



the best of the

# BRUNCH

Top Northern California spots for a post-party feast

By Amy Westervelt Photo: Rod Bailey/pictureperfectweddings.com

From the wild herbs and premium wines of the wine country to the (con)fusion of San Francisco's 1,000-plus restaurants and all points between and beyond, Northern California is a region obsessed with food. Now that no one needs to worry about fitting into gowns or tuxes, succumb to the obsession at a postnuptial brunch.

There are probably more choices here than almost anywhere else on earth, so here's a quick rundown of our favorites:

For a place surrounded by ocean views, Half Moon Bay is noticeably missing from most tourist maps of Northern California. With restaurants like **Cetrella**, a beautiful Mediterranean bistro, offering

big-city quality without the parking hassle or high prices, it won't be long before that changes. A seasonal brunch menu makes the best of the local bounty with dishes like summer vegetable crepes and yummy local king salmon hash, and the wine cellar is very well stocked. Reserve a table for smaller groups or one of the banquet rooms (with fireplaces and terraces) for larger ones. *Cetrella Bistro and Café: 845 Main St., Half Moon Bay. 650/726-4090*

Berkeley's **La Note** is the most charming little slice of Provence you'll find outside of...er, Provence. Grab a spot on the patio, with its canopy of lavender and spring yellow walls. Food-wise, the jambon fromage omelet, made with strong Gruyère, and the brioche pain perdu (French toast for the uninitiated), drizzled with lavender honey, are our picks. They do not accept reservations for brunch, so convince Mom or Dad to go down early and nurse an amazing (and huge) café au

lait while waiting for a table, or rent the back patio. *La Note, 2377 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley. 510/843-1535*

If you didn't get enough pomp and circumstance the day before, Meadowood Resort, tucked away in St. Helena, will fill the void. One word: croquet. **The Restaurant at Meadowood** overlooks the Resort's croquet lawns in addition to one of the most picturesque parts of Napa Valley. The brunch menu offers a daytime version of the food The Restaurant is known for—favorites include the LBT (lobster, bacon and tomato sandwich) and pancakes with orange pecan butter—and plenty of sunlight (grab outdoor seating to enjoy the view). Reservations are a must and banquet spaces are available. *Meadowood Resort: 900 Meadowood Lane, St. Helena. 707/963-3646*

But if you've had about enough of "putting on the dog," **The Mission Ranch** in Carmel offers hearty American fare (with a few modern California touches like tapanade-topped lamb and loads of fresh fish entrées) paired with checkered tablecloths and a pot-bellied stove. One side of

the restaurant has windows that look out on sheep grazing in the meadow and the wetlands beyond, stretching to the Pacific Ocean. Reservations are a must as Sunday brunch is popular with locals and hotel guests alike. (The Mission Ranch hosts a number of bungalows on its 12 acres.) *Mission Ranch Restaurant: 26270 Dolores Street, Carmel. 831/625-9040*

Located on the Sacramento River, the **Delta King** is a stately old paddleboat (companion to Mississippi's *Delta Queen*) that was permanently docked and turned into a hotel in 1984. Champagne brunch here offers standard, but very good, fare, served buffet style—fresh fruit, salmon, an omelet bar, etc. What really makes it special is, of course, the setting. Get ready to quote Mark Twain. Reservations are a must. *Pilothouse Restaurant on the Delta King: 1000 Front St., Sacramento. 916/441-4440*

Decades before it was chic, **Greens** restaurant proved that vegetarian could be gourmet. It remains one of the best restaurants of any sort in San Francisco for good reason. The brunch menu changes each week, but usually includes pancakes, omelets, an Asian tofu scramble, salads, pastas, sandwiches and an assortment of baked goods that regulars have grown addicted to. Good for groups of 10 to 20, and sporting amazing views of the bay, reservations are an absolute must at Greens, and they're taken up to four weeks in advance. *Greens Restaurant: Fort Mason, San Francisco. 415/771-6222*

When the aptly named Palace opened in 1875, the **Garden Court** was the carriage entrance. Following the 1906 earthquake, the hotel closed for renovations and today's Garden Court was born. With its dome, stained-glass ceiling and Austrian crystal chandeliers, you'll feel like you've woken up in the middle of a Jane Austen novel. Sunday brunch is appropriately decadent, offering a buffet of breakfast and lunch standards along with dim sum, seafood, desserts, orange juice, coffee or tea, and a glass of sparkling wine or mimosa. *The Garden Court Restaurant at the Palace Hotel: 2 New Montgomery St., San Francisco. 415/512-1111* ■



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