

# The Cooperage Makes a Big Statement in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Andrew and Merilee McCormick

Photo Ohlen Alexander

It's big and it's beautiful. The latest addition to the already rich Lafayette culinary scene, The Cooperage American Grille, opened for dinner on Oscar night – a fitting moment for a place that claims its Americana character and makes big visual statements. In addition to its impressive size and overall beauty, the quality ingredients and craftsmanship of the food will likely turn The Cooperage into a favorite for the whole family, for all occasions.

The Cooperage team consists of 14-year Lafayette residents Andrew and Merilee McCormick, general manager Mike Iglesias and chef partner Erik Hopfinger. They came to their dream location in Lafayette armed with years of restaurant experience at City Tavern in San Francisco.

"We wanted to create a unique environment," says Merilee McCormick, "with a family friendly menu. You can have dinner in the bar, in the dining room, or choose from a couple areas that are quieter. And I also wanted kids to feel comfortable in this restaurant." She understands what it's like for parents whose kids have practices until 6:30 p.m. and the last thing they want to do is cook dinner, "so I wanted the price point to make this place a regular place to go, whether you want steak and mashed potatoes or something healthy," she adds.

Certainly the largest restaurant in Lafayette, seating up to 292 people, The Cooperage took over the spaces formerly occupied by Petar's and Storyteller at 22 Lafayette Circle across from La Fiesta Square.

The restaurant is not overwhelming, however; it has three separate spaces designed to satisfy different needs: the boardroom, the dining room, and the bar, which boasts a large beer and wine selection as well as vintage cocktails. Merilee McCormick's favorite cocktail is the Lonsdale: a base of gin or mescal with fresh apple, basil and lemon.

A wood chandelier illuminates the bar space. "It was designed by our architect, Jim Maxwell, and executed by our builder, R3 Builders," she says. "It is made of reclaimed wine barrels." Similar ceiling light fixtures are found in different parts of the restaurant, as well as other reclaimed materials. An old metal safe is used as an additional bar table; the refurbished Petar's wood bar was salvaged and is used in the boardroom, and additional reclaimed wood from Petar's is found throughout the restaurant – to create the 'communal-table' in the dining room, the suspended ceilings in the private party room, and the window soffits. Historic

Lafayette photos also grace the walls.

"I met with the Lafayette Historical Society, and they gave me so many photographs," says McCormick. All the pictures are framed and referenced, like the image of the 1920 Lafayette baseball team and a 1914 picture of the building that is now Town Hall Theatre.

From the bar, patrons can move to the boardroom or the dining room. "We created what we call the boardroom in the spirit of a cozy English pub," explains McCormick. The room is intimate; it also has a bar along one of its walls, and booths. It will be open for lunch and dinner by April 1. It can also accommodate up to 50 people for a special event.

The dining room is located to the right of the main entrance, in the former Storyteller location. It is TV screen-free, with a view of the kitchen and the rotisserie. A long communal table is perfect for very large parties; many other tables of differing sizes are also available. To the side, an alcove can be separated from the rest of the dining room with a curtain for privacy.

The entire menu is available anywhere in the restaurant. Iglesias guarantees that every ingredient on the menu has been selected for its quality, like the Rocky Jr. chickens from Petaluma that are cooked in one of the two state-of-the-art rotisserie stations. "All our seafood is wild and chosen for sustainable fishing practices," says Iglesias. The beef is grass fed (Golden Gate from Montana) and the vegetables come from local farms.

Iglesias says he's been in love with Erik's macaroni and cheese for decades, and he and the McCormicks particularly love the prime rib French dip sandwich.

"There is nothing like what we're doing here in terms of celebrating Americana, with quality and thoughtfulness, in the entire East Bay," he adds. "At this scale, we probably compare to the Buckeye (Roadhouse) in Mill Valley. We offer a varied menu of things that all of us like to eat, and offer a lot of options for eating healthy." There are gluten-free choices and when making reservations, staff will ask if diners have specific dietary needs.

The Cooperage is currently open for dinner, and plans to serve brunch by mid-March, and lunch by March 24. For information, call (925) 298-5915 or visit [thecooperagelafayette.com](http://thecooperagelafayette.com).

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.



## business briefs

**Lanvie Moves to Lafayette**  
3569-C Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette  
(925) 283-1888 [www.lanvieu.com](http://www.lanvieu.com)

The changes planned for Broadway Plaza could turn out to be a boon for the city of Lafayette as some stores must relocate during the long remodeling process. Lawn Wu, the Alameda stylist, who had one of her three Lanvie stores that offers a line of very feminine women's fashion in Walnut Creek, choose Mt. Diablo Boulevard for her retail space. Wu calls her inspiration "organic chic," using mohair wool, cotton linen or cotton silk blends for women of



Lanvie Assistant-Manager Jenny Helms (right) shows a dress to a customer  
Photo Sophie Braccini

all sizes who want to find a look that's beautiful for them. She has a special liking for black and white, as well as subtle colors such as beige or olive, and her dresses, of varied length and in a great variety of sizes, can be easily accessorized from the simple to the very sophisticated. Pants are mostly leggings, but with some interesting flattering plus size options that coordinate well with the lace tops and tunics that drape nicely. Lanvie also offers a line of shoes and accessories.

### The Perfect Packers

**Moraga Road, Lafayette**  
(925) 238-5100 [theprecpackers@gmail.com](mailto:theprecpackers@gmail.com)

Moving in, moving out and not willing to do all the packing yourself? The Perfect Packers will come and take care of it for you. If you move locally, the team can also unpack for you. "We have found that good organizing and properly packed goods is the first key to a successful transition," explains the company's website. Perfect Packers come to your home or business, organize, pack, and label your belongings as well as provide a list of what has been packed.

### Moraga Employee of the Month for February

Moraga's February employee of

the month is Louise Hansen, a tutor with the Moraga School District who has had an impact on the education of Moraga children for over three decades. Hansen began her work as a writing aide in 1980; she tutored middle school children in the community by improving their writing and composition skills, while working at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School. "Louise has an uncanny ability to connect with children and works equally well with the lowest performing students and the highest achievers," said Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns. "She is a gift to both our students and our teachers as her humble and thoughtful style has paid real dividends to our community during her time with the district." Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Moraga and the Chamber of Commerce, Hansen will be presented with a gift card to Safeway as well as a gift certificate to Ristorante Amoroma in Moraga at the Moraga Rotary luncheon on Tuesday, March 25.



From left: Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School's Brad Cam, vice principal, Joan Danilson, principal, Louise Hansen, Bruce Burns, superintendent of the Moraga School District, and Kevin Reneau, president of Moraga Chamber of Commerce. Photo provided

### New Team at Coldwell Banker, Orinda

**5 Moraga Way**  
(925) 253-4600 [WoodwardJonesTeam.com](http://WoodwardJonesTeam.com)

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage announced that two of the top realtors in its Orinda office have come together to form an outstanding team. Frank Woodward and Tina Jones have over 40 years of experience and over 1,000 homes sold between the two of them. They will bring together their talents and provide the buyers and sellers of Lamorinda world-class service. Frank Woodward has an extensive sales and marketing background in the tech industry and has a master's degree in electrical engineering and computer science from UC Berkeley. He became a realtor in 2002 and has consistently been a top producer. Tina Jones has owned her own brokerage for 20 years and sold it to Coldwell Banker in early 2013.



Frank Woodward and Tina Jones  
Photo provided

### Business Anniversaries

**Lafayette-based Futures Explored Inc. is celebrating 50 years in Lafayette**

**3547 Wilkinson Ln., Lafayette**  
(925) 284-3240 [www.futures-explored.org](http://www.futures-explored.org)

Futures Explored supports individuals with developmental disabilities. "As active contributors to society, they keep our parks clean, they bag our groceries, they recycle our waste, they cater food for our events, and the list goes on," says Jennie Dobies of the non-profit. Futures Explored was incorporated on Jan. 6, 1964 in Lafayette with a small group of young adults with developmental disabilities, their parents, and the founding director, Helen Young. There were six clients making handcrafted items for sale (which is still done today), and volunteer parents mostly staffed the program. At the time there were few, if any, programs for adults with disabilities and this was a very new and innovative idea being developed by parents throughout California. "It's amazing how far we've come!" adds Dobies. Futures Explored provides work and life skills training to adults with mild to moderate developmental disabilities. Participants may need help with personal or social skills, or to seek and hold a job, or both. The Supported Employment program places individuals in jobs in the community based on their skills and job readiness. The program derives revenue from the state, but also from donations, sales at the Nifty-Thrift stores (Lafayette and Antioch), Nifty E-Waste Recycling Centers (in Lafayette at 3467 Golden Gate Way) and the Huckleberry Café To-Go, a catering service for breakfast, lunch, and party platters.

### News from the three Chambers of Commerce

#### Lafayette

Mixer tonight at 5:30 p.m. at Lafayette Physical Therapy, 3468 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite #B110.

Ribbon cutting at The Dailey Method, celebrating its one-year anniversary at 5 p.m. Thursday, March 13 at 3344C Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Entrepreneur's Club meeting at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, March 20 in the chamber conference room.

Green Committee open meeting at noon Tuesday, March 25 in the chamber conference room.

#### Moraga

Chamber mixer at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 25 at the Serbian Cultural Center, sponsored by the Moraga Rotary and the Moraga Valley Kiwanis.

#### Orinda

Save the date for the Orinda Trivia Bee sponsored by the Orinda Chamber and Orinda Rotary Club at 5:30 p.m. Friday, April 25 in the Orinda Masonic Lodge, 9 Altarinda Road, Orinda. For more information, visit [orindachamber.org](http://orindachamber.org).

## Celebrating an Anniversary?

If your business is celebrating a significant anniversary (5, 10, 20 years or more ...) send us a photo of your business, the owner(s) or the staff with specific information about your business and what you're celebrating, and we'll include it in an upcoming issue.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact  
**Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)