

REDISCOVERING SAN FRANCISCO'S BARBARY COAST

By Denise Clifton

» A jazz band belts out lively strains from an upper mezzanine, while a bespectacled barkeep serves jewel-toned cocktails. From this scene, one can imagine **Comstock Saloon** at its opening in 1907 (as *Andromeda Saloon*) on the west end of San Francisco's Barbary Coast.



» **Comstock Saloon's bar is a nod to history. Tosca Cafe's dishes, such as the delicate squash below, show the Barbary Coast's modern side.**

From the California Gold Rush to Prohibition, saloons and jazz halls lined Pacific Avenue between Chinatown and the bay. Today, the red-light district named for the North Africa pirating region is gone, and bawdy prospectors of the 19th century have been replaced by tech entrepreneurs of the 21st. But a taste of Barbary Coast spirit lives

(disguised by hot cocoa). *Tosca* was purchased four years ago by restaurateur Ken Friedman and his business partner, award-winning chef April Bloomfield. They cleaned decades of smoke stains off murals and restored checkerboard floors. "We basically spent a fortune to make it look like we did nothing," Friedman says.

Tosca is still a place to enjoy a strong drink, but with its new kitchen, guests also can savor a menu inspired by the Italian murals. For dessert, consider one of those "cappuccinos."

Farther east on Pacific, **Old Ship Saloon** survives from the area's early days. It opened in 1851 in the hull of the *Arkansas*, a ship that ran aground at Bird Island (Alcatraz) and was towed to shore. The ship is long gone, but a bar has stood here ever since.

New owners will soon be taking the helm. One of them, Eric Passetti, has a great uncle who tended bar on Pacific in the early 1900s.

This year, *Old Ship* will close briefly for period-specific updates. Passetti proposes a toast to history at the reopening. "We'll be touching on the past, with a modern spin." ✂



on at destinations preserving the best of the old neighborhood.

At **Comstock Saloon** on Columbus Avenue, the ornate bar caught the eye of Jonny Raglin and his partners in 2009. "We were keen on opening a pre-Prohibition, Gilded-Age-of-the-cocktail bar," he says. "With the drinks and music, we feel we're honoring that tradition."

Also on Columbus Avenue, **Tosca Cafe** opened in 1919 and kept spirits up through Prohibition with its "cappuccino" (with booze

MUSIC IN CALIFORNIA

It's been 50 years since Jimi Hendrix and others rocked the world from Monterey, California, and the Golden State still knows how to throw a festival. With music ranging from jazz to electronica, upcoming CA fests will feature hundreds of acts, tasty local foods and incredible works of art from April through late September. Tickets are selling quickly in anticipation. ■ One of the world's top festivals, **Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival** (aka "Coachella"; April 14–16 and 21–23) will draw up to 125,000 people to the Empire Polo Club in Indio with 100-plus acts, including Lady Gaga, Radiohead and Kendrick Lamar. ■ Fine wine and food will accompany the music of Maroon 5, The Foo Fighters and more than 80 other acts at **BottleRock Napa Valley** (May 26–28). Alaska Airlines is a sponsor and is offering related travel specials. ■ Celebrating the half-century since the 1967 Monterey International



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Pop Festival, **Monterey Summer of Love** will hold its main events, showcasing a variety of artists, June 16–18 at the Monterey County Fair and Event Center. ■ Bringing together major artists in rock, indie, hip-hop and more, **FYF Fest** (July 22–23) at the Exposition Park in Los Angeles offers options for varied tastes. ■ **Outside Lands** (Aug. 11–13), featuring music and comedy, will celebrate its 10th anniversary at Golden Gate Park. ■ Jazz musicians will play across eight stages at the 60th **Monterey Jazz Festival** (Sept. 15–17) at Monterey County Fairgrounds. ■ And get the full experience of music, art, comedy and cuisine during **Kaaboo**, (Sept. 15–17) at Del Mar Race Track and Fairgrounds in San Diego County. —Kara Spencer