

In addition to gourmet local food, Nick's Cove on Tomales Bay features wines from co-owner Pat Kuleto's winery in St. Helena.



VAL ATKINSON

## Palate Pleasing

Sampling food and vintages in the Bay Area ■ By David Armstrong

A squadron of pelicans goes wheeling by as a small boat pulls up at Nick's Cove on the shores of Tomales Bay. No sooner does the boat tie up in rippling, wind-whipped waters at a newly rebuilt, 400-foot-long pier than its haul of fresh fish from Marin County waters is whisked to a pierside restaurant, also called Nick's Cove. It will be cooked and eaten that day, accompanied by a crisp pinot grigio made by Nick's Cove restaurant co-owner Pat Kuleto at his winery. ■ "We wanted to find the absolutely perfect wine to eat with oysters," says Kuleto, who has designed and operated some of the Bay Area's leading restaurants. "We put together about 10 barrels of pinot grigio at Kuleto Estate Winery and named it Nick's Covee; it came out fantastic." ■ Kuleto can be forgiven for bragging. I quaffed a glass of Nick's Covee with baked oysters from Hog Island, the noted Marin oyster farm located nearby, and with its appealing minerality and

softness, the wine went perfectly with the briny oysters. Like the wine, much of the food at Kuleto's new restaurant is local: artisan cheeses from Cowgirl Creamery in Point Reyes Station, and cuts of beef from Niman Ranch, a celebrated Marin County source for organic, grass-fed cattle. "We have a bounty in the Wine Country with wine and food," Kuleto says.

The passionate union of food and wine began in the Bay Area in the early 1970s, when innovative chefs such as Alice Waters of Berkeley's Chez Panisse brought a new sensibility to American cuisine. Contemporaries such as Jeremiah Tower of Santa Fe Bar and Grill and San Francisco's now-vanished Stars took up the cause. More recently Thomas Keller, of Yountville's legendary The French Laundry, carried the message of fresh, local and seasonal fare