



New Year

Julie Mitchell reports how 2020 was a good year for some wines in California. p. 6

Garey De Martini discusses what the new year might bring in San Francisco real estate. p. 11



More online

Lou Barberini on citywide burglaries, Quentin Kopp on Recology, and more.

marinatimes.com



Carey Mulligan as Cassie, who's out for revenge in *Promising Young Woman*. PHOTO: FOCUS FEATURES

## Rounding up the best movies of 2020

BY MICHAEL SNYDER

DESPITE PANDEMIC-MANDATED obstacles such as theater closures and postponed blockbusters, there were some excellent movies released in 2020. Here are 10 of my English language favorites in alphabetical order, with choice foreign, documentary, and miscella-

neous selections listed in the online version of this column.

### 'THE ASSISTANT'

Despite its minimal budget, Kitty Green's peek at the workday of a young woman in an entry-level position with a high-powered New York City-based entertainment firm has teeth. It's a scathing "Me Too" era

up-close-and-personal examination of offhand sexual harassment and the sort of be-glad-that-you're-even-here attitudes you can find at a job that's coveted by many.

Julia Garner is fantastic as Jane — a recent college grad who aspires to be a producer. As such, she's supposed to quietly accept whatever

SNYDER, continued on 9

### REYNOLDS RAP :: Opinion

## What Mark Zuckerberg and the 'Marina Times' have in common

BY SUSAN DYER REYNOLDS

*Virtue signaling: the sharing of one's point of view on a social or political issue to garner praise or acknowledgment of one's righteousness from others who share that point of view, or to rebuke those who do not.*

ON DEC. 15, 2020, THE SAN FRANCISCO BOARD of Supervisors debated what they considered a pressing issue. Was it about creative solutions to house the 8,000-plus people living on the streets? Or concern for the opioid crisis, which by mid-December had caused the deaths of more than 600 people, dwarfing the 173 deaths from Covid-19? Or, speaking of the pandemic, was it a robust exchange on how they could help the many small businesses struggling to stay afloat in the face of unprecedented financial hardship? No, it was none of those things. Instead, the board voted 10-1 in favor of a resolution to remove Mark Zuckerberg's name from San Francisco General Hospital. Why? Because the company he founded, Facebook, is an unquestionable source of misinformation and also exploits the data and privacy of its users.

In 2015, Zuckerberg and his wife, Dr. Priscilla Chan, gave \$75 million to the city's sole public hospital, where

REYNOLDS RAP, continued on 4

### SUPERVISOR :: Opinion

## Standing up for the First Amendment

The Board of Supervisors was wrong to target the 'Marina Times'

BY CATHERINE STEFANI

WHEN I BECAME AN ATTORNEY, AND AGAIN when I became supervisor, I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution. On Jan. 20, after an arduous four years, our country will finally inaugurate a new president — one who respects his office, his fellow Americans, and, yes, the Constitution. It will be a much-needed change. But even after Donald Trump leaves the White House, Americans must remain laser-focused on protecting the Constitution, because we have learned over these past four years just how fragile it can be.

That's why, when my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors last month tried to use their power to intimidate the *Marina Times*, I stood in opposition and stopped them.

For more than two decades, the Board of Supervisors has been required to ensure that all San Franciscans

DISTRICT 2 SUPERVISOR, continued on 2

### APPETITES AND AFTERTHOUGHTS :: Encore



'Power lunches' should return to Original Joe's in 2021. PHOTO: NAOMI ROSE

## Debunking the bunk about food and dining

*A new year always begs for some nostalgia. We hope you enjoy this column from more relaxed times.*

BY ERNEST BEYL

IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, I love writing about food. I love eating it, too. This column is about

debunking the bunk about food and dining. For some time now I've been keeping notes on gross gustatory inaccuracies and misapprehensions — call them fake food news.

### WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE

There are those philistines out there in loopy land who can't stand

Worcestershire sauce. They think it tastes fishy, and they might be right. But I say there's no food that cannot be improved by a dash of this stuff. Bloody Marys, of course — also beef stew, steak tartar, short ribs, turkey gravy, vegetable soup, and Caesar salad.

But what is Worcestershire Sauce? In 1837 two chemists, John Wheeley Lea and William Perrins, made the first Worcestershire sauce. They were asked by Lord Sandys, who had been governor of Bengal, to reproduce a sauce from India that he favored. It missed the mark and the chemists stored it in a cellar. Several months later, they dragged it out and tasted it gingerly. It was terrific. The fish had fermented and that's what provided the tang that Worcestershire sauce still has today. Although the exact recipe is a secret, ingredients besides the fermented fish essence are vinegar, molasses, soy sauce, onion juice, and tamarind paste.

### THE CHEESEBURGER IS SUBLIME

The American cheeseburger is the most sublime food ever created. For me it has the six basic food groups

APPETITES, continued on 6





# HAPPY NEW YEAR



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### District 2 Supervisor

continued *from cover*

have access to public notices by placing ads in newspapers across our city. In general, this process includes competitive bidding, recommendation by the Office of Contract Administration, and approval by the board. Since 2012, the board has designated the *Marina Times* a neighborhood outreach periodical, and we were set to renew its advertising contract once again last year.

Until December.

Despite the fact that this publication received a positive recommendation for contract renewal, seven of my colleagues voted to single out the *Marina Times*. Not only did my colleagues choose to target the *Marina Times* based on its editorial content, but the discussion surrounding that decision was extremely troubling to me.

### PUBLIC REPORTING AND OPINIONS

All elected officials have had negative things written about us in the press, even things that we believe are untrue. Choosing to run for office means choosing to open ourselves up to criticism, fair or not. But taking on that responsibility does not mean that we get to become the arbiters of truth, political viewpoints, or journalistic standards, especially in response to critical stories or tweets about us.

That is far outside our prerogative and far afield of the First Amendment. And as we have seen over the past four years of the Trump administration, that is a dangerous place to be as public officials.

Whether or not we agree with what it prints, what its staff writes on Twitter, or what it says about any of us in any format, the *Marina Times* is a neighborhood publication and its rights must be protected.

After my strenuous objections in early December, the *Marina Times's* contract was renewed the following week—unanimously.

I strongly believe that we must do everything we can to protect our local news outlets and promote the First Amendment, especially after the Trump presidency.

The 21st century has seen a remarkable consolidation of local news outlets,

which has coincided with the rise of social media platforms acting as gatekeepers to information and the Trump administration's vicious attacks on the Constitution. Sadly, this has created a media ecosystem that has left too many individuals without access to quality news and too many public servants unaccountable to the people we are supposed to serve.

### A FREE PRESS

In the last 15 years, according to a study out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a quarter of all U.S. newspapers have died, creating news deserts and harmful information vacuums. This means that at least 1,800 communities that had a local news outlet in 2004 no longer had one at the beginning of 2020.

At the same time, we have seen the development of a pernicious brand of national politics that denigrates reporters and those seeking truth through journalism. It is incumbent on all levels of government to do everything we can to reverse these trends, rather than facilitate them.

The events of 2020, including the city's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing investigations into City Hall corruption, have further reminded us of the critical nature of local journalism, which makes the attempt to stifle the *Marina Times* all the more troubling.

Residents of the Marina, Cow Hollow, and beyond rely on this paper for news and information about what is happening in San Francisco.

In these pages were some of the first stories about alleged corruption at Public Works and the Public Utilities Commission. Of course this reporting was unflattering to some in local government and politics, but that is the nature of journalism.

So, as we welcome President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, let's also recommit to our shared values, including freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Those values are truly more important now than ever before, and we can never take them for granted. As always, I am here to help you in the new year and beyond, and I will continue to stand up for responsible and accountable government at all levels.

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## MarinaTimes

marinatimes.com • **Contact:** info@marinatimes.com

**Letters to the Editor:** letters@marinatimes.com

**Advertising:** advertising@marinatimes.com

Calendar submissions due by the **15th of the month** to calendar@marinatimes.com

- Publisher** Brian Calle publisher@marinatimes.com
- Editor Emeritus** Susan Dyer Reynolds susan@marinatimes.com
- Executive Editor** John Zipperer john@marinatimes.com
- Managing Editor** Lynette Majer lynette@marinatimes.com
- Design Director** Sara Brownell sara@marinatimes.com

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# Heart trouble

Small business is the heart of the economy  
and the community, and it's in trouble

BY JOHN ZIPPERER

**S**mall Business Saturday has been a post-Thanksgiving tradition for a decade, drawing people to neighborhood commercial corridors to fulfill their holiday shopping lists. This year, business closures, expanded online shopping, and stay-at-home orders made things very different, and the eyes of many people are on financial help from city, state, or federal sources.

City officials report that restaurants in particular have been hard hit, with their closure rate almost three times as high as other small businesses, as measured by a number of metrics. But small businesses come in all kinds. Hearing “small business,” most people likely think about retail shops, gyms, and restaurants of the type that line Union and Chestnut Streets. But there are also a lot of mom-and-pop landlords who have gone nearly a year without rental income. Fitness instructors, yoga trainers, suppliers of security to stores, office cleaners, and other businesses that have not been able to function fully or at all since March 2020 — they, too, will be either restarting their businesses or else looking for new work themselves.

At a Dec. 22 special meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Supervisor Matt Haney laid out the challenge: “For some [small businesses], the option to move businesses outdoors was a lifeline for those who could keep operating. Sixty percent of the small business owners who participated reported they wanted to continue operating outdoors. Ninety percent said these outdoor spaces kept them from closing permanently. Now, without being open, restaurants have been forced back into takeout-only, which means it is too [costly] to stay open at all. The most recent stay-at-home order, which reduced capacity across the city, came with no additional support at all. Many small businesses in our city feel like they have been left to fend for themselves, [with] few options. Many have dug into their personal savings or have gone deeply in debt.”

Just days after the Supervisors meeting, Haney introduced a bill that, if passed, could provide up to \$50 million in city funding for music and entertainment venues.

## A CITY MATTER

The success or failure of small businesses is no small matter, and it affects everyone in town, whether or not they work for a small business. In a Nov. 19, 2020, press release, Mayor London Breed's office noted: "San Francisco is home to approximately 94,000 small businesses, which make up 94 percent of all businesses in the city. This vital sector of our economy generates almost 360,000 jobs, employing about half of San Francisco's workforce and contributing to the vibrancy of the city's diverse neighborhoods."

Breed was touting voter approval of Proposition H in the November ballot. This made some changings to the city's planning code to make it easier for businesses to do new things and to cut some red tape and expedite permitting. It's a far cry from a robust reform of the city's rules for businesses, but it was one of the few olive branches the city has held out to the business community in recent years. The fact that it passed with more than 60 per-

cent voter approval might inspire City Hall to pay more attention to San Francisco's many political barriers to small business success.

For now, with the pandemic still raging and vaccinations just starting to take place, hope is being placed in help from above. At the supervisors meeting, hope was expressed that Congress and the new administration in Washington would provide relief to states and small businesses. While Congress continues to fight over additional pandemic stimulus bills, the Small Business Administration provides a resource to assistance available for small businesses: [sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources](https://sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources).

## A MATTER OF SIZE

Global e-commerce behemoths Amazon and Walmart had quite a nice pandemic, thank you very much. In late December, Brookings Institution's Molly Kinder and Laura Stateler say the two companies increased their profits last year by 56 percent, and shareholders became much richer, with Amazon and Walmart stocks rising a respective 70 percent and 36 percent. Meanwhile, the Brookings scholars write, their workers' wages "will have grown only 7 percent and 6 percent by the end of the year, even after the new December bonuses."


On the small business side, things have not been so rosy. In October 2020, Alignable issued the results of a survey it conducted with more than 520,000 business owners on the impact of the coronavirus and the recovery of the small business economy in the United States and Canada. The headline news from the survey included 42 percent of small and medium-sized businesses possibly not making it to 2021; year-on-year consumer spending was down 50 percent for restaurants and a whopping 74 percent for arts and entertainment; nearly 70 percent of these businesses were still suffering negative consequences from the pandemic. If there was much of a silver lining, it was that 89 percent of fully closed businesses planned to reopen at some point.

When closed businesses are able to reopen, they will have additional costs, as well as newly accumulated debts and possibly lower revenue than before the pandemic to pay for it all. The owner of an animal boarding company told Alignable, “No one’s traveling and leaving their pets here, and I’m paying \$12,000 per month in rent.”

The pandemic might wane, but companies will still have to pay for increased cleaning and sanitizing, not to mention perhaps replacing employees who moved out of the Bay Area, vandalism to temporarily closed stores, and other costs.

It might take a while for things to return to normal, but at least as the pandemic begins to fade with the spread of vaccination, the good news could be a fairly strong spring back of the economy. People will return to work, rents will resume being paid, and there will be great pressure on lenders and legislators to create flexible debt relief rules. But when that happens, the landscape of San Francisco's small business community could have changed dramatically since March 2020.

Feedback: [letters@marinatimes.com](mailto:letters@marinatimes.com); author email: [john@marinatimes.com](mailto:john@marinatimes.com)




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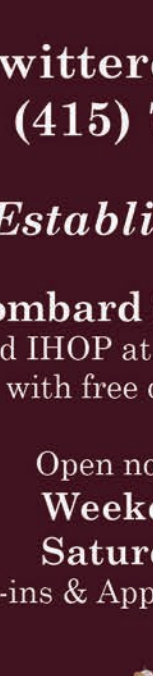
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Reynolds Rap  
continued from cover

Chan worked at the time as a pediatrician. Chief executive of the Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center, Dr. Susan Ehrlich, said the donation allowed the hospital to acquire state-of-the-art technology, and the naming reflects their appreciation. Fortunately for Dr. Ehrlich, the board's resolution is nonbinding, meaning it doesn't have the force of law, nor does it require the hospital to do anything.

In the 10-1 vote, the lone nay came from board president Norman Yee — yes, even the almost always sensible Catherine Stefani voted in favor. But Yee wasn't doing it out of appreciation for the \$75 million, he just "couldn't support the condemnation without more of a policy discussion." He did say he would support removing Zuckerberg's name from the hospital while leaving Chan's name. That makes zero sense, of course, because unless the salaries of pediatricians have gone through the roof, Chan's money also comes from Facebook. Ironically, Yee was among several supervisors behind the 2015 resolution that approved the gift and name change.

I would have expected a resolution making it Zuckerberg-Chan day after the hospital was the first in the city to administer coronavirus vaccines, not grandstanding about an agreement that, as co-sponsor Supervisor Gordon Mar pointed out, the board has no authority to revoke. It's not as though the city plans to give back the money, either. I'm no Facebook fan, but the whole thing seems as hypocritical as it is absurd. Then again, hypocrisy and absurdity often define the Board of Supervisors.

Walton and Ronen celebrated Madrigal as a youth activist, but in reality, he was a gang member who the Feds say committed two murders — one in each of their districts.

**'MARINA TIMES': ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE**

At the board's Dec. 1 meeting, Supervisors Dean Preston and Hillary Ronen — both lawyers — developed a case of amnesia about the First Amendment. Since 2012, the *Marina Times* has participated in a program worth about \$5,000 a year in which the city places public notices in neighborhood newspapers. Bonus points are given for women ownership (check) and being local (check). Every year — including last year, when Preston and Ronen were also on the board — the contract has been rubber stamped. But in 2020, after I criticized Preston for his incompetent handling of the homeless in the Haight, and Ronen for penning legislation to stop owner buyouts of tenants despite having bought a building with owner buyouts of tenants, they decided to single out the *Marina Times* to prevent us from receiving "a dime of public money," as Preston put it. Supervisor Shamann Walton chimed in, too, saying it "wasn't a First Amendment issue" and the city shouldn't fund a publication that prints "rumors." I assume he's talking about my July 2020 column about the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Community Benefits program — a pay-to-play scheme where contractors "choose" to donate to nonprofits in exchange for lucrative jobs with the agency. It just so happens, before he was elected supervisor, Walton was executive director of one of the most prolific beneficiaries of those benefits, Young Community Developers.

Only four supervisors — Catherine Stefani, Aaron Peskin, Asha Safai, and Rafael Mandelman — rejected Preston's trashing of the First Amendment. Progressives are fine, of course, with blogs like Mission Local and 48 Hills that write glowingly about them, and moderates have no problem with the *San Francisco Chronicle* ignoring for decades the widespread corruption brought to light in this column and now ensnaring the city's moderate-appointed officials in federal indictments — but most were fine with defuncting the one newspaper that criticizes them both.

**VIRTUE SIGNALING IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES**

It would have been a lot more painful listening to the three supervisors judge my character if they weren't so bad at it. Take for example, the case of Fernando Madrigal. On April 9, 2020, Ronen and Walton attended a rally on the steps of City Hall to support legislation, co-signed by Preston, to close Juvenile Hall. Walton and Ronen stood beside 21-year-old Madrigal as he spoke about spending time at juvie for robbery when he was 13. Lauding him as a "youth activist," they presented Madrigal as their poster boy for why Juvenile Hall should be permanently shuttered.

At a July 30, 2019 rally against gun violence, Madrigal once again joined Walton on the steps of City Hall, this time alongside Sha'ray Johnson, mother of 15-year-old Day'von Hann, who was tragically gunned down at 24th and Capp Streets on July 8. Just two weeks after that rally, federal authorities arrested Madrigal as Day'von's killer. Madrigal, a member of the Mission Norteños, mistook Hann as a rival gang member. Then, on Dec. 15, the feds indicted Madrigal in connection with a second killing after he allegedly lured the victim near Candlestick Park on July 12, 2018, claiming he wanted to buy marijuana. Missing for more than a year, tree trimmers found the victim's bones in a wooded area of Oakland. The skull was recovered a month later. In the superseding indictment, Madrigal is charged with racketeering conspiracy and two counts of use of a firearm causing death.

Had Walton and Ronen done a little background work, they may have found Madrigal's Instagram account with images of a black short-barreled rifle capable of firing the rounds used in the Hann shooting, and a video allegedly depicting Madrigal loading a magazine with the same ammunition on July 6, 2019 — just two days before Hann was killed.

Walton and Ronen celebrated Madrigal as a "youth activist," but in reality, he was a gang member who the Feds say committed two murders — one in each of their districts. Unlike the hours spent deriding Mark Zuckerberg and the *Marina Times*, however, the supervisors have been silent on Madrigal. Perhaps they're too busy anticipating their next virtue signaling opportunity while solving none of San Francisco's problems.

Visit [marinatimes.com](http://marinatimes.com) for exclusive Reynolds Rap columns.

E-mail: [susan@marinatimes.com](mailto:susan@marinatimes.com). Follow the Marina Times on Twitter @TheMarinaTimes and like us on Facebook @MarinaTimes.





## SIPPY DISPATCH

Hello,

I am Sippy Bear. You may know me as Spirit Animal to the Radhaus. I secretly influence the energy, feeling, inspiration and Gemütlichkeit of the Beerhall, and so forth. However, the time for me to communicate with you directly has now come. Human words I do not understand. Under the authority of Great Spirit we stand. The gifts of freedom, creativity, and imagination deeply connect us all to this realm. I am grateful. Only with much help and kindness from the Radhaus Art Department am I able to send these words to you now. Please, forgive any mistake or offence. With you I will share my Medicine.

Into deepest winter we enter, but I am still awake! I am a Grizzly. It is customary for me during the dark months to hibernate. Dream Time it should be. Could it be? I have no idea how this would feel for someone who is not a Bear. What I am feeling could be something like what your Superman experiences in the presence of a yellow Sun – if you believe in such things. However, I know the truth, and because of this, I have no fear – but I do have the wish that you hear my message, and share in my Gemütlichkeit. I cannot rest. OK. So, I have taken command of most departments and the complete resources still available to us at this time. I also ask for your help.

Will you help me?

With your imagination, an internet connection, a printer, an envelope, a stamp, and the will to create your reality, you can assist me. Giving of your creative power is an inspiration – your positive energy is a unique part of Great Mystery. This is how real Medicine is shared.

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3. Print it – and please enjoy filling it out. Follow your intuition. Remember, it is your imagination and creative spirit that build and sustain our greatest treasures.

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5. ... and, to thank all of you for your effort (and with permission): If I receive from you a filled-out Adventure Menu Note Sheet (with a legitimate and legible return mailing address) I can make sure you receive the special First Prize (of many prizes) in my top secret Loyalty Club Program, as well as the official top secret Loyalty Club Punch Card.

I am awake. Stay aware. Love always,

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## QUOTES SIPPY'S CHOICE

“Hold on to what is good,  
even if it is a handful of earth.  
Hold on to what you believe,  
even if it is a tree that stands by itself.  
Hold on to what you must do,  
even if it is a long way from here.  
Hold on to your life,  
even if it is easier to let go.  
Hold on to my hand, even if someday  
I'll be gone away from you.”

– Crowfoot  
(Blackfoot warrior and orator 1830 - 1890)

“If America could be, once again,  
a nation of self-reliant farmers,  
craftsmen, hunters, ranchers,  
and artists, then the rich would have  
little power to dominate others.  
Neither to serve nor to rule.  
That was the American Dream”

– Edward Abbey  
(American novelist 1927 - 1989)

“Homemade broth, of course, is a  
whole food product. It's a slow food,  
whole food, and real food that has  
been nourishing and healing people  
for tens of thousands of years.”

– Sally Fallon Morell  
(American author and teacher)

“I don't think of money,  
I think of milk and honey.”

– Dr. Teeth  
(Muppet musician, poet and comedian)



THE NATURAL FOREST  
MOTHER EARTH

WORD CHOICE AND ARTWORK BY SIPPY BEAR, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE RADHAUS RECONNAISSANCE BUREAU AND ART DEPARTMENT  
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THANK YOU !!



# Raise a glass to 2020

## It wasn't all bad for California wine

BY JULIE MITCHELL

IT'S A HUGE UNDERSTATEMENT TO SAY that 2020 was a rough year, and California's wine industry suffered multiple crises — the pandemic that closed winery tasting rooms, weeks of brutal heat, and horrific wildfires that burned wineries and engulfed the entire Bay Area in thick smoke and falling ash. As a result, the state's wine grape growers produced less wine in 2020 than was forecast. And yet, according to *Wine Industry Advisor*, of the 4,200 wineries in California, fewer than 20 reported significant damage to wineries. Smoke taint (when grapes exposed to smoke results in wine that carries a faint off aroma and the taste of smoke) did do some damage, but plenty of delicious varietals were crafted in 2020. White wines like Chardonnay and Riesling, which are harvested earlier than reds so the grapes were picked before the fires, did especially well.

### ONLINE FOR WINE

Covid-19 also brought changes to the way we drink wine, and to the way in which we buy it. For one, more consumers buy their wine online, and once buyers purchase wine this way, they tend to repeat it. According to Pew Research, more than 80 percent of Americans now purchase wine online, and online wine sales are growing. Virtual wine tastings and ads on social media are also convincing consumers to purchase wine directly from wineries.

We're drinking more wine, and more premium wines at that.

### BIG SPENDERS

We're also drinking more wine, and more premium wines at that. In a Dec. 18, 2020 *New York Times* article, Danelle Kosmal, vice president of beverages and alcohol at the research firm Nielson, said, "Consumers are trading up and spending more, and it's a trend that's been accelerated since the pandemic started." Many Americans are traveling less and not eating out, so they're more likely to splurge for wine at home, where it can cost half of what it does in restaurants.

### OLDER AND BETTER

This trend is inspiring some top California wineries to release older vintages — library or cave releases from winery cellars are doing well. For example, *The New York Times* reported that Napa Valley's Quintessa sold its first "decade release" wine in 2020 at \$250 a bottle. And Charles Krug, one of the oldest wineries in the country, rereleased a collection of "vintage select" Cabernet Sauvignons from 1974, 1991, and 2003 for \$1,000; 2020's vintage select Cabernet is \$125. According to SipSource, which collects data from wine and spirits distributors, sales of premium wines have grown more than other categories.

Another thing to note about California winemaking in 2020 is that while the entire state suffered from excessive heat and wildfire smoke, wine-growing regions other than Napa and Sonoma were somewhat less impacted. Growing conditions in appellations in the Russian River Valley, Lake County, Mendocino County, Santa Barbara County, Paso Robles and



Online and premium wine sales have surged during the pandemic. PHOTO: FEVERPITCHED

the Santa Maria Valley, Lodi, and El Dorado Hills benefited from an early, mostly mild spring and just a few heat spikes. Wine makers from these areas believe their 2020 varietals have great potential. And there are plenty of reasonably priced, newly released wines on the market from all over the state to buy now.

### NEW RELEASES TO TRY NOW

It's too early to sample most 2020 vintages, but whether you plan to buy your wine online or directly from a winery, here are some of *Wine Enthusiast's* top choices for 2020 affordable new releases from California:

**Brady Vineyard Paso Robles Zinfandel 2018, \$24.** Rich red fruit and contrasting stone, savory spice, and ample acidity and tannins.

**Birichino Besson Vineyard Central Coast Old Vine Grenache 2018, \$25.** Dark, ripe berries and spices with fresh acidity and minerality.

**San Simeon Monterey Estate Reserve Pinot Noir 2019, \$25.** Aromas of Bing cherry, cloves, and other baking spices, and a smooth, silky mouthfeel.

**Four Vines Naked Central Coast Chardonnay 2018, \$11.** Vibrant with

flavors of crisp Asian pear and mint on the nose, and a palate rich with melon, lemon, and guava.

**Husch Anderson Valley Dry Gewurztraminer 2018, \$15.** Dry and flavorful with bright grapefruit and pear flavors; full bodied with a lingering finish.

**Girasole Mendocino County Pinot Blanc 2019, \$14.** Ripe, luscious melon flavors balanced by a smooth, buttery feel with citrus accents.

**Kendall-Jackson Santa Rosa Vintner's Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2019, \$15.** Bright, ripe fruit flavors and zesty acidity in a full-bodied white.

Of course there are many more new wines to try and more on their way. If you'd like expert help selecting them, look to California Wine Merchant (2113 Chestnut Street, 415-567-0646, [californiawinemerchant.com](http://californiawinemerchant.com)) or The Jug Shop (1590 Pacific Avenue, 415-885-2922, [thejugshop.com](http://thejugshop.com)) And when the 2020 varietals roll out, you may just want to put one away to bring out in remembrance of a year that none of us will ever forget.

Email: [julie@marinatimes.com](mailto:julie@marinatimes.com)

## Appetites

continued from cover

necessary for good living. Yes, I said six, not five. Protein (burger), vegetables (lettuce), fruit (tomato), grain (bun), dairy (cheese) — and grease. Without grease a cheeseburger is not a cheeseburger.

### SAUERKRAUT IS NOT SOUR

I love sauerkraut. Sauerkraut is not sour when it is prepared correctly. The trick is to rinse it thoroughly in several water baths before you cook it. The sauerkraut will mellow out. The only time it's permissible for sauerkraut to be sour (so the gods decree) is when an uncooked forkful is added to a hot dog in its bun. Hot dogs should be slathered with mustard, topped with a squeeze of catsup, chopped raw onion, pickle relish and, of course, some sour sauerkraut.

### ROASTING A CHICKEN

You don't have to baste a roasting chicken. The chicken is perfectly capable of basting itself — if you teach it how. I got this from food maven Ruth Reichl. Cut a few slivers of fat from your chicken and with your finger insert them between the skin and the breast meat before you put the bird in the oven. The fat will soon melt and baste the chicken for you.

### ALLEN GINSBERG'S BORSCHT

Common knowledge has the Beats dining on cheap Chinese food and



Author Ernie Beyl enjoying a Bloody Mary at Original Joe's in 2018. IMAGE: STAFF PHOTO

also Italian stuff at the Old Spaghetti Factory on Green Street. But Allen Ginsberg favored Russian borscht. Here's how he made it: Take a dozen or so beets, peel them, and chop into bite-size pieces along with their stems and leaves. Salt lightly and boil in about 8 to 10 cups of water until you have a thick, red soup. Add a bit of sugar and the juice of a lemon. Add a few small boiled potatoes. Serve with a dollop of sour cream on top.

### ALICE WATERS ON SEASONAL DINING

Alice Waters did not invent dining on seasonal foods. She picked up the idea on a visit to France, and on reading the cookbooks of expatriate Richard Olney. Our own San Francisco food guru Narsai David preceded her on the seasonal stuff, too.

### A MICHELIN STAR FOR COSTCO

Michelin stars don't necessarily mean you're going to enjoy your meal. If a Cost-

co hot dog makes you happy, go for it. Come to think about it, the Costco food counter deserves one Michelin star — for its chopped onion machine.

### PIZZA INEQUALITY

Not all pizzas are created equal. Some are mushy and doughy. Others are too oregano-ish. There are more than 20 joints that serve pizza in North Beach. All are good. Shop around and find a pizza parlor that pleases you. I like 'em thin-crust and crispy.

### THE POWER LUNCH

Just what is a power lunch? The term originated in New York (of course) in 1979 by Lee Eisenberg's *Esquire* magazine article — "America's Most Powerful Lunch." Eisenberg was referring to the famous Four Seasons, the iconic restaurant in the Seagram Building. He said the Four Seasons was the place where deals were made. Do we have power lunch restaurants in San Francisco? Of course! Three come to mind — Le Central, Sam's Grill and Seafood Restaurant, and Original Joe's. But do you have to eat there to do a deal? No way! In this city deals are also done in pizza joints, coffeehouses, and on the sidewalks in front of take-out delis. San Francisco is more egalitarian than New York. Let's keep it that way.

Visit [marinatimes.com](http://marinatimes.com) for more columns by Ernie Beyl.



# Warm up with hearty soups

## Perfect for a cold winter’s night

BY SUSAN DYER REYNOLDS

WHEN WINTER TURNS COLD and blustery, my thoughts turn to hot, hearty soups. One of my favorites is stracciatella, or Italian egg drop soup. The name means “torn apart” or “rags,” because the egg looks like torn rags in the soup. It’s an easy recipe, and it’s also good for you if you include a “super green” like kale or spinach. For the meatballs, use my grandfather’s recipe for ricotta meatballs (available at [marinatimes.com](http://marinatimes.com)), but roll them smaller, or use your own favorite meatball recipe. You can make stracciatella vegetarian by leaving out the meatballs and using vegetable stock instead of chicken stock.

One of my other favorites is onion soup casserole. It’s basically French onion soup but less labor intensive, because you make it in a casserole rather than in individual bowls. Like the stracciatella it can easily be made vegetarian by substituting the beef stock for vegetable stock. My mom always had a pot of homemade stock simmering away on the stove during the winter months. I make stock in large batches and freeze it in quart containers. I recommend making your own stock for both of these soups, but if you don’t

have time, be sure the store-bought stock is low sodium.

### STRACCIATELLA (ITALIAN EGG DROP SOUP)

Serves 4–6

- 6 cups chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- 1 cup meatballs, rolled the size of a large marble (optional)
- 1 package Three Bridges Organic Cheese Tortellini (optional)
- 1 cup kale or baby spinach (optional; see below)
- 2 large eggs (preferably pastured)
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese for serving

Bring broth to a simmer in an 8-quart pot or Dutch oven. Add salt and pepper. Add the meatballs, tortellini, and, if you’re using, the kale. Simmer for 8 to 10 minutes, or until meatballs are cooked through, and kale is slightly tender.

Meanwhile, in a small measuring cup with a spout, beat together eggs. Turn the heat off the stock, and use one hand to stir stock in a figure eight motion and the other hand to pour beaten eggs into stock in a slow, steady stream. If you are using spinach instead of kale, place a handful in the bottom of each serving bowl, and ladle soup



Stracciatella soup with tortellini, meatballs, and spinach. PHOTO: SUSAN DYER REYNOLDS

over it. Top each bowl with freshly grated Parmesan cheese, and serve immediately.

### ONION SOUP CASSEROLE

Serves 4–6

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 cups Spanish (yellow) onions (about three medium onions), thinly sliced
- ¼ cup sherry or sweet port
- 6 cups beef or vegetable stock
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- 2 cups plain croutons or thin slices of toasted baguette (divided)
- 3 cups Gruyère cheese (divided)
- 2 tablespoons fresh Italian (flat leaf) parsley, finely minced

Melt the butter in an 8-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onions and

sauté for 10 minutes, or until soft and caramelized. Add the sherry or port and sauté for 10 more minutes. Add the stock, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil and cook over medium-low heat for 15 minutes.

In the bottom of an ovenproof round casserole or Dutch oven (7 to 8 quart with sides a minimum of 4 inches high), arrange 1 cup of croutons or toasted baguette, and sprinkle with 1 cup of cheese. Add the remaining cup of croutons or baguette and top with another cup of cheese. Fill the casserole with the soup and sprinkle remaining cup of cheese on top. Place casserole on a cookie sheet lined with foil, and bake for approximately 30 minutes, or until the top is bubbling and golden brown. Ladle soup into bowls, sprinkle parsley over top of each, and serve immediately.

E-mail: [recipes@marinatimes.com](mailto:recipes@marinatimes.com)



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You no longer need to go to the Art Institute for live-model sessions. PHOTOS: AMY BERK

Art World ∴ Art at home

SFAI’s free online life-drawing sessions for all ages are a great stay-at-home solution

Charcoal, conte crayons, graphite sticks, pencil, and paper are all you need to participate in the San Francisco Art Institute’s free Virtual Open Drawing Studio

BY SHARON ANDERSON

AS CALIFORNIA’S STAY AT HOME orders are extended, SFAI’s City Studio program is offering to the public a free-for-all-ages collection of online drawing lessons using live models. Building on SFAI’s history of offering free live-model sessions on Friday afternoons since the 1950s, the uploaded sessions create a custom learning platform. In a series of six different lessons in life drawing, beginners and more experienced artists are presented with opportunities to explore drawing techniques.

Like many of you, I used to go out. Events, plays, galleries, museums, concerts, films — you name it. As an arts writer and painter, this has always been a big part of my life. Since March, I’ve replaced these activities with reading and painting at home, and going on nature walks. Hard times can, of course, drive us a little crazy. But they can also give us a genius for living and a flair for the fun. Recently I spent a Sunday with my paints and canvases. In what felt like five minutes I’d burned up about seven hours. This is my new “going out.”

BACK IN ART SCHOOL

I recently attempted these online drawing classes. Life drawing takes me back to when I was studying for my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting. The subdued lighting, the spotlight on the model,

even the sound of graphite on paper while looking up at the figure transported me to another time. An unexpected luxury that I never had in art school is the enjoyment of going back and revisiting the episodes to fine tune the drawings or even attempt a different approach. These sessions feature models of all ages and themes such as: Black Joy, Drawing Activism, The Figure as Visual Poetry, and of course an Exploration of Drawing Materials.

Of course, it isn’t just about using up time. We’re all looking forward to life returning to a semblance of normalcy. Art, in my experience, can ground us in the present moment in a way that few things can. That focus on what is right in front of us fills the hours with something that feels meaningful.

SFAI’S CITY STUDIO PROGRAM

Now in its 16th year, SFAI’s City Studio program engages youth with the intent to nurture their passion in the arts, strengthening their conceptual thinking and foundation skills, and to inspire their future interest in a creative life.

All drawing sessions are available online and remain available indefinitely for free: <https://sfai.edu/public-youth-education/open-drawing-studio>.

Sharon Anderson is an artist and writer in Southern California. She can be reached at [mindtheimage.com](mailto:mindtheimage.com).

The Best of Books ∴ What’s flying off the shelves

The Marina Books Inc. best-seller list

COMPILED BY KEVIN MCCARTHY

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. **The Vanishing Half: A Novel**, by Brit Bennett
2. **Ready Player Two: A Novel**, by Ernest Cline
3. **Hamnet**, by Maggie O’Farrell

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. **A Promised Land**, by Barack Obama
2. **Spirits of San Francisco: Voyages through the Unknown City**, by Gary Kamiya and Paul Madonna
3. **The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz**, by Erik Larson

PAPERBACK FICTION

1. **The Queen’s Gambit: A Novel**, Walter Tevis
2. **Shuggie Bain: A Novel**, by Douglas Stuart
3. **Interior Chinatown**, by Charles Yu

PAPERBACK NONFICTION

1. **Life Undercover: Coming of Age in the CIA**, by Amarylis Fox
2. **Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants**, by Robin Wall Kimmerer
3. **Sapiens: A Graphic History (The Birth of Humankind)**, by Yuval Harari

CHILDREN’S BEST SELLERS

1. **Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Deep End**, by Jeff Kinney
2. **The Couch Potato**, by Jory John and Pete Oswald
3. **The Boy and the Gorilla**, by Jackie Azúa Kramer and Cindy Derby

NEW AND NOTABLE RELEASES

**One Life**, by Megan Rapinoe  
The Olympic gold medalist and two-time Women’s World

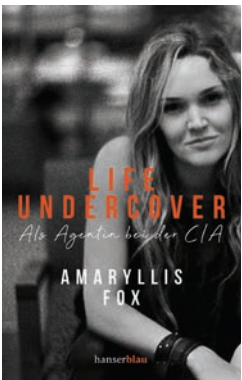
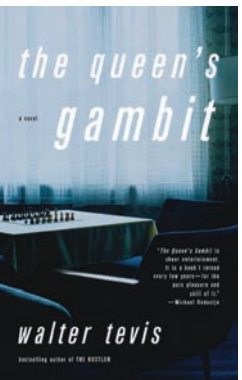
Cup champion describes her childhood in a conservative California town, her athletic achievements, and her public advocacy of civil rights and urgently needed social change.

Red Comet: The Short Life and Blazing Art of Sylvia Plath, by Heather Clark

The highly anticipated new biography of Sylvia Plath that focuses on her remarkable literary and intellectual achievements, while restoring the woman behind the long-held myths about her life and art.

Memorial: A Novel, by Bryan Washington

Japanese-American chef Mike and Black daycare teacher Benson begin reevaluating their stale relationship after Mike departs for Japan to visit his dying father and Benson is suddenly stuck with his visiting mother-in-law, who becomes an unconventional roommate.



Cobble Hill: A Novel, by Cecily Von Ziegesar

In this eclectic Brooklyn neighborhood, private storms brew amongst four married couples and their children. “Breezy, witty, and compulsively fun to read” (Kirkus Reviews), *Cobble Hill* is a highly

entertaining portrait of contemporary family life and the colorful characters who call Brooklyn home.

Find Kevin McCarthy at Books Inc. in the Marina (2251 Chestnut Street, 415-931-3633, [booksinc.net/sfmarina](http://booksinc.net/sfmarina)).



demeaning treatment is required at the office, particularly the distinctly Harvey Weinstein-like behavior of her boss and the diffidence of his enablers. Tightly written and directed by Green, it's a short, sharp jab at an abusive, oppressive circumstance predicated on sex and gender.

'MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM'

This screen adaptation of playwright August Wilson's award-winning period drama, primarily set at a recording session in 1927 Chicago, crackles with righteous anger and shimmies with vintage musical motifs as it depicts the tension between a legendary blues singer, the members of her band, and the white manager and record company owner trying to cut some tracks. But most of all, it's a showcase for brilliant performances by two actors at the top of their respective games: Viola Davis as Ma Rainey, historically known as the Mother of the Blues, and, in his last screen role, the late Chadwick Boseman as a talented, arrogant trumpet player with a tragic back story and a yen for solo stardom.

'MANK'

Directed by David Fincher, *Mank* offers many pleasures, led by Gary Oldman's grand performance as the title character: the immensely witty, talented, alcohol-pickled, real-life screenwriter Herman J. Mankiewicz (nicknamed Mank). This gorgeous, glistening black-and-white pastiche tells the story of Mank's legendary struggle to crank out the script for the now-exalted 1941 Orson Welles masterwork *Citizen Kane* on a tight deadline while Mank was laid up with a broken leg in a desert bungalow. There are copious flashbacks to his early 1930s career on the studio lots and his friendship with wealthy, powerful media magnate William Randolph Hearst (Charles Dance) — the inspiration for *Citizen Kane* — and Hearst's exuberant wife, the actress Marion Davies (an adorable, sympathetic Amanda Seyfried), and more. Fincher offers a lot of inside Hollywood material here, but for a cinephile, *Mank* is a heck of a meal.

'NOMADLAND'

Filmmaker Chloe Zhao's finely tuned, deeply affecting 2017 movie *The Rider* was no fluke. She's followed it up with the poignant odyssey of a tough, taciturn older woman who decides to simply travel the heartland in her modest van and take on a series of seasonal jobs after the death of her husband. Frances McDormand is absolutely riveting as the decidedly unglamorous nomad Fern, whose social interactions generally revolve around some familiar fellow travelers she regularly encounters on the road and other random freebooters who have refrained from settling down. David Strathairn, playing a senior motor home owner with a yen for Fern, is the only recognizable face in the cast, which seems to be made up of many actual nomads that Zhao has recruited to bring gritty reality to the way of life that Fern has chosen.

'NEVER RARELY SOMETIMES ALWAYS'

Shot in naturalistic documentary style, *Never Rarely Sometimes Always* gets close and sometimes uncomfortably personal with the painful journey undertaken by Autumn, a teenage girl from small-town Pennsylvania whose life and plans are



Joe Gardner (voiced by Jamie Foxx) discovers what it truly means to have a soul in Pixar's *Soul*, available on Disney Plus.  
© DISNEY/PIXAR

going to be derailed by an unwanted pregnancy. She can't get an abortion close to home and needs to head out on the down-low with her cousin Skylar to New York City, where the two girls encounter various challenges that are harrowing in the most intimate of ways. Sidney Flanigan and Talia Ryder — the young actresses playing Autumn and Skylar, respectively — are truly wonderful. They thrive under the gentle direction of Eliza

Hittman, who also wrote the brutally honest script. The result is a jewel of a movie that will leave you gutted.

'PROMISING YOUNG WOMAN'

Anchored by a complex, seductive and unsettling turn by Carey Mulligan, *Promising Young Woman* — a thoroughly assured first feature from screenwriter-director Emerald Fennell — is a darkly comic examination of the damage wrought by toxic masculinity. An assault on her best friend and fellow medical student causes Mulligan's character, Cassie, to drop out of school and sends her on a crusade to exact payback and redress the power balance between men and women, unbeknownst to her parents and her boss at the coffee shop where she now works. Mulligan's star turn here shows that she has made good on the promise of her work in the period coming-of-age comedy *An Education*.

'SOUL'

Pixar's latest animated delight is among the studio's best — ambitious, beautifully rendered, and getting all metaphysical with the story of Joe, a genial public-school music teacher (voiced by Jamie Foxx) on the verge of realizing his dream to play piano with a renowned jazz combo. Alas, he succumbs to an accident and his spirit is heaven-bound until it falls into a limbo-like way station for souls who have yet to be born. There, he meets a recalcitrant soul (voiced by Tina Fey) who fears the challenges of life, and they become reluctant partners in Joe's attempt to revive his body back on Earth. Jammed with great music from Jon Batiste and directed by Pete Doctor of *Inside Out*, *Up* and *Finding Nemo* renown, *Soul* is a sweet and soulful ride into one man's psyche ... and beyond.

'SOUND OF METAL'

Powerful, disturbing, heartbreaking and driven by Riz Ahmed's shattering lead performance, *Sound of Metal* is about a rock-'n'-roller's nightmare. Ahmed, best-known as the lead in the provocative miniseries *The Night of ...*, is Ruben — a

drummer in an arty noise-metal duo with his guitar-playing girlfriend Lou (Olivia Cooke) who handles the vocal screeches. One morning during a tour of the heartland, Ruben wakes up in their trailer, and the buzzing he's been experiencing in his ears turns into garbled distortion then rapidly degenerates into calamitous hearing loss. Not only does this impact his livelihood, it also plays havoc with the Ruben-Lulu relationship, which has been one of mutual support for years, helping both of them cope with addiction. Now, Ruben needs to confront the challenge of losing his hearing, investigate solutions, and somehow figure out a way to keep his professional life and his love life together.

'THE VAST OF NIGHT'

An elegant and minimalist take on the traditional 1950s sci-fi alien invasion movie, *The Vast of Night* is an impressive feat accomplished by director and co-screenwriter Andrew Patterson with some creative twists and uneasy moments that elevate the genre. Set in a small New Mexico town, the tale moves like a sleek cat from location to location — a high school gym, the town switchboard, a bare-bones radio station, and so on — as the camera follows Everett (Jake Horowitz), a young, ambitious local D.J., and his teen sidekick Fay (Sierra McCormick), a science-minded high school girl who works an evening shift as the local telephone operator.

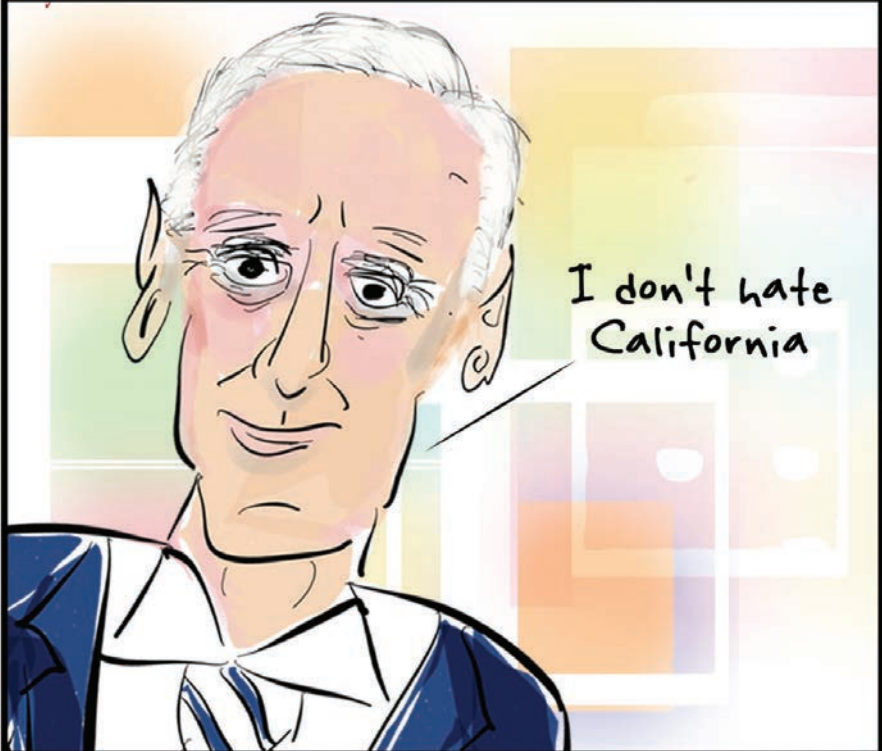
When a strange noise starts to interrupt telephone service and radio signals in the area, the duo tries to figure out what's what, and they find themselves caught up in something potentially massive.

'WORKING MAN'

Moved by the tragedy of factory closings in the heartland, writer-director Robert Jury made a potent and damning dramatization of how corporate America's obsession with the bottom line and disregard for the plight of the dedicated working-class has hollowed out parts of the country and stolen lifeblood and purpose from so many. Peter Gerety is tragic and touching as Allery — an elderly worker at a Midwestern plastics plant who, along with the rest of the staff, is given walking papers when the factory where he's toiled much of his life closes. Allery is so wedded to his job and so unable to confront family problems that he continues to put on his work clothes, pack a lunch and sneaks alone into the abandoned plant where he looks for jobs he can do to busy himself. His wife, played by Talia Shire, is beside herself, but can't bring herself to stop what appears to her to be a charade — until another fired worker decides to join Allery in his quixotic endeavor.

Michael Snyder is a print and broadcast journalist who covers pop culture. Follow Michael on Twitter: @cultureblaster.

OUR POLITICS  
BY JOE DWORETZKY



Biden Sends a Holiday Message



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Families had a lot of together time in 2020. PHOTO: LIGHTFIELDSTUDIOS

# Silver linings from a challenging year

BY LIZ FARRELL

I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANYONE SAD TO see 2020 come to an end. What a year! My first column of the year is usually about looking forward to the year ahead, possibly making some resolutions or even tips for a family reset. But our family reset came last March when we all began to shelter in place along with working and going to school remotely. While I remain hopeful that 2021 will bring a return to more normalcy, if ever there were a year to reflect on, this is it. Covid has rocked our world, our country, our city, and our home lives; however, it hasn't been all bad. So allow me to reflect and share some of those silver linings in hopes that you too may pause and find your own.

### FAMILY TIME

To say our family has spent a lot of time together over the last nine months would be an understatement. It was a big adjustment in the beginning as the kids needed to rely on each other for entertainment instead of their friends or teammates. However, even with healthy doses of bickering, they have all grown much closer and it has been amazing to watch those relationships grow and strengthen.

My husband also traveled almost every week before the shutdown but hasn't since March. As a result, we are able to have family dinner almost every night now, and he has time to do one of the things he enjoys most, which is cooking, and that has been a huge help. He even can adjust his schedule to help with school drop-offs or driving to sports practices, and although he will never admit it, I think he really enjoys it. We used to have to intentionally carve out time for a family movie or game night but now those happen all the time.

Additionally, there is no longer stress and tension trying to get out the door for church on Sunday morning as we enjoy mass snuggled on the couch for a YouTube livestream. Especially with two teenagers in the house now, I am aware that although they would rather be doing things with their friends or playing sports, this is precious time that I will always cherish as we have watched them mature and persevere.

### THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Our family has always enjoyed and spent time outdoors, but until March that mostly meant running from field to field

or court and squeezing in a playground along the way. The pandemic brought youth sports to a screeching halt and for many months closed our playgrounds.

I will always remember one Saturday morning in April when my son asked me what we were going to do all day. I admit those first few weekends were daunting, but as we adapted, we found joy in urban hikes, long walks with the dog to new neighborhoods, or packing a picnic to a socially distanced circle on the Marina Green. Then came the Slow Streets program and our world started to open up. We explored Golden Gate Park by bike, mapped out routes connecting Slow Streets to the ocean, and for the first time I wasn't terrified about my kids riding their bikes or skateboarding on the streets of San Francisco. We have all come to appreciate that our parks and open spaces, which now include Slow Streets, are essential and have become an even more important part of daily life, especially for families.

### LITTLE THINGS

One of the greatest gifts the pandemic has given us is it forced us all to slow down and appreciate the little things. Who would have ever imagined we would end up being grateful for things like toilet paper? The pandemic has made us focus on the basics and being grateful for essential workers who make sure the shelves are stocked at the grocery store.

It has made us also appreciate all our first responders who have been working so hard to keep us healthy and safe and remembering we wear a mask to protect them. We are grateful for technology — Facetime, Zoom, and Hangouts so we can still connect with family and friends. We have been blessed with good weather, so we are grateful for the ability to be outside. The pandemic has also taught us to appreciate the little things that we maybe took for granted before such as a hug, handshake, or the chance to see someone smile.

Covid has definitely brought hardships and challenges, but I hope that one day when my children are telling their children what it was like to live through a pandemic, they won't just remember how they had to wear a mask all the time or all that they couldn't do but will remember the year we all slowed down and had more time to enjoy our city and each other.

Email: [liz@marinatimes.com](mailto:liz@marinatimes.com)





The trends in the pandemic and the economy could be pointing to a brighter 2021 for the property markets. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

# Return to growth

What’s ahead for San Francisco real estate in 2021

BY GAREY DE MARTINI

ASIDE FROM BILL GATES AND A handful of scientists and civil servants, few foresaw the pandemic that hit us in 2020. As Covid-19 spread, all the cheery economic forecasts for that year went out the window. Nevertheless, we are once again here to try to tell you what might be in store for San Francisco real estate in 2021.

## COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The National Association of Realtors predicts a 1.3 percent year-over-year growth in sales, and an 8.4 percent increase in home prices in the coming year. This is for the entire San Francisco–Oakland–Hayward metro area, but you get the idea. In San Francisco, the consensus among real estate experts is we can expect a low volume of sales, and a healthy but single-digit increase in home values in 2021.

Single family homes are in demand, while condos in high rises are less appealing. However, these same condos may once again attract buyers as the roll out of the vaccine gains momentum in the first half of the year, and Covid-19 becomes less of a factor.

For years San Francisco was the hottest real estate market in the country. Not any more, according to many experts. For example, the real estate news site Mansion Global says, “A movement of value-seekers leaving the San Francisco Bay Area for Sacramento got supercharged during the coronavirus pandemic, when many were allowed to work remotely. That influx is expected to continue into 2021.”

Suddenly second-tier cities are becoming hot spots for real estate. A piece by real estate writer Sylvia Shalhout says the best places in California for cash-on-cash return include Madera, Cathedral City, Bakersfield, Oroville, and Chula Vista.

You might ask, How is this possible? Price is one thing, but what about quality of life? Sadly, as it turns out, quality of life even in San Francisco isn’t what it once was.

According to senior broker associate Eileen Mougeot of Corcoran Global Living, the city is facing some challenges that extend beyond Covid-19 and the high cost of housing. “The thing that concerns me most about the San Francisco real estate market is the condition of San Francisco. I know more and more people who are talking about leaving the city, and in fact actually leaving. I think we have to acknowledge that.”

Mougeot is one of the most positive people I know. For her to express this concern is saying something.

“The homeless situation is terrible. San Francisco is dirty. There are more and more car break-ins. A lot of people have had enough and want out. Something really has to be done.”

## A MIXED BAG

In the next 12 months, the coronavirus should be less of an issue. But the condition of the city will take longer to address. It requires new thinking, and new resolve — for everyone’s sake, including those currently on the streets.

Mougeot is hopeful. “I can’t imagine the city won’t come back from all of this. After the ’89 earthquake, people said everyone is going to leave the Marina and this is the end of San Francisco. And there were people who left, for sure. But look, how long did it take the Marina to recover — a couple of years maybe? Three years at most. This city just has too much to offer. It’s too important, and too beautiful really, for it not to recover from all that’s going on right now.

“I’ve always believed in real estate,” said Mougeot. “I’ve seen this time and again over the years. If you can hold on to properties during a bad time, you are going to come out really well. The city has always managed to turn itself around.”

San Francisco real estate is a mixed bag. Noe Valley is currently booming, because of its relatively sunny weather, charming 24th Street, and a preponderance of single family homes. But if you want a deal, it might be hard to beat a condo in a San Francisco high rise. Prices have been reduced, and mortgage rates are extremely low. There was a time when borrowers would not stand a chance against buyers offering all cash. That is no longer the case, as fewer and fewer all-cash offers are being made.

Looking at real estate across the nation, Realtor.com pointed out that in 2020, the seasonal pattern for home sales was thrown out of whack by the arrival of the coronavirus and shelter-at-home orders. This all came just as the spring selling season was about to begin. When home sales became more possible again, the uneven return of buyers and sellers created a housing market frenzy across the country — pushing the number of homes sold to decade highs while days-on-market dropped to new lows.

Understanding this backdrop will be key to evaluating data in 2021. Realtor.com expects the housing market to settle into a much more normal pattern in the coming year, and as a result, year-over-year trends will need to be understood in the context of the unusual 2020 base year.

Feedback: [letters@marinatimes.com](mailto:letters@marinatimes.com)

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