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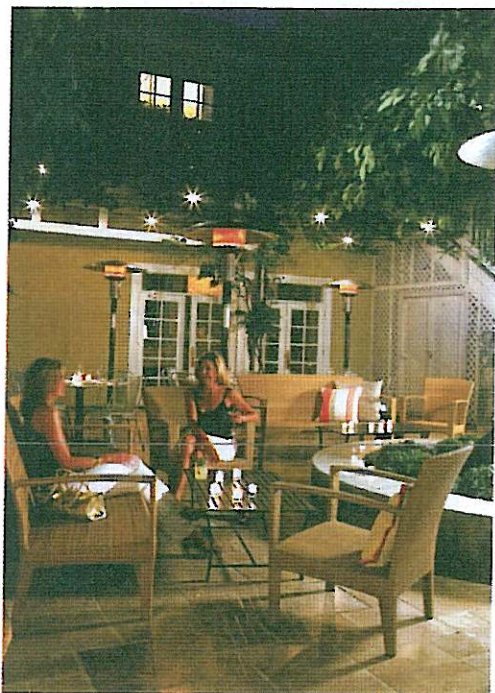
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In Sonoma, El Dorado Kitchen sets a rustic scene.

A NICE NAPA

For years, deep-pocketed visitors to California's Napa and Sonoma Valleys stuck with tried-and-true stops like Auberge du Soleil and French Laundry. Though these remain some of the area's most refined lodging and dining experiences, a new wave of hotels and eateries are making their mark. The **Poetry Inn** (6380 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA, 707-944-0646), which opened in May, has just three guest rooms for nightly rental. Canadian businessman Cliff Lede and his wife, Cheryl, transformed the former simple bed-and-breakfast into a luxurious enclave with wood-burning fireplaces, fine Italian linens, and outdoor showers. Perched atop a hill in the Stags Leap district, it offers resplendent views of the Cliff Lede Vineyards. Guests are welcome to tour the winemaking facilities or just sip Lede's vintages—including the newly released 2002 Poetry Cabernet Sauvignon—in

the comfort of the inn's great room or on the outdoor patio.

Across the Mayacamas Range in Sonoma County, **Les Mars Hotel** (27 North Street, Healdsburg, CA, 877-431-1700) is giving the four-year-old Hotel Healdsburg a run for its money. Inspired by a French chateau, the hotel has 16 individually decorated guestrooms filled with 17th- and 18th-century French antiques and fine art. The hotel library is the perfect place for guests to relax after a long day visiting some of the 60 local wineries.

Adjacent to Les Mars is **Cyrus** (29 North Street, Healdsburg, CA, 707-433-3311), a culinary temple in a region renowned for fine cuisine. Named after Cyrus Alexander, the trapper who discovered the Alexander Valley, the restaurant is helmed by maître d' Nick Peyton and Executive Chef Douglas Keane, two veterans of San Francisco's famed Restaurant Gary Danko. Keane's menu has French influences and contemporary flair, as seen in dishes like seared diver scallops with cauliflower cream, leek coulis, and Uni-Meyer lemon emulsion.

Down-county in the town of Sonoma, young

chef Ryan Fancher is stirring things up at the **El Dorado Kitchen** (405 First Street West, Sonoma, CA, 800-289-3031). The casual restaurant is located in the El Dorado Hotel—run by Auberge du Soleil's parent company, Auberge Resorts—on Sonoma's Historic Plaza. Fancher, a veteran of Auberge du Soleil and French Laundry, brings California cuisine to this rustic indoor/outdoor setting. Menu highlights include beef sirloin with roasted hen-of-the-woods mushrooms, fingerling potatoes, and glazed carrots in a Bordelaise sauce.

Easygoing fare can also be found at **Press** (587 St. Helena Highway South, St. Helena, CA, 707-967-0550), where chef Keith Luce cooks up local seasonal products on a wood-burning grill and rotisserie. The restaurant, which opened in May, was founded by Leslie Rudd of Rudd Winery and Dean & DeLuca, as well as Pat Roney of the Girard Winery and Reuben Katz of the Culinary Institute of America. The stunning farmhouse setting overlooks Hall Vineyards, and the wine list focuses on small producers from the region. It's the perfect place to sit back, relax, and enjoy the California wine country from a different perspective.—CHARLOTTE KAISER

Pure poetry at the Poetry Inn, with its stellar views of the rolling Napa hills.



Satchel Savvy

If an updated weekend bag is in your future, consider this limited-edition beauty designed exclusively for the St. Regis Hotel by Tomas Maier of **Bottega Veneta** (\$4,500). The bag marks the venerable hotel's 100th anniversary and the debut of the new San Francisco St. Regis, which opens in November. *Bottega Veneta*, 699 Fifth Avenue, 212-371-5511; bottegabeneta.com.