

From under-the-radar services (orchid boarding) to over-the-top splurges (a \$4,000 shot of scotch)—and things in between (bespoke bikes and bling)—our annual roundup showcases the area's standout offerings.

*By Jeanne Cooper, Nerissa Pacio Itchon,
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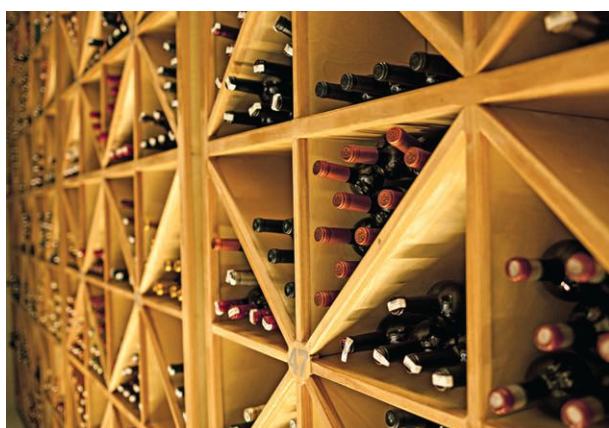
BEST OF SILICON VALLEY





GO-TO CURATOR OF VIP EXPERIENCES

For the past 15 years, **Gwen Books'** luxury concierge/travel firm has catered to an entirely referral-based clientele that enlists her to "create a seamless bespoke journey," she says. "We provide unique experiences that most travelers don't know exist." (She recently curated three days in Delhi, India, for LinkedIn CEO Reed Hastings and 20 members of his executive team.) Books makes every effort to visit and vet hotels, establishing relationships with the "inside teams" at properties such as Chablé Resort & Spa in Chocóla, Mexico (shown here). She doesn't rely on handbooks, but rather has connections with boutique firms all over the world, resulting in "unparalleled local knowledge and unprecedented access," says Books. One family celebration in Morocco involved private artisan and textile sessions, a helicopter to the desert, four-wheel-drive adventures through sandy trails, camel rides and an evening under the stars with an astronomer. "Creating lasting memories is intrinsic in what we offer our clients," she adds. gwenbooks.com



PLUMED HORSE PHOTO BY KRISTIAN MELOM

MOST IMPRESSIVE WINE LIST

Jeffrey Perisho, wine director of Saratoga's **Plumed Horse**, admits he is often the envy of other sommeliers. After all, the restaurant is one of only 87 in the world to garner *Wine Spectator's* Grand Award for its outstanding wine list, which boasts 3,400 options. It can store 23,000 bottles on-site, thanks to a spacious building with a dramatic three-story glass-front wine cellar in the middle of it all. It holds such rarities as 26 vintages of Joseph Phelps Insignia, dating back to 1982; a 1929 Cheval Blanc for \$13,500; and a magnum of 1987 Henri Jaye Vosne-Romanée Cros Parantoux for \$62,850. It also offers an unprecedented 182 Champagne selections. "We're pretty unique in that we hold Champagne in such high regard," he says. "Champagne is incredibly diverse, very food-friendly, sets the tone and is a favorite of mine." That's apparent from the get-go, when diners sit down to see a chic cart roll up with seven bubbly available by the glass. plumedhorse.com





JEWELRY MADE JUST FOR YOU

Vittoria d'Aste-Surcouf is recounting the time a client walked into the **Gleim** showroom with a “hodgepodge of diamonds”—various shapes and sizes, set in pieces she had accumulated over the years. D'Aste-Surcouf was undeterred. She ultimately utilized all of the gems to stunning effect, devising a pendant that's invaluable to the client. Another client requested a ring inspired by a palm frond, a nod to the tropical locale where he proposed to his fiancée. For the past few years, d'Aste-Surcouf has worked in both of Gleim's Palo Alto locations, specializing in bespoke jewelry—starting from scratch or incorporating existing baubles and relying on her training on the bench. She starts by meeting with the client and sketching a design. Then a wax model is made, which the client can view with the stones in place. Upon approval, Gleim collaborates with craftspeople in San Francisco on the fabrication. “We can do pretty much anything,” says d'Aste-Surcouf. “People love the process. It means so much more to sit down and design something, especially when it's for a special occasion.” gleimjewelers.com

BUZZIEST BLACK-TIE CHARITY EVENT

“When I founded Part the Cloud in 2012,” says Mikey Hoag, “my vision was to create an event that would make a difference in pushing the Alzheimer's cause forward. Almost six years later, it has become a movement—raising \$20 million and funding some of the most cutting edge research in the field.” On April 28, the biannual **Part the Cloud Gala** returns to Rosewood Sand Hill (tickets \$1,500-\$5,000; tables \$25,000-\$75,000). This year's co-chairs are Ellen Drew and Debbie Robbins, with Stanlee Gatti contributing his event design talents. Guests, including luminaries from the tech, VC, entertainment and sports worlds, can expect gourmet fare, a spirited live auction, inspirational speakers and rousing performances (Tony Bennett, Chris Isaak and Jimmy Buffett are past headliners)—all for a great cause. alz.org/partthecloud



GLEIM PHOTO BY VITTORIA D'ASTE-SURCOUF; PART THE CLOUD GALA PHOTO BY DREW ALTZER PHOTOGRAPHY



HANDBUILT BIKES WORTH OBSESSING OVER

Since the bike he wanted didn't exist back in 2002, Todd Ingermanson decided to build it. He found the process addictive and made some for friends too. That eventually led to **Black Cat Bicycles**.

In his Aptos shop, Ingermanson fabricates modern bikes using more traditional methods. For example, he favors fillet brazing using a gas torch and brass filler, rather than joining tubes with TIG welding using electricity. In the early days, he couldn't afford to hire someone to paint his bikes, so he did it himself. "People really went bonkers," he recalls of his initial abstract styles.

Ingermanson's frames start at \$3,000, with parts usually doubling the budget. Other details, like an intricate paint job or handmade handlebar stem, factor into the final price. He is clearing his queue—each bike entails 40 to 150 hours of labor—and expects to accept new orders this summer.

"Having something built for you, from the ground up ... makes it a special object," he says, adding: "Being asked to build someone's companion for years' worth of experiences and adventures is pretty cool." blackcatbicycles.com



CHOICEST CUT AND COLOR

With so many clients already driving north to their San Francisco salon, when presented with the opportunity to open in Palo Alto last year, Jon Reyman and Christine Thompson didn't hesitate. The pair behind **Spoke & Weal** has some serious cred: He's a master hairstylist and former artistic director of Aveda's Advanced Academy in New York City, and she has more than 26 years of coloring experience; both have done plenty of editorial and runway work as well. (Reyman is known for his unconventional approach, including cutting hair when it's dry.) Pop in for a complimentary consultation with a well-trained stylist, but if you're looking for a cut by Reyman (\$800) or color by Thompson (starting at \$200), plan in advance: With five locations now, they're usually at the South California Avenue location only one day a month. spokeandweal.com



WHITE-GLOVE AUTO STORAGE (AND MORE)

He jests that he's chief parking-lot attendant and bartender, but Buff Giurlani has a far loftier title at **AutoVino**: co-founder of what is probably the most unique storage company around. Its 20,000-square-foot main facility in Menlo Park stores not only vintage automobiles and rare wines, but actually makes wine too. With a second 10,000-square-foot location in Redwood City—and a third location coming in Menlo Park soon—AutoVino houses upward of 100 cars and 5,000 cases of wine (car storage from \$350 per month; wine storage pricing depends on the number of cases). Since 2009, AutoVino has provided TLC in secure, temperature-controlled environments to Enzo Ferraris, McLarens and even a 1956 Porsche convertible that the proprietor eventually sold for about \$1.5 million. While the wine owners typically are from the Peninsula, the car owners live throughout the Bay Area, with some hailing from as far away as Prague, London and Hong Kong. auto-vino.com





STARCHITECT FOR HIRE

Moving from New York to Woodside as a kid informed **Cass Calder Smith's** work years later, "especially in creating a deep appreciation for the natural beauty of California," he says. The UC Berkeley-trained architect founded his acclaimed practice in 1992. With offices in San Francisco and New York, CCS has designed public and private buildings and interiors all over the globe—among them, no doubt, some of your favorite local restaurants. Smith and his team were responsible for Pausa in San Mateo and British Bankers Club in Menlo Park. When it comes to Silicon Valley residences (like the Los Altos Hills project shown here), the firm can take full advantage of the natural light and warm climate, often creating homes that are driven by a desire for indoor-outdoor living, as well as innovation and sustainability. ccs-architecture.com



GENIUS SERVICE YOU NEVER KNEW YOU NEEDED

They do the feeding and tending for you. Not for pets. But for orchids. **Brookside Orchids** operates the largest orchid boarding program in the Bay Area. For \$55 per month, for a minimum 10-square-foot space at the nursery's Menlo Park or Pacifica sites, staff members water, fertilize, repot and eradicate pests. When the plants bloom—anywhere from one to three times a year, depending on species and age—owners are notified, so they can pick up their prized plants to display in all their glory in their home or office until they're ready to return them for storage. The service, which started in 1996, has 350 customers throughout the Bay Area. "We have people who want to possess things but have no inclination to take care of them, and others who are collectors but live in apartments and don't have space," says manager Mark Pendleton. "We board some orchids that are worth \$1,000 or more, and others that people can get at Trader Joe's for \$19.95." brookside-orchids.com



DISHING OUT DECADENCE

Relax, lean back and put yourself in the skilled hands of the chef at **Alexander's Steakhouse**—you'll be deliciously rewarded. The \$295-per-person omakase menu (chef's choice) at this fine-dining Cupertino steakhouse with Japanese influences is composed of seven courses. It may start with osetra caviar with Dungeness crab and brioche, wind its way to seared foie gras with kabocha veloute, then proceed to Japanese A5 wagyu with seasonal vegetables, before ending sweetly with dessert, along with a trio of mignardise. If you're all about the beef, choose instead the Alexander's Trio. The \$250 sampler lets you compare and contrast domestic Angus beef, F1 wagyu and mind-blowingly marbled, full-blood wagyu. Pair with a glass or bottle of wine. Or choose one of the Favorites of the Sommelier spotlighted wines that can be enjoyed by the ounce, such as the Super Tuscan, Tenuta dell'Ornellaia, Bolgheri 2011 (\$19 per ounce). alexanderssteakhouse.com



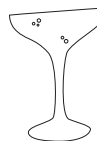
DOPEST TEA PARTIES

High tea has taken on a new meaning, thanks to exclusive parties for women hosted by **Kikoko**, an upscale medical cannabis tea purveyor. At the soirees, which are often held in Peninsula homes, guests are encouraged to arrive in tea frocks, with vintage hats provided. A “budtender” advises them on which low-dosage, high-quality organic teas to sample. As guests sip from china teacups, Amanda Jones—who started Kikoko with Jennifer Chapin after watching a mutual friend with cancer struggle to find the right dose—gives a brief Cannabis 101 presentation. Once the tea kicks in, the guests enjoy mingling, says Jones. “The connectivity between the women is incredible. They’re having these deep conversations and incredible laughter.” kikoko.com



EXTREMELY LIMITED-EDITION LIBATION

At the **Rosewood Sand Hill** bar, patrons with bank can sip an exclusive 50-year-old scotch—at \$4,000 per shot. At a mere 1 ½ ounces, it's the bar's most expensive offering. There are reportedly only 15 bottles of this **Balvenie Fifty Cask 4567** in the United States, with only three available at public establishments and the rest in private collections. The Menlo Park venue has one of those three bottles, from which only 16 servings can be poured. “It's very velvety, with the sweetness of vanilla,” says Mario Quiroz, the hotel's food and beverage director. “You know how a great filet mignon melts in your mouth? The scotch just melts on your tongue.” Included in the \$4,000 price tag are shots of three other Balvenie vintages. If that's still too rich for the wallet, you can always admire the bottle. But don't get too fixated because that's only a dummy on display. The real one is kept in a safe, and retrieved only when someone orders it. rosewoodhotels.com





NAME TO KNOW IN VINEYARD MANAGEMENT

Founded in 1999, La Honda Winery has steadily amassed awards for its Santa Cruz Mountains vintages while quietly growing another business: private vineyard management. Today, about 50 clients from Woodside to Saratoga benefit from the services of **Post & Trellis**, including planting vines, installing irrigation, harvesting the fruit and producing wine. “The families adore what the vineyards look like; they love the increased value it puts on their property; and they adore the arrival of the wine and the sharing of it,” says co-founder David Page.

“It’s a significantly more fun part of their property than the guesthouse and the tennis court.” One senior tech exec in Woodside—whose vines produce about 1,500 bottles of chardonnay, merlot and syrah a year—“takes them around the world as a personal heartfelt gift for colleagues and others.” Creating a ¼-acre, 500-vine vineyard runs about \$50,000, with annual management starting at \$10,000. postandtrellis.com



SERENITY NOW

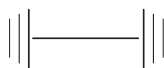
Screen-addicted insomniacs and wellness enthusiasts alike will find the ultimate in sleep-inducing relaxation at **The Spa at the Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley**, where the signature California Dreaming massage (\$360) incorporates stress-relieving practices focused on creating a restful nighttime ritual. Developed by Spa Director Maritsa Victorian with national sleep expert Robert Michael deStefano and Campbell-based skincare line Longeva, this 75-minute soother releases tension from seven somatic sleep-robbing zones typically ignored during most massages, using a combination of breath work, aromatic essential oils and hot basalt stone therapy. The 7,500-square-foot sanctuary also features a shop that stocks local beauty products, a eucalyptus-infused steam room and a sun-drenched pool deck—an ideal escape for an offline afternoon with a refreshing glass of bubbly. fourseasons.com



PREMIER CUSTOM PERFUMER

If perfumer **Yosh Han** were to create a scent epitomizing Silicon Valley, it would exude the freshness of the surrounding nature, from the ocean and mountains to lush grasses and coastal oaks—plus a little something extra. “The Valley has a certain sparkle in the air I would add,” says Han, who has been concocting her eponymous line of fragrances since 1994. “It smells like an electric charge.” While Han’s characteristically light but complex fragrances can be found in boutiques around the world, the self-described scent artist, who calls both San Francisco and Los Angeles home, still finds the custom fragrance process intriguing. (A custom blending session is \$1,500.) “I enjoy other people’s takes on the actual ingredients. To each person, each scent is unique. Ten people could smell cinnamon, for example, but to each nose, it reflects different character traits.” This spring, look for Han’s entree into the recreational and medicinal cannabis market with her coconut oil-based amplifier wellness blends that can be put directly into the mouth or added to food and drinks. eaudeyosh.com





ELITE TRAINER

Sheldon Wesley calls himself the toughest fitness instructor you will ever encounter. “I can see what people can be—and I push them to that,” says Wesley, who has been a trainer for 33 of his 55 years (\$250 per hour). He attracted a cult following for creating Footworks in 1993, a rapid-paced, choreographed exercise that’s like tap dancing done on an aerobic step without risers. For 30 years, he taught that high-energy program and even performed it on *America’s Got Talent*. This year, he segued into body sculpting, expounding proper form as he pushes to their limits private clients and members of the Alpine Hills Tennis & Swimming Club in Portola Valley and the Menlo Circus Club in Atherton. Wesley knows firsthand how much a body is capable of overcoming, having been born premature with fetal alcohol syndrome and scoliosis. His greatest satisfaction comes, he says, “when people realize that the vision I saw of them is real and they arrive at that place they thought they never could be.” sheldonmoves.com

A-LIST ART ADVISERS

Its enviable list of clients includes venture capitalists and tech execs, as well as a couple of Golden State Warriors players—all of whom flock to **Simon Breitbard Fine Arts** for assistance in outfitting their homes with contemporary art that’s not only meaningful, but effortlessly fits in with their decor. Evie Simon and Stephanie Breitbard established the art consulting firm in 2007, which also includes an appointment-only gallery with works from more than 100 artists. It’s no accident that the San Francisco gallery displays art in rooms decorated like a home. That’s because the enterprise originated in Breitbard’s own Mill Valley house, where she turned two wine cellars into commercial gallery space. The co-founders believe that art and decor go hand-in-hand: “It’s not about matching it with the pillows,” says Simon. “Design is so artistic now. It’s certainly a valid strategy to want to make the two work together seamlessly.” sbfinearts.com

