



# FROM THE EDITOR

Each year when Christmas Day rolled around in the rural Tennessee community where I grew up, I knew in advance every dish that would be on the spread at the family gathering. In fact, I even knew the placement of each item on the card tables set up for the occasion, because the only things that seemed to change from year to year were the heights of the kids and the sophistication of their toys.

While there's nothing wrong with eating the same dishes each holiday season, and indeed many people find comfort in such consistency, I enjoy the variety and excitement of the culinary offerings in Los Angeles, with its 365-day-a-year growing season and its amazing array of cultures. We have the opportunity here to honor our traditions while learning about those of different cultures and even creating new ones to hand down to our children and grandchildren.

Those of us who are transplants must create our own families here with whom to share our holidays and the special events of our lives. It's a pleasure to knit together unique traditions from past and present. When I make it home for the holidays, I leave room in my luggage to bring back the smoky bacon and country ham that—to my taste buds—have no equal here. It's nice to know I can enjoy them alongside the best California has to offer.

In this season's issue, we behold the local bounty available on both land and sea, both animal and vegetable, both nature-made and handcrafted, both drinkable and edible. Leslee Komaiko introduces us to fishermen who employ environmentally responsible methods of catching fish, and Stephen Lewis gives us a glimpse at California farms producing grass-fed beef. Lisa Kring takes us into the surprising world of backyard vineyards, while Lisa Pilar shares her family recipe for a zingy salsa that's great for spicing up meals in any season—and to can for holiday gift giving. Speaking of gift-giving, Sienna Spencer has done the legwork for us and presents an array of gift ideas that, regardless of budget and taste, is sure to ease the pressure of finding just the right thing for that difficult-to-buy-for person on your holiday shopping list.

Charles Perry gives us a glimpse inside the exotic pantry of a well-traveled veteran food writer—himself! Randy Clemens introduces us to a whole new world of California-crafted beers and helps us pair them with holiday dishes, while mixologist Chuck Taggart expands our options for toasting the New Year with some inspired and inspiring cocktails.

We at *Edible Los Angeles* hope these pages inspire you as you plan your holiday feast this winter and as you select food-related gifts for those fortunate enough to live in your orbit.

We wish you and yours an exceptional holiday season and a healthy and happy 2009. Cheers!

Carul

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