

# BEST OF THE WEST

OCTOBER 2013

◀◀◀ OUR 12 FAVORITE THINGS THIS MONTH ▶▶▶

## 1. *Treats for grown-ups*

Summon these spirits for Halloween—spiked candy so good, it's scary.

Cult favorite **Alma Chocolate** in Portland offers two kinds of bonbon *avec* booze, one laced with Maker's Mark bourbon and one with gin- and Campari-soaked coconut; it also does a chocolate-covered rum- and Madeira-saturated prune with lime anise ganache. Order from [almachocolate.com](http://almachocolate.com); \$2.25/piece. To savor our other picks, you'll have to visit the venues: Chef Jason McClure at **Sazerac** in Seattle adds beer to his caramels for an extra-rich chew. \$\$\$; [sazeracrestaurant.com](http://sazeracrestaurant.com). At **Perbacco Ristorante + Bar** in San Francisco, the Negroni caramel popcorn, coated in Campari and spiked with gin salt, is haunting. \$\$\$; [perbaccosf.com](http://perbaccosf.com).



# 2

## MONUMENTAL NEWS FOR NEW MEXICO

The Rio Grande del Norte, a roughly 240,000-acre swath of handsome country outside Taos slashed through by the Rio Grande gorge, got some presidential love last spring: It landed on the very short list of new national monuments. Now we know that one of the most stubbornly wild corners of the West will stay that way. Autumn is a good time to visit the area's sprawling grasslands, piñon and juniper woodlands, and volcanic peaks for fishing, hiking, mountain biking, or hot-air ballooning. *blm.gov*.

# 3 MOUNTAIN MUSIC

Portland tenor saxophonist Rich Halley has ample jazz cred; over a three-decade career, he's been compared to sax powerhouse Sonny Rollins. Halley's other love is the outdoors—he began hiking the Northwest wilds as a boy. The two passions converge in his new CD, *Crossing the Passes*, inspired by a trek through Oregon's Wallowa Mountains. Says Halley, "For me, there's always been a connection between being in the mountains and playing really good improvised jazz—a freedom, a spiritual uplift." It comes through in every note. \$10; *itunes.com*.



# 4 Joe six-pack

Coffee beer? Absolutely. Craft brewers from Anchorage to San Diego have discovered that what's best about both dark beer and black coffee—the hint of bitterness, the hit of richness—makes them a very compatible combo. Here are three of our favorites; the joe is added at various stages in the brewing process. From left:

### VICTORY AT SEA COFFEE VANILLA IMPERIAL PORTER

From San Diego's Ballast Point Brewing Company comes beer's answer to dessert wine; it tastes like caffe mocha with a vanilla shot. *ballastpoint.com*.

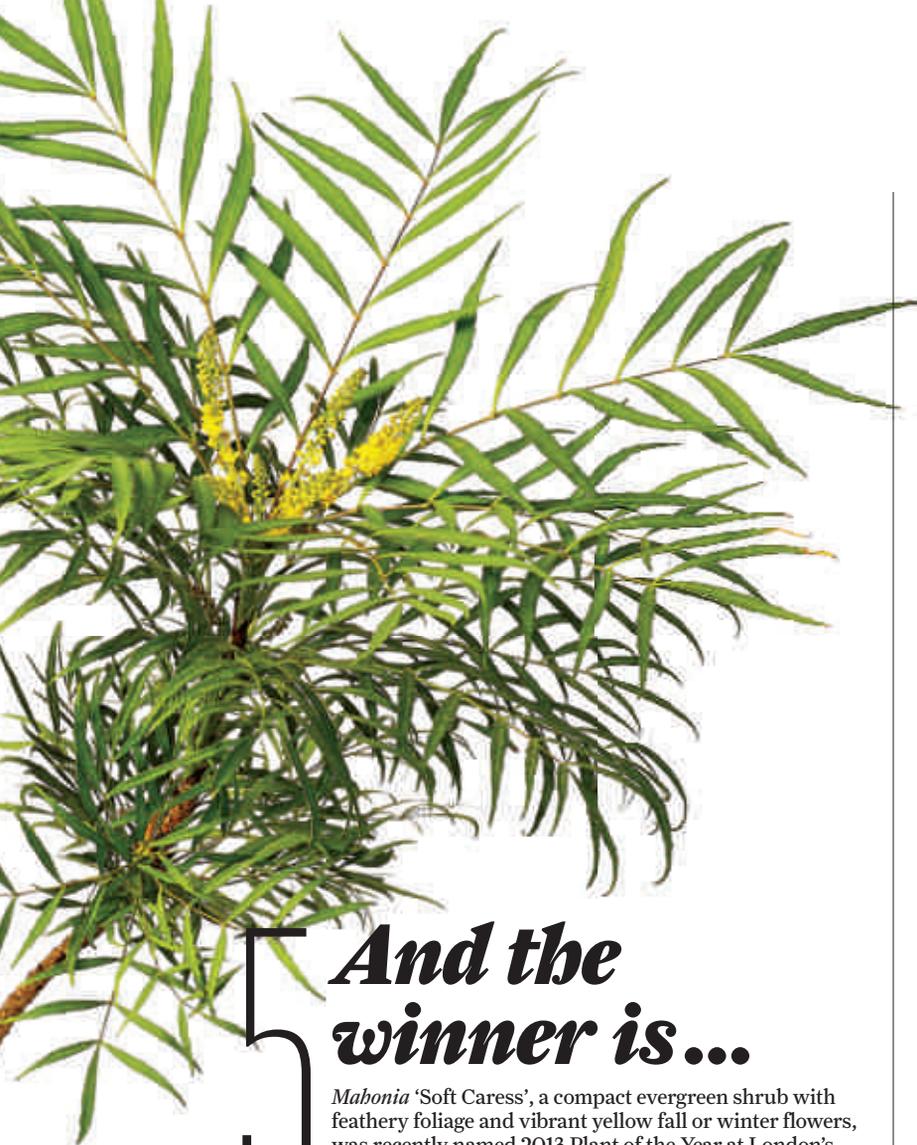
### BLACK PHOENIX CHIPOTLE COFFEE STOUT

The spiciest thing to come out of the O.C. since the Real Housewives: a chile-powered ale from Bootlegger's Brewery in Fullerton, California. It starts off mellow and finishes with a snap of heat. *bootleggersbrewery.com*.

### COOL BEANZ COFFEE PORTER

A lively sip, this clean, lean porter from California's Palo Alto Brewing Company packs a touch of toast with its coffee—think of it as your breakfast beer. *paloaltobrewing.com*.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM RIGHT: JOSÉ MANDOJANA; JEFFERY CROSS (3); C. FREDRICKSON PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES; JEFFERY CROSS



## And the winner is...

*Mahonia* 'Soft Caress', a compact evergreen shrub with feathery foliage and vibrant yellow fall or winter flowers, was recently named 2013 Plant of the Year at London's prestigious Chelsea Flower Show. "It's like the Academy Award for plants!" says horticultural expert Janet Sluis. And we claim bragging rights since 'Soft Caress', bred by a nursery outside Atlanta, is sold exclusively on the West Coast through the *Sunset* Western Garden Collection, which Sluis directs. 'Soft Caress' looks delicate but is hardy to 0° and requires little water. [sunsetwesterngardencollection.com](http://sunsetwesterngardencollection.com) for retailers.

# 6

## S.F. LITQUAKE

What's shakin' for book lovers: San Francisco's 14th annual Litquake, nine days of readings (hundreds of them, including appearances by Isabel Allende and Mary Gaitskill), panels, performances, and a Lit Crawl on closing night during which more than 80 Mission District businesses will host readings and performances. That finale has inspired other cities; L.A. will throw its first and Seattle its second Lit Crawl this month. Oct 11-19; [litquake.org](http://litquake.org).



# 7

## Hot stuff

The new copper Modfire outdoor fireplaces are works of art that happen to be practical. Made individually in Phoenix, they can be kept polished to a high gloss or allowed to mellow into a natural patina. Either way, the inner glow is impressive. From \$2,250; [modfire.com](http://modfire.com).



# 8

## TRANSPORTING OYSTERS

This Seattle seafood spot is definitely going places: The Narwhal truck is the Northwest's first mobile oyster shack. "We'd been doing oyster bars at weddings forever, so it seemed natural to create one on wheels," says co-owner Renee Erickson, left, part of the crew behind the popular restaurant The Walrus and the Carpenter. Under Washington law, Narwhal, which has parked at farmers' markets and a brewery, can serve raw oysters only at private events. Luckily, the general public can gobble its cornmeal-crust fried Hama Hama oysters, served hot with aioli; they're the most toothsome bivalves we've ever tasted. \$; [narwhaloystertruck.com](http://narwhaloystertruck.com).

# OREGON'S UNDISCOVERED WINE COUNTRY

Mention Oregon wine, and most people think of the Willamette Valley, famous for a single grape, Pinot Noir. But 150 miles or so to the south, in the Rogue, Applegate, and Umpqua Valleys, winemakers have been quietly raising the bar. Stretching roughly from Ashland north to Roseburg on either side of Interstate 5, the region includes diverse microclimates and terrain—arid areas, mountains, and temperate valleys. So a startling range of white and red grapes thrives there, from cool-weather Riesling to warmth-loving Tempranillo. The best wines are astonishingly good—and the wineries are uncrowded, inexpensive, and friendly. Here are some of our favorites; all refund the tasting fee with purchase.

## Ledger David Cellars

*(Rogue Valley)* The winery's petite tasting room is flanked by the Rogue Creamery cheese shop and Lillie Belle Farms chocolates. Try the **2010 Tempranillo** (\$28)—tangy red fruit layered over earthy tobacco, smoke, and pepper, all beautifully balanced. \$5 tasting fee; 245A N. Front St., Central Point; ledgerdavid.com.

## Cowhorn Vineyard & Garden

*(Applegate Valley)* In a mini valley within the valley, this spot feels delightfully remote and as wild as its biodynamically grown wines. Try the **2009 Syrah 80** (\$35), with an intriguing savage side; you'll find pepper, meat, leather, and spice under its juicy core of minted plum and berry fruit. \$5 tasting fee; 1665 Eastside Rd., Jacksonville; cowhornwine.com.

## Red Lily Vineyards

*(Applegate Valley)* The tables by the river make a great place for a picnic. Try the **2009 Tempranillo** (\$35). Exotic nutmeg spice, resiny herbs, and forest

aromas underlie plum fruit edged with mocha. \$5 tasting fee; 11777 State 238, Jacksonville; redlilyvineyards.com.

## Abacela

*(Umpqua Valley)* The staff in the grand visitor center is helpful, and the vineyard views are lovely. Try the **2012 Albariño** (\$18); a pretty touch of lemon blossom rounds out the tartness of peach, apricot, and puckery citrus zest. Tasting fee from \$5; 12500 Lookingglass Rd., Roseburg; abacela.com.

## Brandborg Vineyard & Winery

*(Umpqua Valley)* The drive here is longish but lovely, with great wine at the end. Try the **2012 Oregon Pinot Gris** (\$16), with notes of lemongrass, wet stones, and white blossoms around a core of lemon and peach. \$5 tasting fee; 345 First St., Elkton; brandborgwine.com.

## AUTUMN IN APPLEGATE VALLEY.

A Southern Oregon fall offers vivid foliage, fine fishing, and great sipping.



For more wine country getaways, visit [sunset.com/wineregions](http://sunset.com/wineregions)





# 10 *Sur prize*

When the Big Sur Roadhouse opened this summer, it filled the dining gap that existed between folksy Big Sur Deli and pricey Post Ranch Inn on this gorgeous stretch of coast. It serves up an unexpected menu: California cuisine with New Orleans flavors. Stop by for buttermilk biscuits, blackened local fish, and fried-chicken lollipops whipped up by chef Matt Glazer, who grew up in NOLA and knows his stuff. Choose the jaunty, casually elegant dining room or the airy patio (above). Both will be closed for the day on October 4; the chef is getting married. \$\$\$; [bigсурroadhouse.com](http://bigсурroadhouse.com).



# 11 BRIGHT IDEA

Small is beautiful; simple is smart. Those precepts illuminate the Aurora lamp from Portland personal and home accessories company The Good Flock. Created for not-vast rooms from hand-turned oak or walnut, the lamp works as a sconce or on a table; there's also an overhead version. From \$169; [thegoodflock.com](http://thegoodflock.com).



# 12 MILLER TIME

First canning came back; now more and more food DIYers are grinding their own flour. A bit of a pain, yes, but fresh flour tastes better than industrially milled—sweet and nutty—and it retains more nutrients. Savvy bakeries such as The Mill in San Francisco and Portland's Tabor Bread now mill their own flour. If you'd like to get cranking, Portland Homestead Supply Co. has what you need: organic grains, countertop mills, and classes. [homesteadsupplyco.com](http://homesteadsupplyco.com).

COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ALANNA HALE, JOHN CLARK