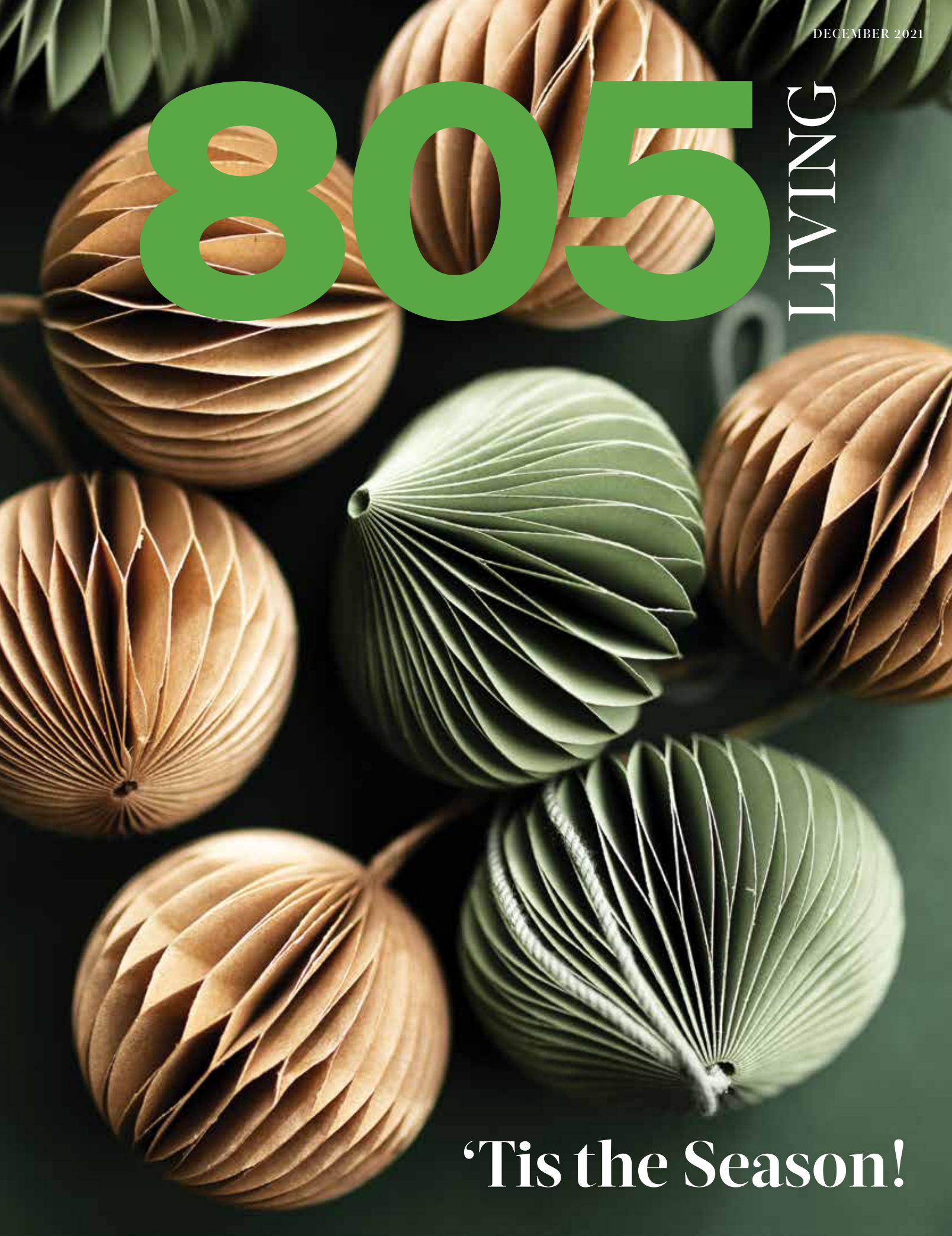


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LIVING



‘Tis the Season!

Home on the Range

A TEAM OF CULINARY PROFESSIONALS UNITES TO ELEVATE CONTEMPORARY STEAKHOUSE FARE IN HISTORIC SOLVANG.

The Santa Ynez Valley continues to flourish as a wine and food mecca with the recent opening of **Coast Range & Vaquero Bar** (coastrange.restaurant) in Solvang, the Danish-style town where smorgasbords of Swedish meatballs and jam-filled aebleskivers have been available since the 1960s. Drawn by the agricultural and equestrian traditions of the region, chef Anthony Carron and his wife Hillary Calhoun partnered with chefs Lincoln Carson and Stephen Fretz and joined forces with renowned sommelier and winemaker Rajat Parr to bring the new venture to fruition. “These guys were all our first picks, and fortunately for us, no one said no,” says Calhoun, who wrangled and hosted team members for nearly a year at Coast Range Ranch during the restaurant’s renovation.

“It wasn’t a hard sell,” says Carson, now a resident of the valley with his wife and daughter. “We wanted our food to match the great wines coming from this region,” he says. “While you don’t want to be rooted in the past, you also don’t want to lose sight of what’s possible here. It’s a kind of stewardship.”

At first glance, the dinner menu appears to be classic steakhouse-style with starters like oysters on the half shell, caviar with traditional accompaniments, and a wedge salad. But there’s more to discover about Coast Range dishes, the result of techniques and details befitting each chef’s experience.

Side dish highlights include Yukon gold and Gruyère gratin fries with ketchup, a fresh twist on creamed spinach with Parmesan and artichoke hearts, and big-shell macaroni and cheese with sheep’s milk ricotta and Comté Mornay sauce. Notable appetizers are the crab cake served with Creole remoulade and fresh watercress, chilled rock crab claws from the Channel Islands, and a daily crudo with dashi, topped with slivered jalapeños and dollops of yuzu *koshō*, a fermented chile-based Japanese condiment that Carron makes from scratch.

Among the offerings from the “Coast” section of the menu are California king salmon, diver scallops, and bluefin tuna, which are grilled over red oak, as is the vast selection of beef cuts in the “Range” category. Selections



A large portrait in the Vaquero Bar pays tribute to Dolly Parton, who is a source of inspiration to its founders.



are butchered to order then grilled over the outdoor firepit. Calhoun recommends the VIP seating for two in the white-tiled preparation area to take in all the action during dinner service, an option based on a memorable experience from culinary adventures he and his wife had in Rome. Local quail from Motley Crew Ranch and Kurobuta pork chops are also on hand, and all grill items come with a choice of lobster sauce, béarnaise, black truffle jus, yuzu miso, or the proprietary CR steak sauce. >



Chefs Stephen Fretz (opposite) and Lincoln Carson (above) turn out fresh takes on classics like Beef Wellington (left). Meanwhile, the 9-5 martini garners attention at the Vaquero Bar with its elderflower-purple hue and lychee garnish.





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Taste Dining Out



Joseph Sabato helms the Vaquero Bar.

The winter soup is a luscious, Paris-worthy French onion broth topped with crusty *pain au levain* (French-style sourdough bread) from Bob's Well Bread, Gouda, and creamy stracchino cheese. The Beef Wellington in a spinach crepe with *perigourine* (black truffle-based) sauce is fast becoming a Coast Range signature dish.

Carson's pastry prowess shows in the rotation of desserts, which includes Valrhona chocolate soufflé with chartreuse gelato, hot brioche doughnuts with brown-butter glaze, and a dacquoise layered with chocolate and espresso cream.

The restaurant's imaginative interior has a welcoming, Old World vibe with pressed-tin ceiling tiles, flocked wallpaper, stained-glass insets and hand-painted gold leaf on dark wood panels. Custom Italian alabaster chandeliers dangle above leather banquettes, and a centuries-old wooden church podium serves as a hostess stand. Private booths feature decorative themes: horses, bulldogs, the high seas, Chumash culture, and national parks—a portrait of Teddy Roosevelt presides over the latter, as if deciding between the steak tartare and prawn cocktail.

Outdoor seating is also available for lunch, dinner, or just to hang out. (For a longer stay, ask about the vacation apartments upstairs.) It's not surprising that the Vaquero Bar, which debuted last spring, was named among *Esquire* magazine's Best Bars in America in 2021. The nightly scene there is exuberant. Partner, general manager, and bartender Joseph Sabato, pours 805 and Agua Santa draft beers, knocks out chilled espresso martinis and bourbon hot toddies, and suggests northern California classic, Central Coast, and international favorites from Parr's evolving wine list, all while spinning vinyl albums until last call. ♦

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