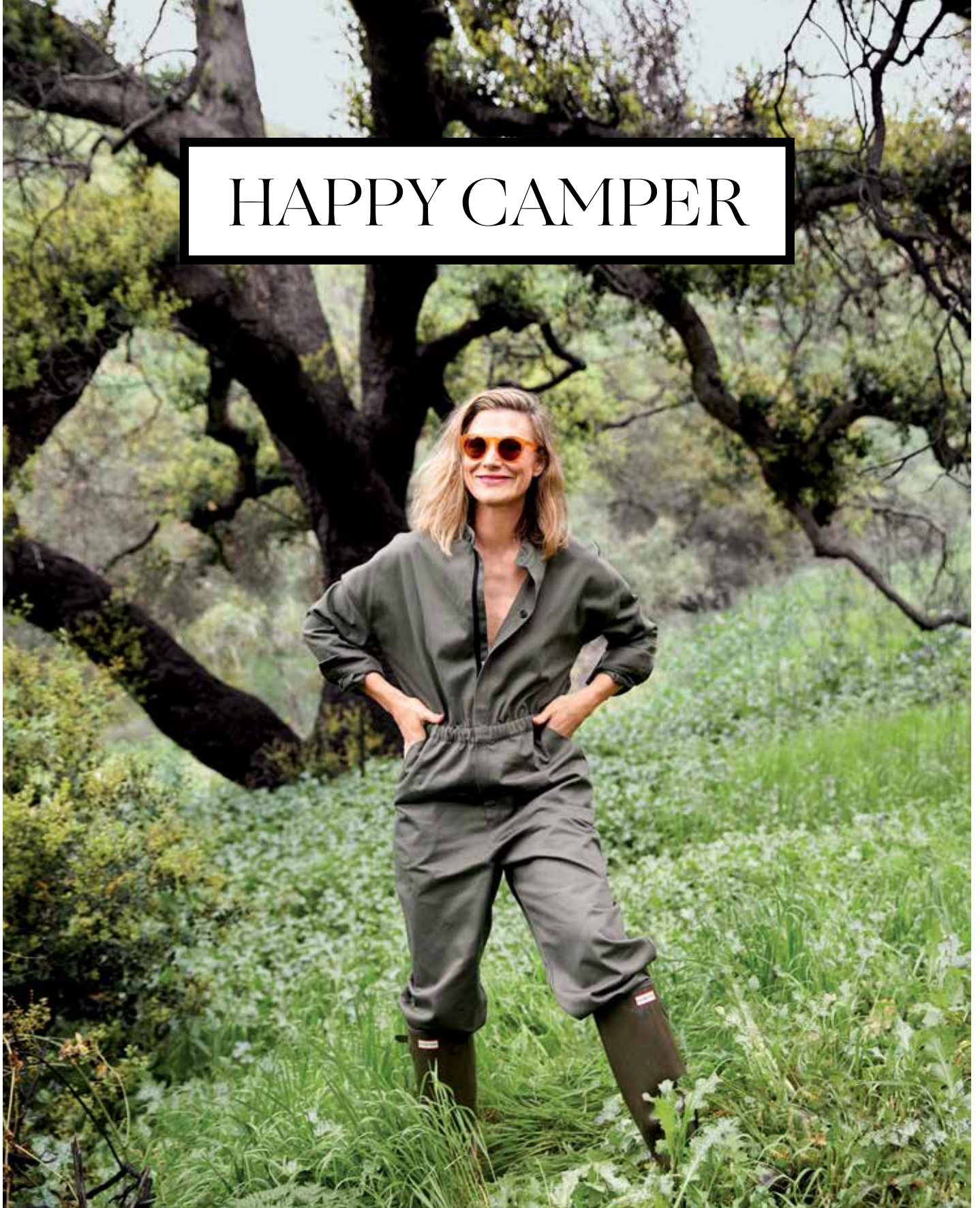


# HAPPY CAMPER



At their rustic-meets-refined getaway, Heidi Merrick and her family live ultra-lightly on the land.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TREVOR SMITH TEXT BY KERSTIN CZARRA PRODUCED BY KATE BERRY



The dress code for a fashion insider-turned-farmer? "I usually live in one of my jumpsuits, but when friends come for dinner, we dress up. I pair it all with Wellies," says Merrick. "It fulfills so many Jane Austen fantasies for me." On Merrick: Campeggio Jumpsuit \$355 [heidimerrick.com](http://heidimerrick.com).

● **LOS ANGELES DESIGNER HEIDI MERRICK'S** clothing line channels laid-back glamour in a way only a born-and-raised California girl's could—so it's no surprise that her family's weekend escape follows suit. Whenever they can, Merrick and her husband, Johnny Johnson, along with kids Hiver (9) and Alfie (4), leave their home in Silver Lake for a sprawling 55-acre plot perched between Carpinteria and Ojai.

Along with the massive, twisty oak trees, the property boasts flowering apple, pear, apricot, avocado, and walnut trees; a small citrus grove; and rambling fields filled with fragrant cowboy sage, purple lupine, and California poppies. "Johnny and I both grew up in pretty bucolic settings, so we want our kids to know the peace of being outdoors," explains Merrick.

With that in mind, the family has left the land almost completely untouched. Aside from an uncovered kitchen-dining deck, complete with claw-foot tub, the only structure is a small birchwood library that Johnson designed. "It's important for us to remain as connected to nature as possible," Merrick says. "But we needed a place that was dry and where we wouldn't be rooming with field mice." They also needed access to their treasured books. The space is lined with titles ranging from Homer's *Odyssey* to a set of Nancy Drew mysteries. A vintage Moroccan rug and floor cushions made of fabric from Merrick's past collections create a cozy spot—in addition to the sleeping loft—in which to read or listen to music.

The surrounding landscape holds extra-special meaning for the designer, who spent her childhood fishing, hiking, and mountain biking, as well as surfing the local break. (Her father is legendary surfboard shaper Al Merrick of Channel Islands.) She always wanted to live somewhere with views of Rincon Mountain—a verdant peak that slopes down and ends at their property line. "We let the land present itself to us," says Merrick. "We base where we build on where the best light is, where we tend to gather, where the kids like to play." The deck area is positioned to watch the sunset over the majestic mountain, and before it's too dark, everyone pitches their tent.

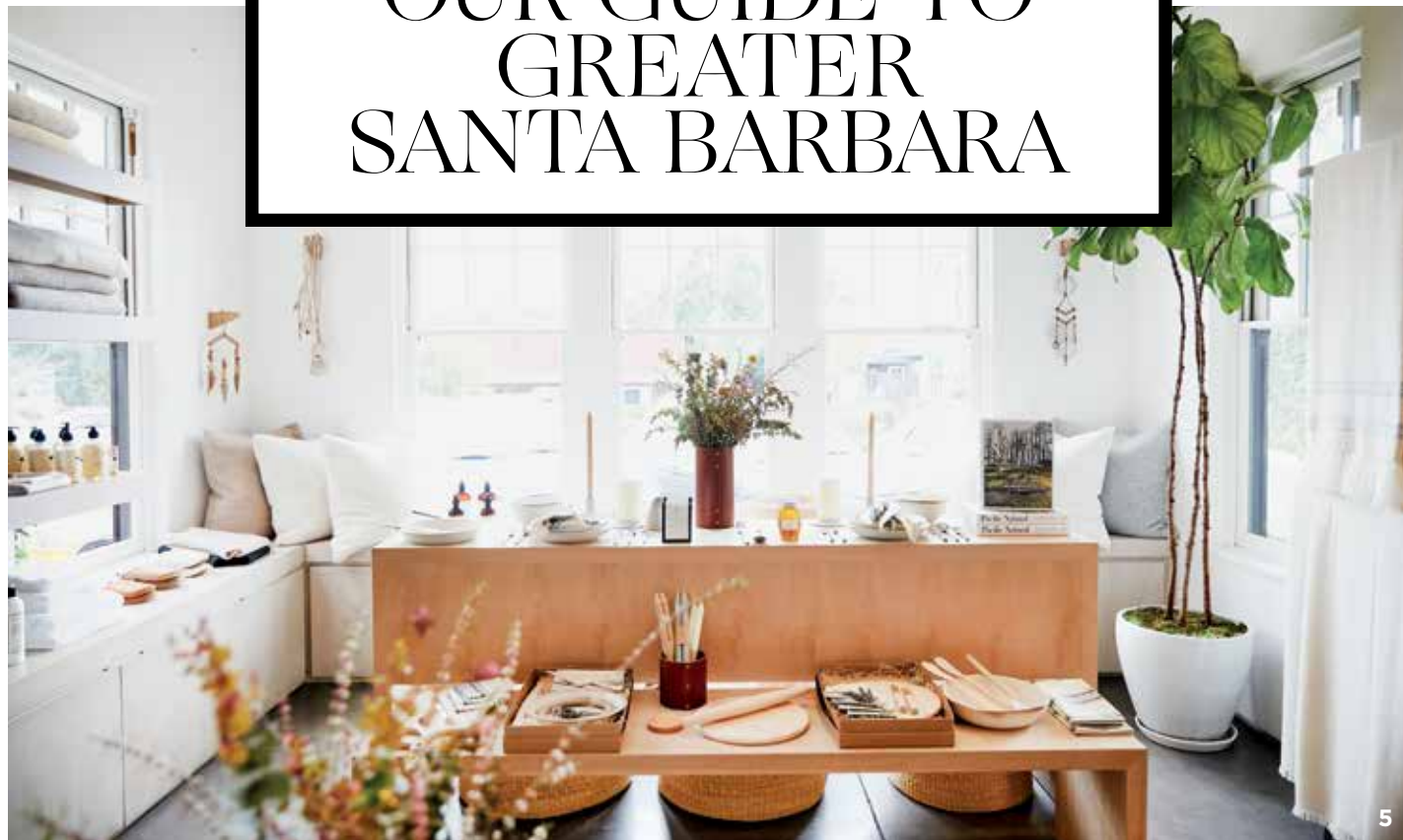
Days are filled with impromptu picnics, a family surf at the nearby beach, or searching for frogs and pollywogs in the property's creek. "I want Hiver and Alfie to run wild like I did," says Merrick. "I want them to understand the signs of the ocean, read the clouds, assess a river." And, of course, there's the upkeep. Merrick and Johnson proudly do most of it themselves. "We tractor and trim the trees, and I tend to my kitchen garden, where I'm growing lettuce, tomatoes, squashes, and herbs," she says. One day they want to build a house and be completely sustainable on the land, which also means expanding their brood. "Alfie wants a milking cow and Hiver wants fainting goats," says Merrick with a smile. "But the immediate vision is mostly tree houses and animal lookouts."



Flip the page to read about our favorite spots along the Santa Barbara coast—plus Merrick's picks in her hometown of Carpinteria.



# OUR GUIDE TO GREATER SANTA BARBARA



Sun, surf, and serious style abound in this idyllic enclave. Read on for the best of the California coastal town (often called the American Riviera) and surrounding area.



1. Raoul Textiles 2. Mate Gallery 3. Garde 4. William Laman 5. Jenni Kayne

## Shops

**Channel Islands Surfboards** Opened in 1969 by legendary board designer-shaper Al Merrick, the shop continues to masterfully craft world-class surfboards for every level. Even nonsurfers have been known to pick up pieces to display in their homes like sculpture. 36 Anacapa Street, [cisurfboards.com](http://cisurfboards.com)

**Garde** At this design store-cum-apartment rental, you can stay the night and purchase what you like. Every piece of California minimalist design, from settee to toothbrush, is for sale. Don't miss the Silkie chickens that run free in the side garden. 2280 Lillie Avenue, Summerland, [gardeshop.com](http://gardeshop.com)

**Jenni Kayne** Kayne virtually created the modern, laid-back luxe look. Her Santa Barbara outpost has a curated collection of the designer's staples: slip dresses, cozy sweaters, and sleek suede mules that essentially make up the local uniform. Her new home line includes creamy alpaca pillows, ceramic vessels, and linen napkins. 525 San Ysidro Road, Montecito, [jennikayne.com](http://jennikayne.com)

**Mate Gallery** This gallery is a slice of coastal New England in the heart of California. Owners Matt Albiani and Rob Brand's shipshape shop is filled with vintage textiles, oil paintings, tattered sail flags, and, if you're in need, an old copy of *The Official Preppy Handbook*. 1024 Coast Village Road, Montecito, [mategallery.com](http://mategallery.com)

**Raoul Textiles** Owner Sally McQuillan's hand-printed textiles on fine Belgian linen use vibrant color and unexpected patterns inspired by traditional designs found in Mexico, Indonesia, India, and Africa. The shop also stocks a selection of furniture from George Smith, Janus et Cie, and its own Engle & Deutch line. Take home a charming tea towel or tote bag as a souvenir. 136 State Street, [raoultextiles.com/home](http://raoultextiles.com/home)

**Tecolote Bookshop** A local treasure, Tecolote has been open for nearly a century—and has the huge literary selection to prove it. The worn chairs are the perfect place to peruse a stack of best-sellers or hear a writer speak at one of the author events. The store is also happy to track down an out-of-print gem for you. 1470 East Valley Road, [tecolotebookshop.com](http://tecolotebookshop.com)

**William Laman** Enter this clapboard cottage and browse the tiny rooms filled with elegant furniture—from Eames chairs to seagrass stools—in addition to lighting, garden planters, and tabletop pieces that are, in the owners' own words, "not what you need, but what you want." 1496 East Valley Road, Montecito, [williamlaman.com](http://williamlaman.com)



1. Channel Islands Surfboards 2. The Apiary

# Heidi Merrick's Carpinteria —

The designer, who grew up in the small oceanside town just south of Santa Barbara, gives us the local tour.

**The Apiary** Come here for amazing meads and ciders. The owners taught my husband how to brew up a batch, and they sell a vintage made from our apples called the Weekend Farmer, which is named after us. *4191 Carpinteria Avenue, [theapiary.co](http://theapiary.co)*

**Beach Liquor** Don't miss this spot on the main drag for the most delicious burritos you'll ever eat. I love the

carnitas with homemade pico de gallo. And it's in a liquor store so, you know, two birds. *794 Linden Avenue, [beachliquortacotogo.com](http://beachliquortacotogo.com)*

**Carpinteria Bluffs** A few years back, people in the town raised money to buy and preserve the bluffs and create a boardwalk trail—a beautiful demonstration of the community and their love of nature. *[carpinteriablufts.org](http://carpinteriablufts.org)*

**The Farm Cart** This is my friend's organic cart in the middle of town. You can get anything—even oranges from a neighbor's tree. The farm boxes are filled with strawberries, fresh cilantro, and whatever's in season. They include recipes, too. *5103 Carpinteria Avenue, [farmcartorganics.com](http://farmcartorganics.com)*

**Rincon Brewery** Rincon makes the best burger I've ever had, topped with local Coleman Farm lettuce and thin-cut fried onions. I go late at night with friends after an event. *5065 Carpinteria Avenue, [rinconbrewery.com](http://rinconbrewery.com)*

**Rori's Ice Cream** The owner used to be a food stylist, but now homemade ice cream is her passion. The flavors are insane—we love the lemon curd and fresh mint patty. *4191 Carpinteria Avenue, [rorisartisanalcreamery.com](http://rorisartisanalcreamery.com)*



**BEST COAST**

In the greater Santa Barbara area, there's a sandy spot for everyone. Take a stroll on **Butterfly Beach** and stay for the stunning sunset. Set up a surf lesson at the beginner-friendly **Padaro Beach** just off Santa Claus Lane. Head to Arroyo Burro Beach, also known as **Hendry's Beach**, to walk your pup on the flat sandscape. For those wanting to soak up the scene, **Rincon** in Carpinteria is the locals' surf break, as well as a breathtaking place to spend an afternoon.

1



3

1. Bettina (within the Montecito Country Mart, page 56) 2. Loquita  
3. Elizabeth Colling, owner of Mercı (within the Montecito Country Mart, page 56)



2

# Food & Drink —

**C'est Cheese** Locals and picnickers alike have flocked to this fromagerie for 15 years to sample the more than 100 varieties of cheese from around the world. You can also pick up Spanish jamón, imported olives, and wines that pair nicely with an Époisses or English Stilton. *825 Santa Barbara Street, cestcheese.com*

**Jeannine's** Join the lazy brunch crowd on the sun-dappled terrace at this Montecito village institution. Any stress from the long order line is quickly washed away with a fresh peach Bellini. Tuck into the Norwegian Benedict or lemon poppy-seed pancakes and be sure to grab some pineapple coconut scones to go. *1253 Coast Village Road, Montecito, jeannies.com*

**Loquita** One of the hottest tables in town—thanks to Spanish tapas with a twist, like pork belly with kimchi paella. There isn't a bad seat in the house, from the whitewashed modernist dining room to the terracotta patio surrounded by jacaranda trees, bougainvillea, and flowering vines. *202 State Street, loquitasb.com*

**Olivers** If Nancy Meyers set a movie in a plant-based restaurant, this would be it. The upscale vegetarian eatery epitomizes indoor-outdoor living with a warm wood dining area that spills out onto a tree-lined patio. Locals and weekenders rave over the Kung Pao cauliflower, jackfruit tacos, and cocktails—all made with restorative cold-press juices and kombucha. *1198 Coast Village Road, oliversofmontecito.com*

**On the Alley** Relaxed and family friendly, try this popular salty-dog fave located near the Santa Barbara Harbor. Kids go nuts for the waffle fingers and burritos with tater tots, and parents can opt for a chopped sesame salmon salad or clam chowder. Sit outside to watch the gently bobbing boats. *117 Harbor Way, onthealley.com*



1

1. Olivers 2. Belmond El Encanto



2

# Stay —

**Belmond El Encanto** Hidden away on a hillside with sweeping ocean views, the site was once popular with plein air artists in the 1920s. Today guests lounge by the zero-edge pool, or wander the olive-tree-lined pathways that lead to the Craftsman-style suites and cozy bungalows. *800 Alvarado Place, belmond.com*

**Canary Hotel** Interior designer Michael Smith blended touches of Spanish, Moroccan, and California design throughout this boutique property, situated in the heart of Old Town Santa Barbara. Borrow a hotel bike to explore the nearby shops and cafés. *31 West Carrillo Street, canarysantabarbara.com*

**El Capitan Canyon** About 20 miles north of Santa Barbara, El Capitan is located in a seaside pocket on more than 300 acres along the Pacific. The nature-immersed accommodations include cabins and luxury tents on raised wood decks. Roughing it has never looked better from the heated swimming pool. *11560 Calle Real, elcapitancanyon.com*

**Rosewood Miramar Hotel** Reopened this past spring, nearly 20 years after the original Miramar closed its doors, the beachfront property has serene, breezy rooms with gardens, a movie star-moment pool, and an outpost of Malibu Farm. *1759 South Jameson Lane, Montecito, rosewoodhotels.com*

**San Ysidro Ranch** A former citrus farm, this recently reopened Spanish Mission resort sits at the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Private cottages come complete with laid-back luxuries—think: stone fireplaces and outdoor hot tubs—and the price tag to match. *900 San Ysidro Lane, sanysidroranch.com*



1. Lotusland 2. & 3. Santa Barbara Farmers' Market

## Activities

**Channel Islands** There are endless ways to explore this eight-island archipelago off the coast of Santa Barbara. Enjoy a whale-watching tour, hike miles of scenic trails, or navigate the islands via kayak.

**The Funk Zone** Locals (including Merrick) flock to this downtown Santa Barbara neighborhood for its mix of boutique hotels, restaurants, art galleries, and farmhouse-meets-industrial-style tasting rooms. Browse the mid-century pieces and vintage designer accessories at the Blue Door, then sip some local Viognier at the Valley Project. [funkzone.net](http://funkzone.net)

**Lotusland** Tucked away in a residential neighborhood, this botanical wonderland is the creative vision of singer-turned-gardener Ganna Walska. Walking the property is like stepping back into another era, and it hosts a dizzying array of exotic plants. Last-minute types, take note: You need to make a reservation in advance. 695 Ashley Road, Montecito, [lotusland.org](http://lotusland.org)

**Montecito Country Mart** An old-fashioned town square with real style cred. Browse the chic home goods at Hudson Grace, buttery leather bags at Kendall Conrad, and seaworthy accessories at Mate Gallery. If hunger strikes, order a slice at Bettina pizzeria, designed by architect Barbara Bestor,

or drop by Merci, the new artisanal café from pastry chef and Spago alumna Elizabeth Colling. 1016 Coast Village Road, [montecitocountrymart.com](http://montecitocountrymart.com)

**Rose Story Farm** This magical 15-acre farm is brimming with 120 varieties of roses, interwoven with avocado and lemon trees. Take a floral-arranging class and leave with one of its sweet-smelling rosebushes. 5950 Casitas Pass Road, Carpinteria, [rosetoryfarm.com](http://rosetoryfarm.com)

**Santa Barbara Farmers' Market** Warning: This may ruin all produce buying for you. From freakishly large strawberries to otherworldly artichokes, farmers bring their finest fruits, vegetables, and much more to this Saturday-only market. Pick up your favorites, along with fresh bread and local honey, for a sublime picnic. 110 East Cota Street, [sbfarmersmarket.org](http://sbfarmersmarket.org)