

Group-Friendly Dining Near the Airport

northern

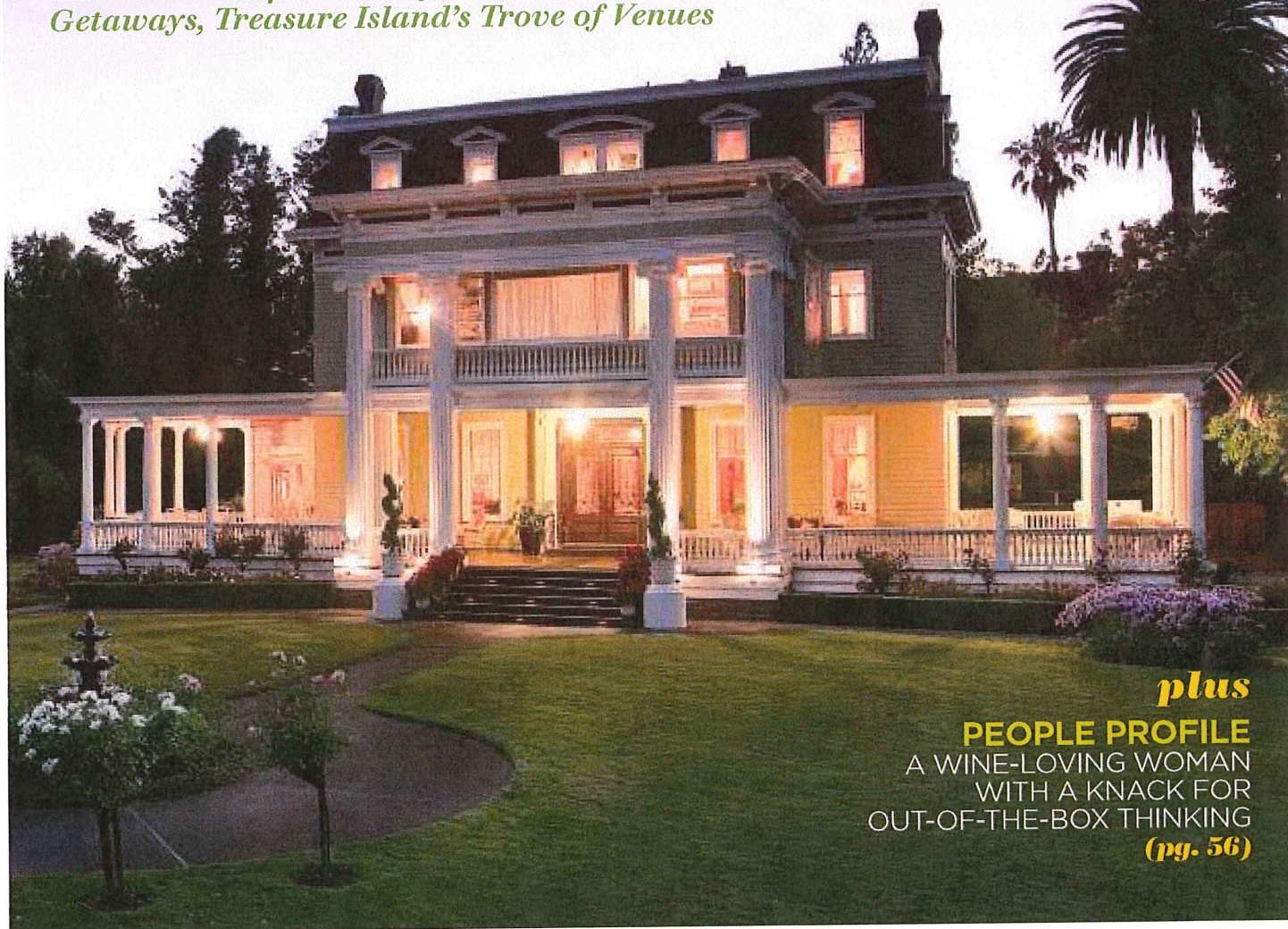
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PEOPLE PROFILE

A WINE-LOVING WOMAN
WITH A KNACK FOR
OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING

(pg. 56)

meetingNOTES



Here Come *the* Venue Vixens

An event planner, an F&B manager and a pair of wedding pros turn an idea into a business.

Take four event planners, a lengthy list of reception and meeting sites, and no shortage of get-up-and-go. That's the Venue Vixens, a Sacramento-based quartet aiming to vet as many Northern California event spaces as possible—and make their findings public both to individuals and to meeting, wedding and event planners. ♣ Lora Ward, Catrina Arcularius, Kendra Pfeiffer-Wershing and Laurie Schmalzel last October launched TheVenueVixens.com, an online database of locales ranging from waterfront to urban, rustic to museum-based. The group visits as many places as possible, so check the blog often for updates.

{MOVERS & SHAKERS}

NCM+E: What prompted you to launch the website?

WARD: There's a need for a resource for people to be able to find varieties of locations, whether it's for weddings or corporate events. And it's a thrill for us to find the brand new, the out-of-the-way, the unusual. But we take care of the established properties too.

SCHMALZEL: We all needed to keep up on the most current, latest and greatest... and we've been visiting places together for the last three years. We decided it would be a great opportunity to share this information in a more formalized way.

NCM+E: Do you charge for website access?

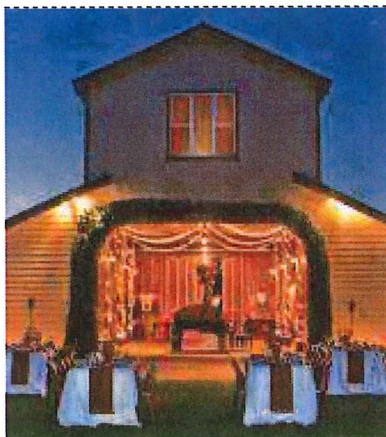
WARD: It's free to go on the site, read the feature, see the pictures and get minimal statistics to what we've reviewed so far. There might be costs if a client needs a personalized site inspection or a pairing with their specifications.

NCM+E: How honest are your reviews?

SCHMALZEL: We are very objective. At the same time, we try to stay as positive as possible. Because of that, there have been a few places that we haven't included. We're trained to be open-minded, but also at the same time we are looking at things like service, food, what the value is, do you get "move in, move out" time?

WARD: Some places say (they) can do 250 people, but that's cheek to jowl. So we will phrase the review, "Best suited for 150."

—by Jan Ferris Heenan




Here are Three of the Venue Vixens' Favorite Recent Finds:

1. The 600-acre River Highlands Ranch in Smartsville near Grass Valley. Catrina Arcularius blogs, "River Highlands Ranch itself offers... the absolute best bridal suite I've seen to date (it's called Duck Pond!). Picture a private pond with a small log cottage set next to it amongst the native oak trees and a sense of quiet and privacy rarely found."

2. Solage Calistoga, an eco-conscious property with a full-service spa, restaurant and ample lodging. The cottages come with two cruiser bikes apiece, Italian linens and plenty of high-tech amenities. Says Schmalzel, "It's one of those very posh, minimalist properties."

3. Beatnik Studios, a renovated, early 20th-century warehouse near downtown Sacramento, boasting exposed brick walls, stained concrete floors and a changing gallery of artwork. "It's chic; cool," says Schmalzel of the 5,000-square-foot venue. "It has a great urban vibe to it."

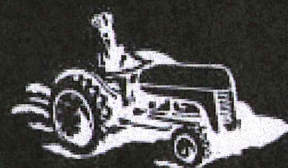


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