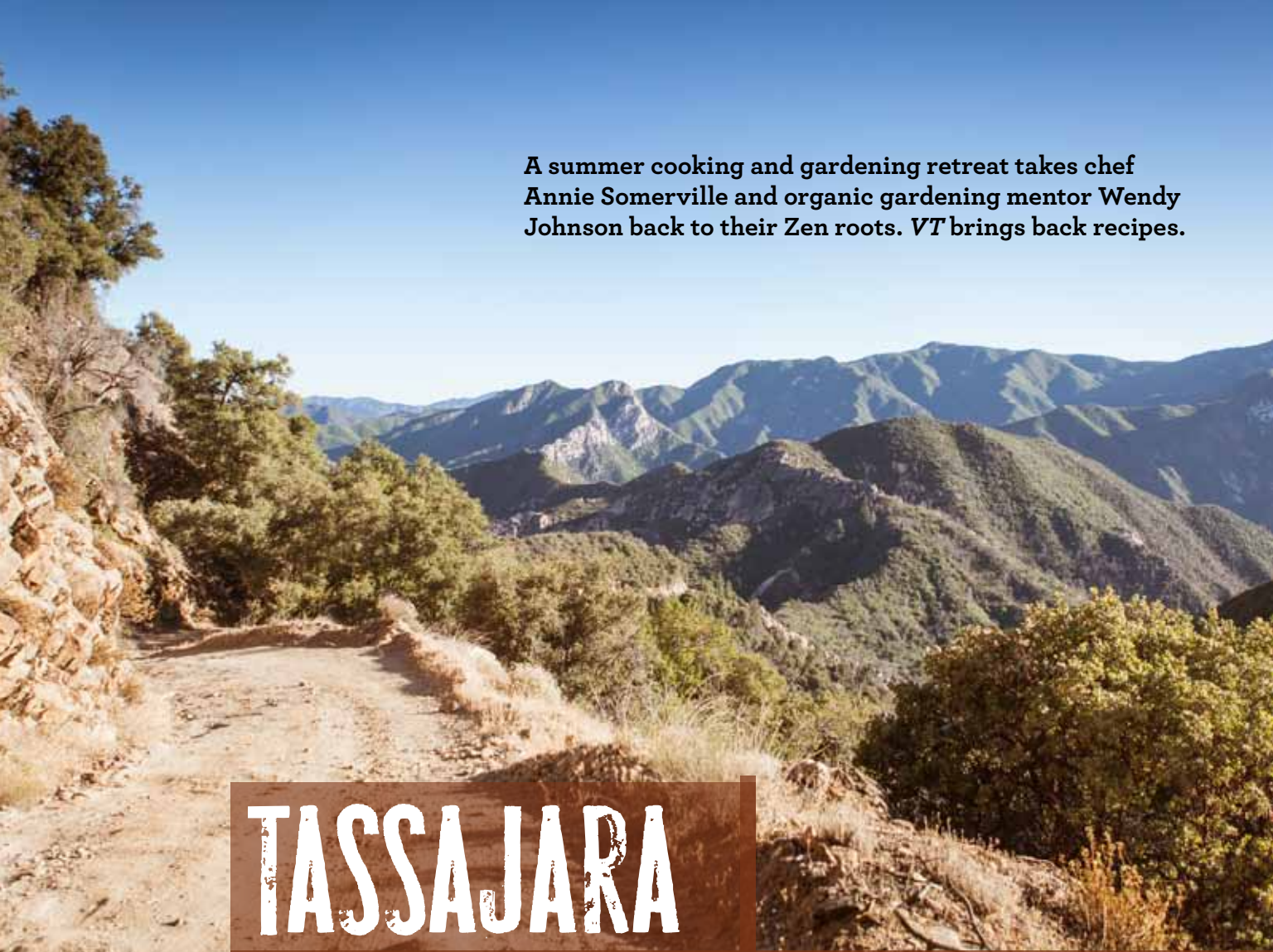




Clockwise from top right: The road to Tassajara offers sweeping views of the Ventana Wilderness; chef Annie Somerville gears up for an afternoon cooking demo with the help of longtime workshop participant Dave Schoenwald; meditation central: the bell-adorned zendo; a shaded path leads to the kitchen and dining area.



A summer cooking and gardening retreat takes chef Annie Somerville and organic gardening mentor Wendy Johnson back to their Zen roots. VT brings back recipes.

TASSAJARA WEEKEND

BY Elizabeth Turner RECIPES BY Annie Somerville



PHOTOGRAPHY
Jesse Narducci





Did you know chef Annie Somerville started her cooking career as a resident student of a Buddhist monastery? In fact, San Francisco's Greens Restaurant, where Somerville has spent nearly three decades as executive chef, has deep ties to Tassajara, that same Zen training monastery nestled 150 miles south, in California's Ventana Wilderness. Both Tassajara and Greens were established by the San Francisco Zen Center, one of the largest Buddhist orders outside of Asia.

A private monastery for most of the year, Tassajara opens its doors to visitors from May to mid-September, offering a unique place to commune with nature, practice meditation (optional), enjoy the Japanese-style bathhouse and natural hot springs, and feast on spectacular vegetarian meals.

Every guest season, Tassajara offers an array of weekend retreats. Last year, when we heard Somerville was leading a retreat with Wendy Johnson, a Buddhist meditation teacher and one of the founders of SFZC's Green Gulch Farm, VT hit the road to Tassajara.

Read on for a taste of the experience.

From top left: retreat leaders Annie Somerville and Wendy Johnson; the monastery sits next to lovely Tassajara Creek; guests in the gardening class gather by the compost pile to blend up Johnson's recipe for potting soil—a mix of sand, compost, leaf mold, and good old Tassajara dirt.





SUMMER CORN AND QUINOA SALAD WITH PUMPKIN SEEDS AND LIME, p. 54

Provençal Tartlets

MAKES 4 TARTLETS

Almost any fresh herb will taste great in place of the thyme and oregano in this recipe, but don't use rosemary, Somerville warns—it's too strong.

- 2 small golden or green zucchini, diced (1½ cups)
- ½ large yellow onion, diced (1 cup)
- 1 medium red or yellow bell pepper, diced (¾ cup)
- 2 medium Japanese eggplants, diced (2½ cups)
- 1 fennel bulb, outer leaves and core removed, diced (1 cup)
- 4½ tsp. olive oil
- 1½ tsp. minced garlic
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh oregano
- 1 cup Perfect Roasted Tomatoes (opposite page)
- 16 Gaeta olives, pitted and coarsely chopped (3–4 Tbs.)
- 1 Tbs. chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 oz. Fontina or Asiago cheese, grated (½ cup)
- 3 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 recipe Masa Harina Cream Cheese Dough (recipe follows), shaped into 4 rounds and chilled
- 1 large egg



PROVENÇAL TARTLETS

- 1** | Preheat oven to 400°F. Toss zucchini, onion, bell pepper, eggplants, and fennel in large bowl with oil, garlic, thyme, and oregano; season with salt and pepper, if desired.
- 2** | Arrange vegetables on two baking sheets, and roast 20 minutes in oven, rotating pans from top to bottom and flipping vegetables halfway through for even cooking. When vegetables are just tender, transfer to bowl, and set aside to cool. Reduce oven temperature to 375°F.
- 3** | Add tomatoes, olives, parsley, and cheeses to roasted vegetables; toss gently; and season with salt and pepper, if desired.
- 4** | Mound ¾ cup filling in center of each dough round. Gently fold edges inward, forming 6 to 8 pleats as you move around

- the dough. Some filling will be visible in center of each tart. Chill filled tarts 10 minutes.
- 5** | Whisk egg with 2 Tbs. water. Brush dough tops lightly with egg wash, and transfer tarts to parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake 20 to 30 minutes, or until crust is golden and filling is bubbling.
- PER SERVING (¼ TARTLET)** 348 cal; 9 g prot; 24 g total fat (12 g sat fat); 26 g carb; 80 mg chol; 405 mg sod; 3 g fiber; 5 g sugars

Masa Harina Cream Cheese Dough

MAKES DOUGH FOR 4 TARTLETS

This rustic dough has the delectable flavor of corn tortillas. If fresh or dried masa harina is not available, increase the flour to 1¼ cups—the dough will still be

supple and delicious without the toasted corn flavor. To shape crusts that are perfectly uniform and round, use a small salad plate as a guide to trim your rolled dough. For a more rustic look, leave the rough edges.

- 1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling dough
- ¼ cup masa harina
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 4 Tbs. cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
- 8 oz. cold cream cheese, cut into small pieces

- 1** | Combine flour, masa harina, and salt in bowl of food processor; pulse to combine. Add butter, and pulse 10 times. Add cream cheese, and pulse until dough comes together.
- 2** | Shape dough into disc; cover with plastic wrap, and chill at least 1 hour.
- 3** | Cut chilled dough into 4 equal pieces, and flatten into discs. Roll each disc into ⅜-inch-thick circle about 7½ inches in diameter.
- PER SERVING (¼ TARTLET)** 224 cal; 4 g prot; 16 g total fat (9 g sat fat); 17 g carb; 47 mg chol; 165 mg sod; <1 g fiber; <1 g sugars

Perfect Roasted Tomatoes

MAKES 2 CUPS

Use these fragrant tomatoes fresh out of the oven, or store in a sealed container in the refrigerator up to a week. Don't forget to include the sweet roasting juices.



2014 COOKING RETREATS AT TASSAJARA

Check out *The Zen of Baking* (May 20–23) and *Zen in the Kitchen* (June 27–30), both led by chef and *Tassajara Dinner & Desserts* author Dale Kent, and Buddhist priest and chef Korin Charlie Pokorny. For more information, visit sfzc.org/tassajara.



- 2 lb. plum tomatoes, cored and halved crosswise
- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 4 fresh sage leaves, chopped (1 tsp.)
- Leaves from 4 to 5 fresh thyme sprigs

- 1** | Preheat oven to 400°F.
- 2** | Place tomatoes cut-side down on parchment-lined baking sheet. Brush lightly with oil, and sprinkle with salt,

- pepper, sage, and thyme. Roast in oven until tomato skins are blistered and flesh is very soft, about 45 minutes, then remove from oven, and set aside to cool.
- 3** | When tomatoes are cool enough to handle, try removing their skins (if they slip off easily, remove them; otherwise leave them on).
- PER ½-CUP SERVING** 68 cal; 2 g prot; 4 g total fat (<1 g sat fat); 8 g carb; 0 mg chol; 301 mg sod; 3 g fiber; 5 g sugars  



THREE-PEA SALAD
WITH MEYER LEMON
VINAIGRETTE

Three-Pea Salad with
Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette

SERVES 6 | 30 MINUTES OR LESS

The trick to a successful vinaigrette, says Somerville, is to start with the acidic ingredient and mix everything with that before adding the oil. She also favors an oil-to-acid ratio of 2:1, rather than the traditional (and heavier) 3:1 ratio. Meyer lemons make this dressing extra-special, but regular lemons work well too.

VINAIGRETTE

- 3 Tbs. Meyer lemon juice
- 2 tsp. minced Meyer lemon zest
- ½ tsp salt
- 6 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil



SALAD

- 2 cups shelled fresh or frozen garden peas
- 2 cups sugar snap peas, cut into ¾-inch lengths
- 12 radishes, thinly sliced (1½ cups)
- 3 small carrots, thinly sliced (1 cup)
- 2 cups pea shoots or baby arugula

1 | To make Vinaigrette: Whisk together lemon juice, zest, and salt. Slowly pour in oil, and whisk until dressing is emulsified.

2 | To make Salad: Have large bowl of ice water ready. Bring large pot of salted water to a boil. Add peas and sugar snap peas, and boil 1 minute. Drain, and immediately dunk vegetables in ice-water bath. Drain well, and transfer to large bowl.

3 | Add radishes and carrots to peas mixture; toss with ¼ cup Vinaigrette (reserve remaining Vinaigrette for another use). Gently stir in pea shoots.

PER 1-CUP SERVING 135 cal; 4 g prot; 7 g total fat (1 g sat fat); 14 g carb; 0 mg chol; 77 mg sod; 5 g fiber; 6 g sugars  

Summer Corn and Quinoa
Salad with Pumpkin Seeds
and Lime

SERVES 4 | 30 MINUTES OR LESS

This favorite Greens to Go salad gets a bright burst of flavor from fresh lime. Be sure to rinse the quinoa thoroughly in a fine mesh strainer to remove the bitter outer coating.

- 1 cup quinoa, rinsed 3 times in cold water, and drained well
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ large red onion, finely diced (½ cup)
- 1 Tbs. Champagne vinegar or rice vinegar



- 3 Tbs. olive oil, divided
- 1 cup fresh corn kernels
- ¼ tsp. cumin seed, toasted and ground
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper
- ½ cup diced jicama (2 oz.)
- 2½ Tbs. fresh lime juice, plus more to taste
- 1½ tsp. lime zest
- ¼ cup toasted pumpkin seeds
- ¼ cup chopped flat leaf parsley

1 | Bring 1 cup water to a boil in small pot; add quinoa and salt. Cover pan, reduce heat, and simmer over low heat 15 minutes, or until tender.

2 | Fill separate saucepan with water, bring to a boil, and drop in diced onion for 30 seconds. Drain onion, then toss with vinegar in small bowl.

3 | Heat 1 Tbs. oil in large skillet over medium heat; add corn, cumin, and cayenne; sauté 3 minutes.

4 | Transfer corn to large bowl, and add quinoa, remaining 2 Tbs. oil, onion, jicama, lime juice, and zest. Season with salt and pepper, if desired. Just before serving, add pumpkin seeds, parsley, and an extra drizzle of lime juice, if desired.

PER 1-CUP SERVING 339 cal; 10 g prot; 17 g total fat (3 g sat fat); 40 g carb; 0 mg chol; 304 mg sod; 6 g fiber; 4 g sugars  

VARIATIONS

➔ Sub 1 cup cooked black beans for fresh corn.

➔ Add 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes just before serving.

➔ For refreshing crunch, add ½ cup diced seeded cucumbers just before serving.

➔ For a spicier salad, add 1 seeded and diced serrano or jalapeño chile (taste for heat before adding), and substitute chopped cilantro for the parsley.



Left: Zen students take a break in the resident dining hall; right: the “Bird House,” a student cabin, was rebuilt in 2009 after burning to the ground in a 2008 wildfire that surrounded the entire property but destroyed only two small structures.

Grilled Serrano Salsa Verde

MAKES 1½ CUPS | 30 MINUTES OR LESS

Make this zesty sauce fresh every day. It’s a great topper for tofu, tacos, rice bowls, and more.

- 1 bunch fresh cilantro
- ¾ cups olive oil
- 1 grilled or roasted serrano chile
- 1 Tbs. champagne vinegar
- 2 small or 1 large grilled garlic cloves

Combine all ingredients in bowl of food processor with ¼ cup water. Blend until smooth.

PER 2-TBS. SERVING 121 cal; <1 g prot; 14 g total fat (2 g sat fat); <1 g carb; 0 mg chol; 1 mg sod; <1 g fiber; <1 g sugars 