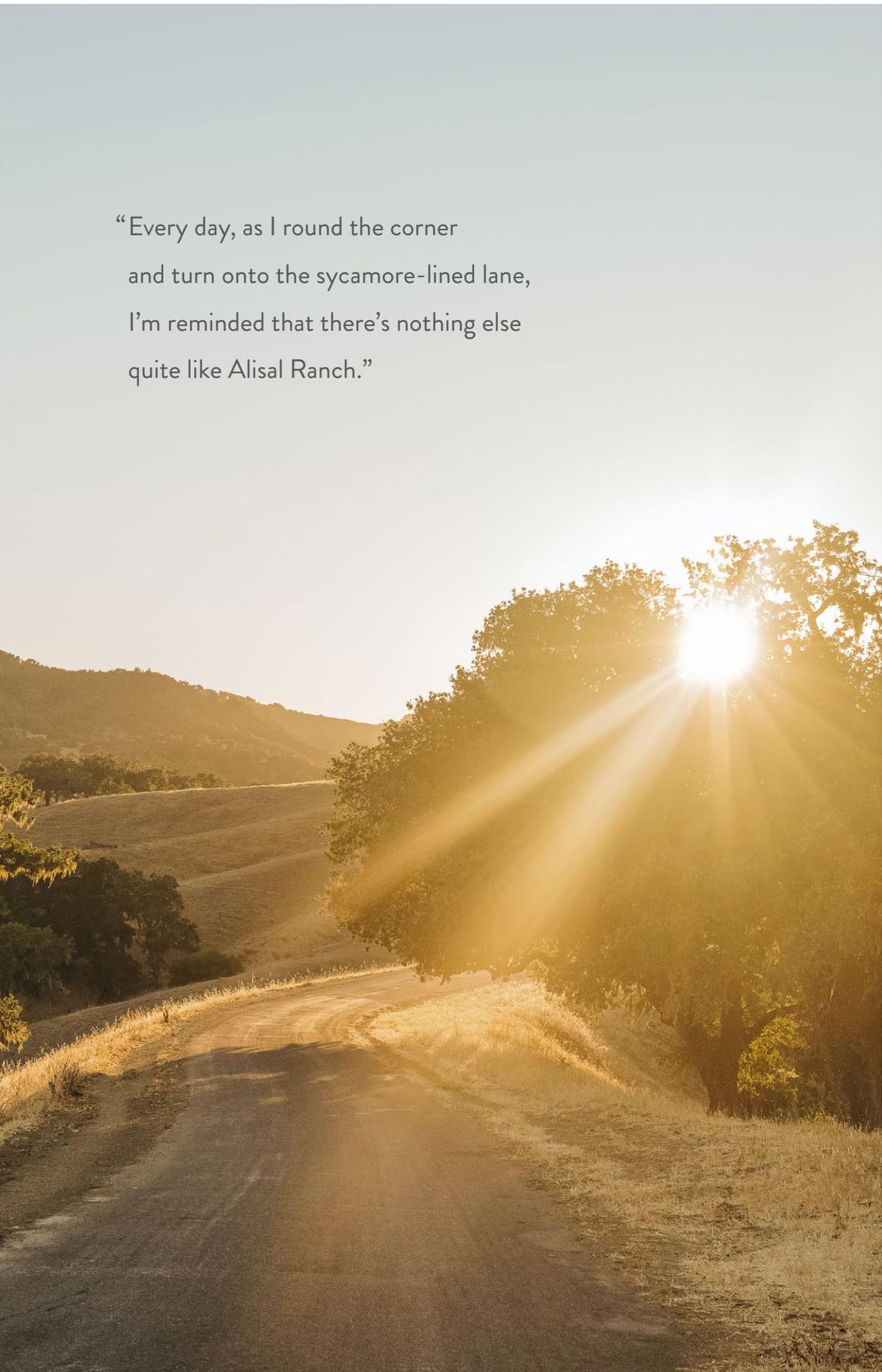


LASSOS & LEGENDS

ALISAL RANCH 2023

Longtime Alisal Ranch wrangler, Skip Cole, opens up about horses, wrangling, and where he feels most at home.

“Every day, as I round the corner
and turn onto the sycamore-lined lane,
I’m reminded that there’s nothing else
quite like Alisal Ranch.”



There is a special brand of magic about this place, nestled within some of the most majestic landscape in America. Of course, breathtaking scenery is only half of our secret; it’s the memories we’ve helped create for generations of guests that truly sets us apart.

In an industry that trumpets the latest trends, we’re proud to have welcomed guests for more than 75 years. We’ll always offer a slice of California that many thought no longer existed. And, while we’re not retiring any of our time-honored traditions, we’ve been hard at work refining the Alisal Ranch experience.

If you’re a past guest, you’ll likely notice that all guest rooms and cottages have been completely renovated or refurbished. While we’ve kept the Western theme, it’s been modernized with a simple, tasteful approach, with noteworthy accents. We also know that one of the reasons you’re staying with us at Alisal Ranch is to take in the great outdoors, and we wanted to ensure that all of our guests are able to do that right from their accommodations. Now you can sip your morning coffee, take an afternoon snooze, or enjoy sunset cocktails from the privacy of your own patio. And, since we know Mother Nature can be a tricky one, we’ve upgraded all rooms to include air-conditioning.

Chef Craig Riker joined Alisal Ranch last year and has been earning rave reviews from our guests for his delicious farm-to-ranch cooking. He inspired us to make a few changes in order to offer the freshest, cooked-to-order meals, so we’ve designed a brand-new, expansive menu, along with daily specials to add an element of surprise. Reservations for dinner make the experience seamless.

We’ve also added a few more ways to have fun too! There’s axe throwing at the Lake and a brand new spa menu, plus a few new activities at the barn courtesy of our new Director of Equine Brandon Gotham.

There are so many things that make Alisal Ranch special, and in this latest issue of Lassos & Legends, we’re sharing just a few. Whether you’re riding alongside some of our longtime wranglers, getting inside the creative mind of fashion designer Heidi Merrick, or hearing from some of the farmers and purveyors who supply our kitchen, it’s clear that there’s one thing that makes Alisal stand out from the rest—the people.

Here at Alisal Ranch, we pride ourselves on creating an unmatched experience for our guests, and we can’t wait to welcome you for your first or fiftieth time.

We are delighted to welcome you to Alisal Ranch and we hope you enjoy learning more about what makes this place so special.

Kathleen Cochran

General Manager
Alisal Ranch



WRANGLERS
PAST AND PRESENT
SHARE THEIR
PASSION

WORK THAT FEEDS THE SOUL

Even at 78 years old, Skip Cole still wakes up each morning at 1:00 a.m. He likes to eat breakfast, take time to warm up his joints, and get down to the barn to start preparing the horses for the 6:00 a.m. breakfast ride.

Old habits die hard, and Cole sticks to his routine even on the days he's not working. "I'm on this clock I've had for 50 years."

Cole, the 1980–81 Stallion Champion of California, came to Alisal after two decades working on cattle ranches. Guest ranching was a switch for him, but he loves building relationships with the guests and sharing some of his knowledge during horseback rides.

"I'm glad to be a wrangler, I really am," Cole says. "A lot of young cowboys think they don't want their friends to see them working on a dude ranch, but it's harder than you think because you have the responsibility of five, six, seven people behind you."

"We like guests who appreciate horses as living, breathing creatures. And then who love the scenery and absorb the scenery as if it was medicine," says Kay McWilliams, who has been a wrangler at Alisal for about 15 years.

McWilliams first started at the Ranch in Summer 1996. "With guest ranching, you're riding a lot and you're in the saddle, and the saddle is my happy place. Being on a horse is my happy place," Kay says.

She especially loves taking guests to the Spring Trail, with its California bay laurel and maple trees, which she says are the Ranch's brightest colors in the fall.



If you think the scenery sounds like the perfect place for some of life's sweetest moments, it is. Cole, who has been part of six marriage proposals, even named one particular trail Proposal Point because of its success rate.

Then, some trails are just plain useful, like the I-5. Named after the California highway that stretches from the Mexican border to the Canadian border, wranglers often use this trail as a direct route to the Adobe for breakfast. Another option, blazed by Herd Manager Mark Bohannon, is the Bohannon Trail.

After years of encouraging guests to yell "Yeehaw!" at the end of a ride, that trail became known as the Yeehaw Trail. "Everyone would get done and tell Sam Switch they liked the Yeehaw Trail," Cole jokes.

Sam Switch joined Alisal as barn manager in October 1995 at a time when the Ranch was growing. He spent the next five years making small changes with big impact. He bought more horses to accommodate more riders and hired more wranglers so each ride was small and intimate.

During rides at Alisal today, the wranglers keep a close eye on the guests and the trails ahead. While they may be pointing out bear tracks or blooming trees, they're also paying attention to the horses, offering riders helpful tips or suggestions, and sharing their passion.

Today, the barn has around 115 horses and about a dozen wranglers, depending on the season and the day.

"I often tell guests being out on this Ranch feeds my soul and I believe that to my toes. Without it, I wouldn't be whole. Wrangling is deeply embedded in my being, and that's because of the horses, of course," McWilliams says.

Her longtime friend Skip couldn't agree more. "The Ranch has been very good to me, and they keep finding nice jobs for me." At his age, he doesn't ride much anymore, but he makes sure to get to every breakfast ride and announces all the rodeos.

Switch left the Ranch in 2001 and started his second act as an emergency medical technician in North Carolina. Cole and McWilliams say they'll be wranglers at Alisal for as long as the Ranch will have them.

"We are so grateful to the Jackson family for keeping the tradition of cattle ranching and guest ranching alive and for providing a way for so many of us to enjoy the Ranch because it is such a special place," McWilliams says.

Farm -to- Ranch

MEET THE PRODUCERS
AND PURVEYORS WHO INSPIRE US

Alisal Ranch's location in California's Central Coast means that high-quality, sustainable, and delicious food is straight from a neighborhood ranch or farm. Get to know some of our favorites.

Cattaneo Bros.

Katelyn Kaney knows exactly how the sausage is made, along with the beef and turkey jerky, and everything else handcrafted by Cattaneo Bros., the family-run artisanal food company. Kaney is the second generation to run the company, started by two brothers in 1947 and purchased by her parents in the 1980s. She grew up in the business and learned the ropes, doing everything from hand slicing and hand stringing the meat to sales and marketing. Then life threw her family a curve ball. "I lost both of my parents to cancer in the same year," she says. She was 24, and was immediately thrust into the role of CEO. "That experience made me really think about how we fuel our bodies," she says. Now, as the mother of twin boys, she's especially mindful, and proud, of her company's back-to-basics ethos. "We've always delivered a product with simple ingredients: meat from local ranches, salt, garlic, pepper, and we've never added sugar."

Kaney's products are available at Alisal Ranch, a place where she has a personal connection. "I've been a part of three BBQ Bootcamps, but it's now my boys' favorite place to go," she says. "I think the coolest thing about taking your kids here is that it's so safe and you can just let the kids be kids and run around. We've lost some of that today, but here you can do that."

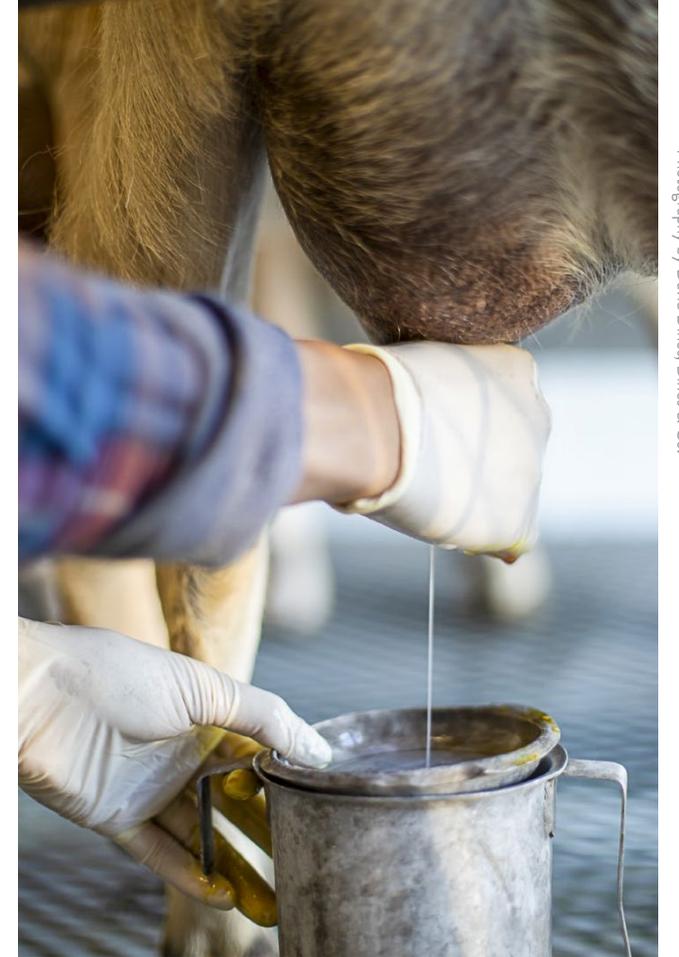


Stepladder Ranch & Creamery

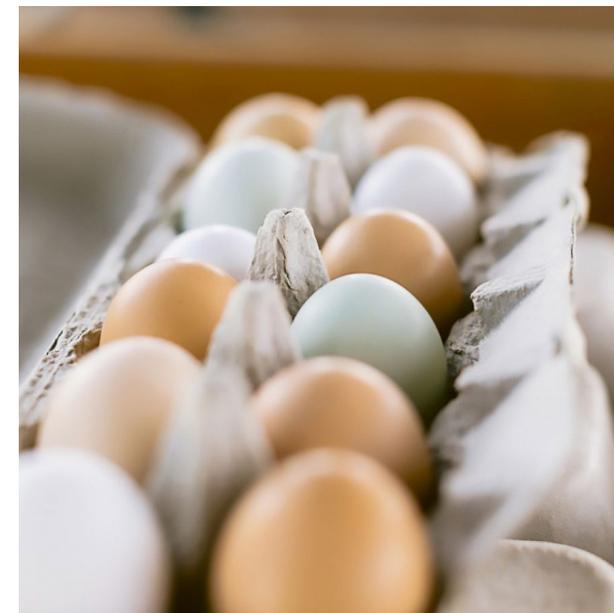
Founded in 1870 as a cattle ranch and part of the Harmony Valley Creamery Association, most of the 750-acre Stepladder Ranch & Creamery is still free-range grazing land. Jack and Beverly Russell acquired the property in the 1980s, and it's now operated by their grandson, Jack Rudolph, and his wife, Michelle.

About six years ago, Jack and Michelle turned their interest in farmstead cheesemaking into a licensed creamery operation. Starting with a small herd of 10 goats, they began producing a few types of goat cheese. With each passing season, the herd has grown, as has the variety of goat's and cow's milk cheeses they now produce in their award-winning creamery.

The Stepladder cheeses available at Alisal are mostly triple crème, including Ragged Point and Big Sur. Ragged Point is a small-format bloomy rind triple crème cow's milk cheese named for the gateway to Big Sur just North of the farmstead. It pairs well with apples, honey, and crusty bread. Available year-round, Ragged Point was a finalist at the Good Food Awards and took home third place at the American Cheese Society in the Triple Crème category.



Photography by David Dines, Dines & Co.



Photography by Olive + Grain Photo

Roblar Farm

Just a few minutes from Alisal Ranch, this market-style garden farm sits on about three acres. Director of Farming Clay Garland hopes to get the sustainable, regenerative farm certified organic in the next few months.

Roblar is part of Gleason Family Vineyards, which also owns nearby Buttonwood. Last summer, Alisal's guests loved the peaches grown at Buttonwood, and Garland is looking forward to providing more this year, along with the usual greens, roots, and winter and summer squash.

"I think it's really nice to receive support from local restaurants as a farmer," Garland says.

A great benefit of this local partnership is the crop planning Garland and his team can do with the restaurant staff. Looking ahead to next year, Garland will plant some heirloom and cherry tomatoes, more squash, and mixed greens for the Ranch's kitchen.

In addition to on their dinner plates, guests can find Roblar Farm's products at a farm stand at the corner of Roblar Avenue and Refugio Road and at farmers markets in Solvang and Santa Barbara. Along with eggs and produce, the farm sells wine produced by Gleason Family Vineyards. "It's a beautiful pairing of farming and wine," Garland says.



FASHION DESIGNER

HEIDI MERRICK

ON THE RANCH LOOK AND LIFE.



Photography by Blue Gabor

The fashion designer whose eponymous line of dresses has draped the silhouettes of Hollywood A-listers also grew up surfing, and if you think elegant dresses and catching waves don't seem to jive, then you don't know Heidi. She's the essence of California cool, the kind of person who knows all of the biggest names in surfing but would much rather spend time with the tweens on the all-female surf team she sponsors. It's all part of her inclusive, break-the-mold ethos, which extends to her brand. In addition to beautiful dresses, Heidi's second collection, SRF LA, shares a bit of her laid-back lifestyle: "I did SRF LA because I want to encourage a little more openness in that world. You don't have to be the best surfer—you just have to enjoy the culture of it."

It's also why she extended the brand with RNCH after she and her husband bought a 50-acre apple farm. Merrick, who grew up surfing in Carpinteria, California, is as at home on the farm as she is in the ocean or the city. During the pandemic, she and her young family decamped to her hometown. It was a move she saw as temporary, but after spending weekends surfing and running through the grass, her kids put their (little) feet down. She explains, "They didn't want to leave, and it's absolutely the right thing for them. They love this way of life."

The sporty Merrick does too. She started visiting Alisal Ranch decades ago, first as a single woman and in more recent years with her young family. "This area is where I grew up, where I first learned to ride a horse," she says, "and Alisal represents it the best. It's Old California—it's magic." Alisal is also where she taught her young daughter to fly-fish.

Her decades-long bond with Alisal Ranch coupled with her white-hot talent made her the perfect choice to rethink the resort staff's uniforms: "Designing uniforms as a clothing designer is a real problem-solving game because you're designing for so many different people. How they present themselves is a really big deal and you want them to feel beautiful and like they're living their best life." The result is a blend of cowboy/cowgirl details with refinement. "Think Johnny Cash with an elevated, more formal take," she says. The detail-oriented designer really threw herself into the project, even buying a pair of Levi's as a test. "I didn't feel I could ask Alisal staff to wear something all day if it wasn't comfortable," she says. She didn't even own a pair of jeans at the time. "When we first moved out here, my dad would laugh and ask me what I was wearing because I was always in dresses. I'm a dress designer!" she laughs. "Now all I wear is those jeans."

Turns out the ranch life really does look good on Merrick, and this summer, it will look good on Alisal staff, too.



HEIDI MERRICK
MIGHT JUST BE
THE COOLEST GIRL
IN THE WORLD.



SPIRITS OF THE WEST FARM TO BOTTLE



Is there anything more fitting after a day on a dude ranch than a few fingers of whiskey, served neat?

The team at Alisal Ranch didn't think so, either. A few years ago, they teamed up with Heaven's Door—the Tennessee-based whiskey company co-created by master blender Ryan Perry and music legend Bob Dylan—to hand-select and blend a barrel that would feel just right for the Alisal experience. “The Jacksons love this land, they take such good care of their cattle, their horses, and their employees, so when it came to these bottles, we wanted to keep it very small-label, and work with people who are respectful of their own properties,” says Mary Friar, director of food and beverage at Alisal Ranch. “Heaven's Door focuses on that grain-to-bottle organic feel—not overprocessing, not putting in any additives. To us, that was really important.”



That first collaboration was a rye with serious bite, and when that barrel ran dry, the team settled on what is now a signature house spirit: a classic bourbon aged in a medium-roast barrel for mellow toasted notes, with just enough kick to keep you on your toes while still going down smooth. “It leaves you feeling warm, that's for sure,” laughs Ruben Santos, assistant director of food and beverage. With vanilla notes from the oak barrel, layers of baking spices and caramel, plus a little heat on the finish, it's an ideal sipper that doesn't wilt when stirred into an Old Fashioned—or Old Adobe, as the house version is called. On property, the standard sugar cube is swapped out for a glug of maple syrup, a nod to the Ranch's beloved Adobe breakfast.

When the Alisal team wanted to add a signature barrel-blend tequila to the mix, the hunt was on for a distiller that aligned with the property's slow-food ethos. They found the right match in El Tesoro. “These folks are doing it by hand, the old-school way,” Santos says. “A lot of companies use the equivalent of a giant crockpot to cook the agave. At La Alteña—El Tesoro's distillery—they use a stone brick oven.” That slow, thoughtful approach carries through the entire process. After cooking and cooling the agave cores, or piñas, for 96 hours, a tahona wheel made of volcanic rock is used to press the roasted piñas—the same method employed centuries ago. “From the time the agave lands at La Alteña to the time you have blanco tequila, it takes about two weeks. At big name brands, that's more like three or four days,” Santos explains. “But their philosophy is always, if we could wait seven years for the agave plant to mature, why hurry the process? Why cut a corner when you could just treat it the right way?”

The tequila's complexity speaks to El Tesoro's location in the town of Arandas, in the Jalisco Highlands. “They have a natural volcanic spring under the facility, so they're pulling all that minerality, and it adds layers and layers of flavor to this tequila,” Santos says. The final product is a reposado, aged nine months in a bourbon barrel, with herbaceous and floral notes and just the barest suggestion of smoke. And while its complexity and punch make it worthy of sipping neat, this is a spirit that truly sings with the addition of a little orange liqueur, fresh lime, and a touch of agave syrup. “When you're sitting poolside relaxing with a nice margarita,” says Santos, “it drinks very well.”

RECIPES

ALISAL MARGARITA

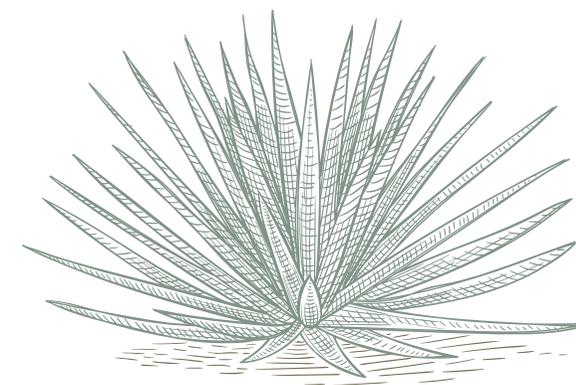
2 oz El Tesoro Reposado Alisal's Barrel
1 oz Fresh Lime Juice
0.75 oz Cointreau
0.25 oz agave syrup

Shake all ingredients with ice and pour over old-fashioned salted rim glass. Garnish with lime wheel.

THE OLD ADOBE

2 oz Heaven's Door Cask Strength Alisal's Blend
0.25 oz maple syrup
3 dashes of Angostura bitters

Stir all ingredients in mixing glass with ice and pour over large Alisal-branded ice cube. Garnish with an orange swath and a Luxardo cherry.





Alisal Ranch is nestled on more than 10,000 acres in California's Santa Ynez Valley.

We're home to a multitude of flora and fauna. If you're interested in learning more about all of our natural treasures, turn to *A Descriptive Guide to the Flora and Fauna Found at Alisal Ranch*, but for a few of our signature favorites, read on.



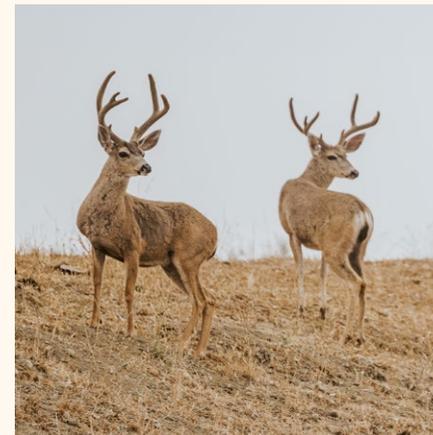
OAK TREES

Alisal is full of historic 300-year-old oak trees. A symbol of strength, oak trees can be found throughout the ranch. One of the most scenic spots is marked by several oak trees with views down to the lake. It's been nicknamed Proposal Point for a good reason.



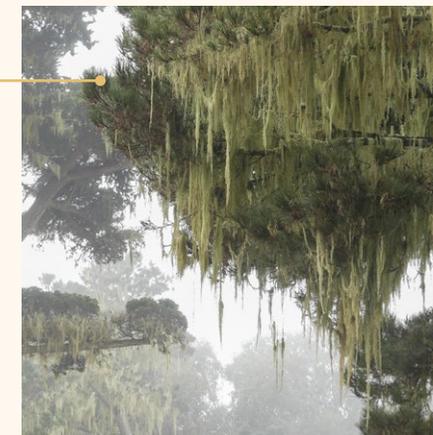
SYCAMORE TREES

Alisal translates to grove of sycamores and there's nothing more iconic than the Lane, the sycamore-lined entrance drive. By day, the Lane's sycamores are lush, but by night, they twinkle with lights. Take a 15-minute drive to Sycamore Grove, one of Alisal's most popular wedding venues and the site of the pancake breakfast at the adjacent Old Adobe. Sycamores symbolize strength and eternity.



LACE LICHEN

Many trees across the property are draped in lace lichen. Indigenous people once used it to swaddle their babies but today it's used as way to monitor air pollution. Sensitive by nature, lace lichen only thrives in areas with good air quality.



SAGE BRUSH

If there is one plant that symbolizes the American West, it's sage. Hardy yet beautiful, its green leaves appear almost silver in the sunlight. It has been used by Native Americans for centuries for its healing and spiritual properties.

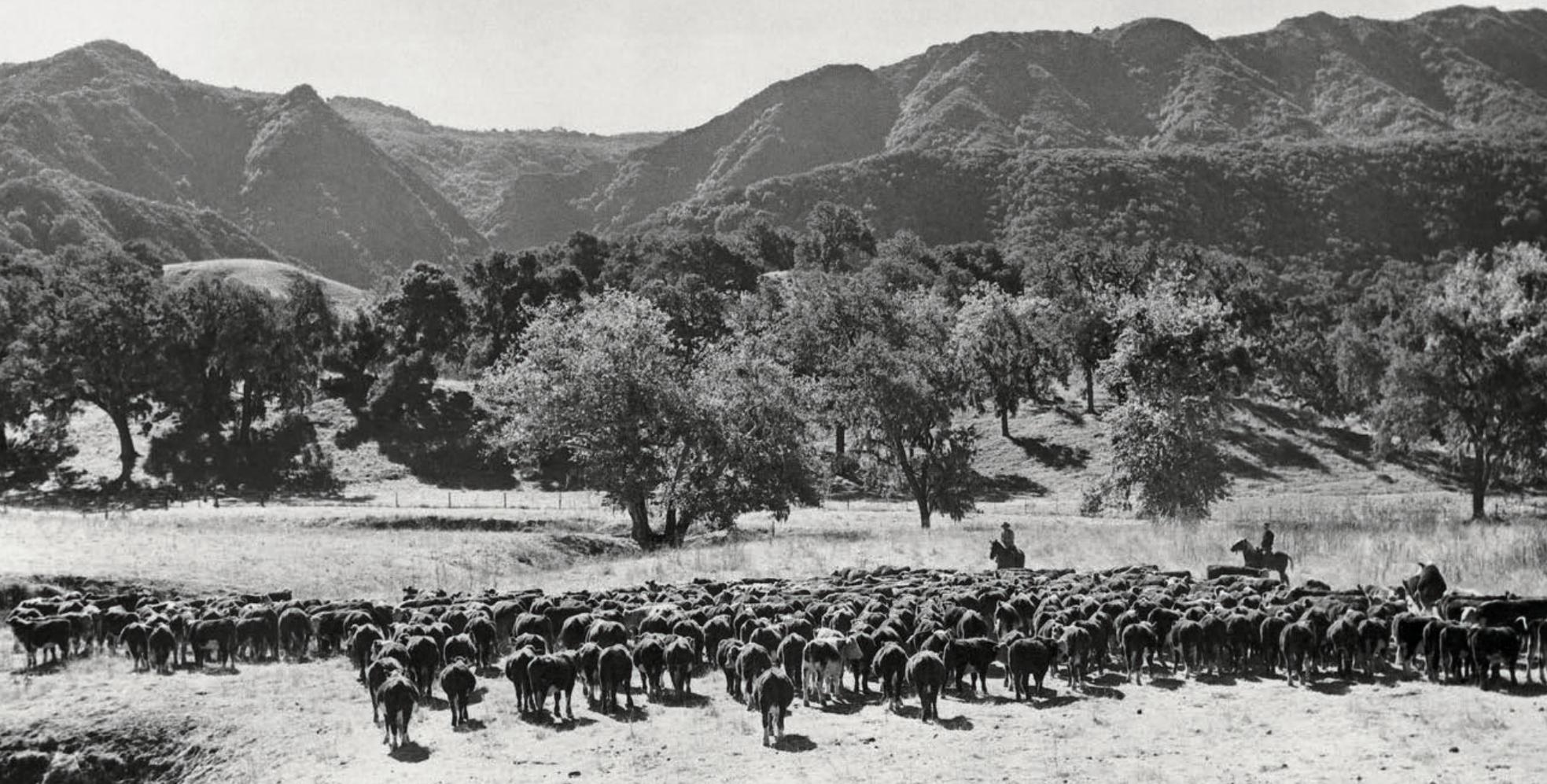


MUSTARD

Winter isn't known for its vivid colors in most parts of the world, but here in the Santa Ynez Valley, winter is stunning. From the emerald green hills to the fields ablaze with yellow mustard, it's a time to cherish. Though Alisal Ranch's mustard plants are wild, area winemakers often plant it as a natural insecticide.



Hope, History, & Hollywood: Alisal Ranch's Legacy



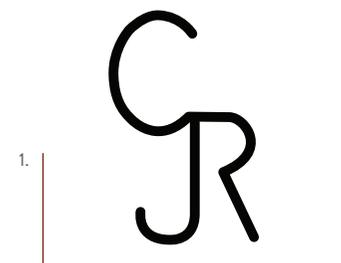
The land transferred hands several times before Henry Pierce bought it in 1868, restoring 1,300 head of cattle and adding 5,000 sheep and 90 head of horses. To expand Rancho Nojoqui, Pierce bought 70,000 additional acres of neighboring land. He needed water, and revolutionized area ranching with an innovation that everaged the Santa Ynez River. In 1882, Pierce renamed the ranch The Alisal after the Chumash word meaning “sycamore grove.” His family owned the ranch for nearly 40 years before selling in 1907 to Charles Perkins, the director of the Southern Pacific Railroad, who bought the ranch in 1926. An internationally known stock and saddle horse magnate for his steeplechase prospects and thoroughbred breedings, Perkins headquartered his horse, Flying Ebony, at the Alisal. Flying Ebony won the Kentucky Derby in 1925, officially putting the Ranch on the world map.

When Perkins died in 1943, his sister became sole owner, and put the ranch on the auction block. Alisal's current owners, Ann and Pete Jackson, purchased the title and took the reins. The sophisticated couple, who played polo and enjoyed the social scene in Montecito, were guided by friend and fellow polo player Lynn Gillham who helped the Jacksons imagine Alisal as a guest, or “dude,” ranch while remaining a working cattle ranch. On July 6, 1946, with accommodations for just 30 people, plus barns and rodeo fields, Alisal opened its doors. It quickly became a popular getaway for American families and a host of notable celebrities. Clark Gable was married in the library in 1949, and the guest book reads like a Who's Who of Hollywood, including Groucho Marx, Gregory Peck, Mickey Rooney, Ava Gardner, Kirk Douglas, and Walt Disney.

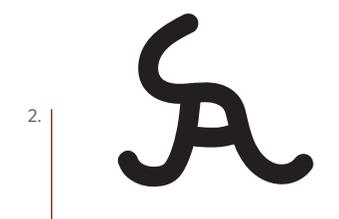
Alisal Ranch has expanded over the years, and today there are 73 cottages with capacity for up to 225 people. It remains owned and managed by the Jackson family and still functions as a working cattle ranch. Resort activities have expanded well beyond horseback riding to include golf, boating on Alisal Lake, tennis, fishing, and swimming. With no televisions or telephones in the rooms, Alisal Ranch harkens back to a simpler time and remains a rustic retreat for those who seek a getaway to the California of yesteryear.



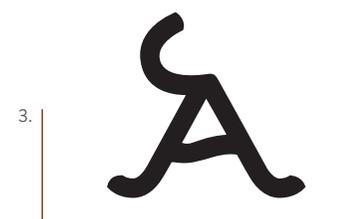
A symbol of hope and the chance for a fresh start, California has long been a destination for dreamers and adventurers. Alisal Ranch has been a part of that history for almost 200 years. It began in 1834, when a land grant, then known as a “rancho,” was issued to Raimundo Carrillo. He called his 13,500-acre parcel “Rancho Nojoqui” (naw-ho-wee) after the Chumash Tribe village “Naxuwi,” which meant “meadow” or “honeymoon place.” The acreage featured a waterfall, lush green pastures, and a beautiful sycamore grove. It was primarily a cattle ranch, though before the Gold Rush, cattle was raised for hides and tallow, not meat.



Horses and cattle are branded as a means of identification. Our original brand reflects the initials of Raimundo Carrillo and is the oldest registered cattle brand in California. We still use it on our cattle today.



Our brand mark has changed several times throughout the decades. When the name was changed to Alisal, the brand was adjusted from an R to an A.



The most recent change reflects our evolution as a heritage brand.

I'LL BE SATISFIED

You can have my part of city life
With all the comforts of its kind
But I prefer the open spaces
Where the sun is sure to shine.
You can have that stuffy cottage
Down on Fifth Avenue
I'll be contented with a hut of breezes
With a roof of sky so blue.
You may have a fluffy pillow
And a fancy feather bed
I won't complain with a bed roll
With some sage brush at my head.
I guess life is what you make it
In the city, on the farm
But me I'm sticking to the country
To live and die where I was born.

—Sgt. W. Jake Copass
July 27, 1943

From:
It Don't Hurt to Laugh
Cowboy Poetry
by Jake Copass

Jake Copass was once head wrangler at Alisal Ranch. Born in Texas, he was raising and driving Percherons by the time he was ten. He was stationed in New Guinea as a member of the Veterinarian Corps during World War II and was sent to Santa Barbara in 1944. He settled in the Santa Ynez Valley in 1946. Copass started writing cowboy poetry in 1943.



ALISAL RANCH

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