring the most acclaimed culinary talent from California and beyond.





The Farmhouse is dedicated to using the finest local and sustainably sourced ingredients prepared with classic culinary techniques.

work together. We look forward to crafting menus that encompass the divergent terroir of the valleys of Napa and Ojai, and to sharing our work with a new audience.”

Chef Kostow will be joined in the kitchen by Chef de Cuisine Jacqueline Dasha, and they will collaborate on a six-course meal that showcases the same food philosophy that was integral to their Michelin Guide 3-star restaurant in Napa Valley. Kostow is known for creating palate-awakening flavor profiles which challenge, excite and nourish both the body and soul. Eating a Chef Kostow meal is a bucket-list experience, on par with seeing the Aurora Borealis in Norway or catching a U2 concert in Dublin. To put it simply: Kostow’s pop-up at The Farmhouse is an absolute MUST for world-class foodies.

At \$475 per person, the six-course tasting menu will feature produce sourced from Meadowood’s surviving farm space as well as other local farms in Napa and Ojai. The opening menu for March includes spiny lobster *a la presse* with pumpkin-preserved tomato and rice koji cream with puffed wild rice. Guests will also enjoy wine pairings selected by Meadowood beverage director Micah Clark. Additional selections will be available from Olivella’s expansive 900-label wine list, which boasts bottles from around the world with particularly strong representation from California, France, and Italy.

Ojai Valley Inn guests seeking a casual meal must find their way to The Oak. Its vast outdoor space is decked with heaters to keep guests warm as they gaze upon mountain vistas dotted with majestic oak trees tucked among the green of the golf course. The restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, and its delectable options include brioche French toast with caramelized almonds, kale Caesar with white anchovies, and seared local albacore with smoked beet risotto. And there’s no need to eliminate cocktails from your wellness regime, especially when it’s a meticulously crafted Lavender Lemonade with Hangar One Buddha’s Hand Citron Vodka meshed with lavender grown on the Inn’s grounds. After dinner, you can indulge in frozen delicacies from Ojai Ice Cream, which has been serving cold treats since 1979. For sweet treats that won’t melt in your trunk on the way home, check out the fudge and other nostalgic candies from the shop which was famously featured in the film *Easy A*.

After dining your way to homeostasis, a trip to the spa is the next logical step at the Ojai Valley Inn. The resort’s 31,000 square foot spa offers a wide range of body treatments including a CBD Oil Massage for deep relaxation and pain management, a hydrafacial with clinical grade dermabrasion, and an energizing cabana massage by the Tranquility Pool. The scenic Ojai trail

which wraps around the valley is convenient for power hikes or gentle strolls, either self-guided or in the company of a local expert.

In deference to the Ojai Valley’s history as a mystical site for the Chumash people, the Inn offers counseling in a range of spiritual healing modalities such as sage rituals, drumming circles, Native American Prayer Song, and crystal readings with spiritualist Nancy Furst. Individuals seeking self-empowerment and chakra clearing can schedule sessions with Reiki master Katie Manzella. Mood balancing techniques and the stimulation of one’s healing soul can be found in Cristy Candler’s Sound Healing therapies and Ixchel Leigh’s Aromatherapy counseling. For further self-discovery and creative expression, visit the Artist Cottage & Apothecary which offers walk-in activities during open studio hours. Options include candle making, succulent terrarium composition, pottery planting, paper marbling and mandala making.

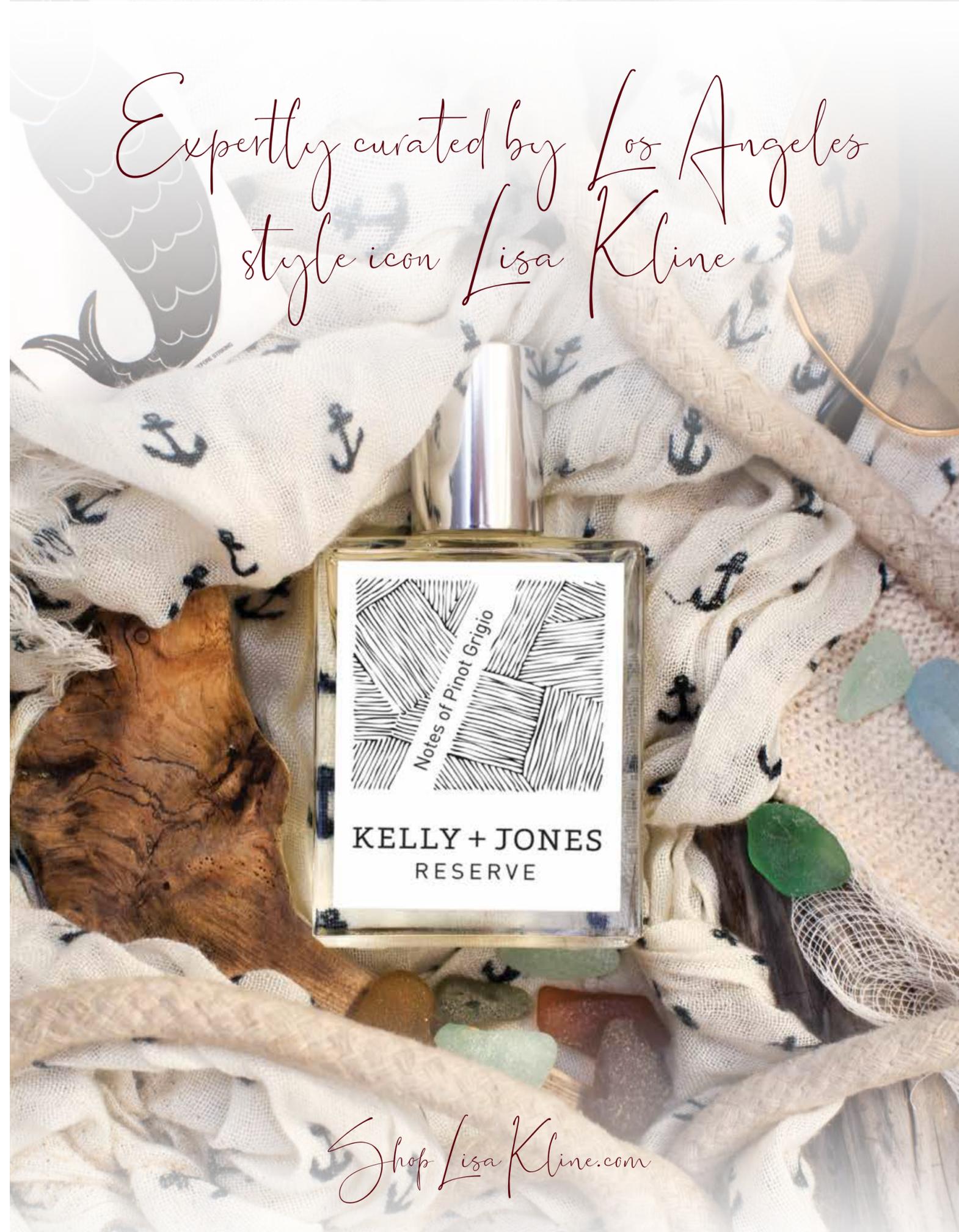
“Today, the Ojai Valley is a haven for artists, writers and movie stars who find inspiration in its serene beauty,” says Shelby Sabat, the public relations manager for the Inn. “Tucked within the Topatopa Mountains, the Inn is known as a Shangri-La where the relaxed glamour of Southern California is balanced with the region’s natural beauty for an unrivaled experience that embodies the authentic spirit of Ojai.”

The healing power of a visit to Ojai Valley Inn is infused into every aspect of the experience, from the exquisite cuisine and beautifully manicured gardens to the gentle waves of the Tranquility Pool and the enlivening scents of the potpourri at the Artist Cottage. Although each visitor’s time at Ojai Valley is merely an interlude from the tumult of life, it is also an opportunity to relearn how to be in the world. It is the chance to usher in a more conscious way of being, by savoring every bite of food, every breath, and every vista of beauty that we encounter. ■



Owner of four acclaimed restaurants in Los Angeles, Nancy Silverton is also the prolific author of 11 cookbooks. She was named Culinary Ambassador for The Farmhouse in 2019.

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Artisan in residence, Scott Daigre, serves as The Farmhouse's Culinary Gardener. His love for horticulture took him away from a career in marketing and allowed him to flourish as a professional grower. His work brings fresh vegetables and herbs from farm to table, empowering the chefs to create a work of art on every plate.

