



LUXURY SPA

C O L L E C T I O N



by american spa

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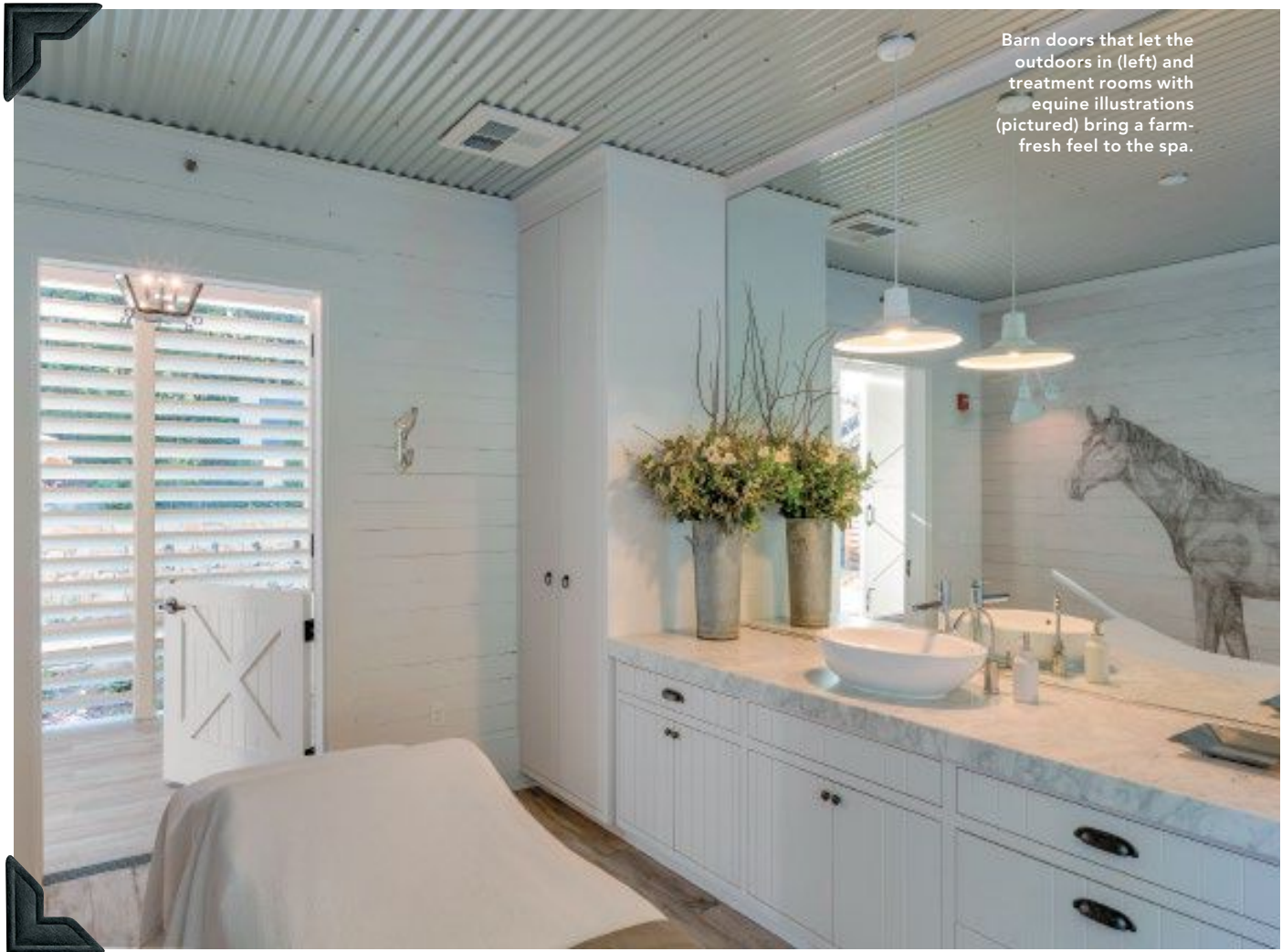
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Homegrown Healing

A multimillion-dollar renovation of a beloved family run Sonoma, CA, inn includes the debut of a charming farm-to-table-inspired spa.

Written By Julie Keller Callaghan



Barn doors that let the outdoors in (left) and treatment rooms with equine illustrations (pictured) bring a farm-fresh feel to the spa.

Set amid six wooded acres in Sonoma County, CA, the Farmhouse Inn is an idyllic escape. The charming inn, owned by a brother-and-sister team since 2001, is home to gardens, vineyards, and a darling boutique hotel, making it a must-see stop for those looking for a bucolic wine-country retreat. Recently, the property became even more appealing, thanks to an \$8 million renovation that included new rooms, updated landscaping, and the creation of a lovely farm-to-table spa. “**The Spa at Farmhouse Inn** is really at the heart of the recent renovation—an intimate, authentic wine-country experience steeped in a sense of quiet sophistication and luxury,” says Scott Lee, president and principal of SB Architects.

The 3,500-square-foot retreat features three indoor treatment rooms, as well as one outdoor treatment room, and was designed to fit seamlessly into the property. “In homage to the design of iconic horse barns, the new spa is long and low,” says Lee. “Large barn doors and shutters line the entry to the all-white space. It is clean, refreshing, soothing, and completely in keeping with the ethos of the Farmhouse Inn.”

Lee says that when coming up with the spa concept, the focus was on creating an intimate experience that provided an extremely strong sense of place. “While the spa itself is intimately scaled, the treatment rooms are a generous size, and each opens onto a private shower garden tucked into the wooded hillside,” he says. “Aligned along an

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indoor/outdoor corridor filled with light through floor-to-ceiling plantation shutters, the three treatment rooms evoke the essence of stalls in a very elegant horse barn, with each featuring a different sketch of a horse to set it apart from the others.”

Owner Catherine Bartolomei says that the integration goes well beyond fitting into the inn’s chic country style. “The Farmhouse Inn provides a personal experience curated for each guest by our team of concierges, and the spa operates on the same principle: personal experiences individually tailored, using local, authentic ingredients,” she says.

The spa concept, which was envisioned by the team of Loma Alexander and Peggy Francis, is a farm-to-treatment-table one. “Even before the opening of the new spa, the Farmhouse Inn was deeply committed to using local ingredients and a farm-to-spa-table approach for services,” says Alexander. “We have continued in that direction with the new menu.” As such, it is filled with services that take advantage of fresh local ingredients. A highlight is a special scrub that is listed on a

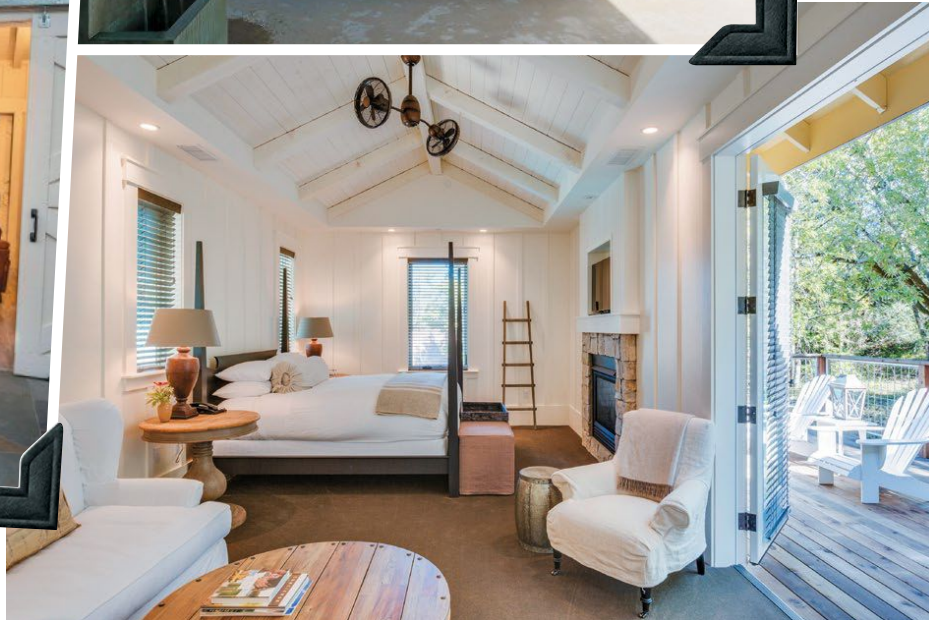
chalkboard at the spa and that changes with the seasons to use fresh ingredients grown on the farm. A recent favorite involved a blend of strawberries and chocolate mint leaves in a base of sweet brown sugar and milled almonds. Guests crushed dried strawberries and mint leaves in a mortar, and then added the scrub base. Customization is also key in The Personal Apothecary (\$195, 75 minutes; \$235, 90 minutes; \$310, 2 hours) experience. First, an oil blend is selected from more than 1,250 different combinations. “Guests can then choose the type of treatment they want for that moment using their personalized blend—a wrap, a scrub, a massage, or a combo of all the mentioned,” says Alexander.

Another popular locally inspired treat is A Roll in the Hay (\$350 per person, 2 hours) couples’ treatment. It begins with a house-made DIY mocha scrub for two in the outdoor shower garden, followed by a rest on the outside patio. There, the duo is wrapped in warmed linens, and an alfalfa, chamomile, and lavender pack is rolled on top of them after they nosh on a chef-made seasonal treat.

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“The Spa at Farmhouse Inn is...an intimate, authentic wine-country experience steeped in a sense of quiet sophistication and luxury.”

The renovation included the creation of a spa with plenty of outdoor space (right and below), as well as charming updates to the inn’s spacious rooms (below right).

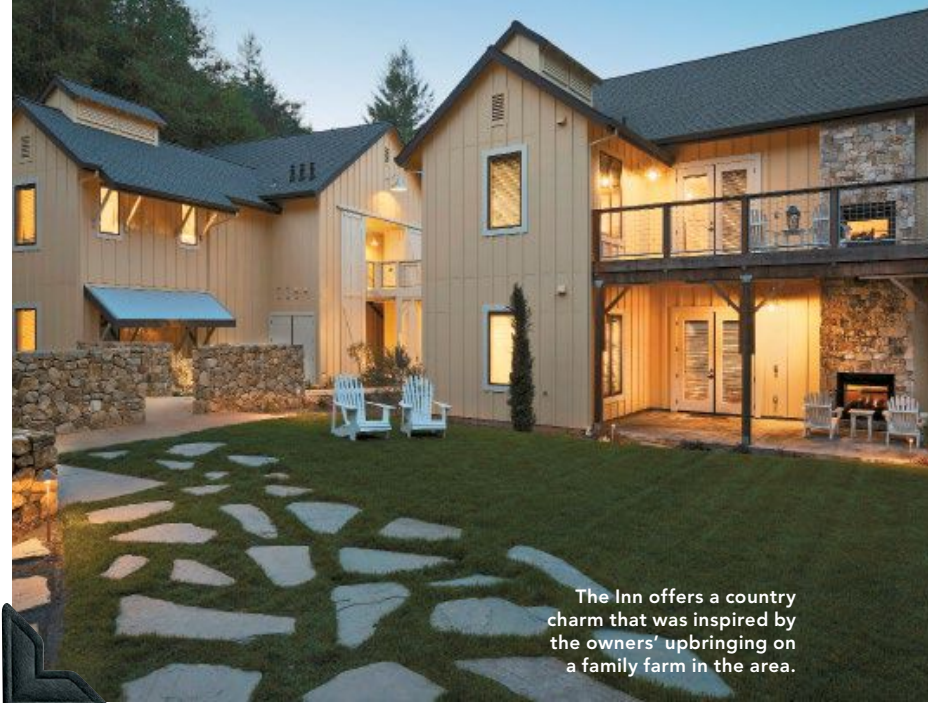


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It concludes with a chocolate-oil massage. “Most of our longer treatments incorporate a romantic element,” says Alexander. “Farmhouse Inn is a romantic place, so it works well.” Guests also flock to Catherine’s Favorite (\$260, 90 minutes; \$345, 2 hours), which includes a lavender-orange hair and scalp treatment, a massage with lavender-tangerine butter, and a foot scrub and wrap. With such tantalizing offerings, the spa’s appeal is wide reaching with both inn guests and locals visiting the spa. The team of seven caters to around 48 guests on a typical day.

According to Bartolomei, so far, spa success has been sweet, with the main challenges of spa operations coming from the weather, and even that has not posed much of a problem. “While the indoor/outdoor nature of our spa is one of its most compelling elements, it can be a challenge in the cold and rainy months,” she says. “On those days, our spa staff greets guests with a warm neck cozy and a hot elixir. Fortunately, we are blessed with a temperate climate, so those cold, rainy days are limited in number, and most of the year, we are able to capitalize upon our weather to create a holistic indoor/outdoor spa experience.”

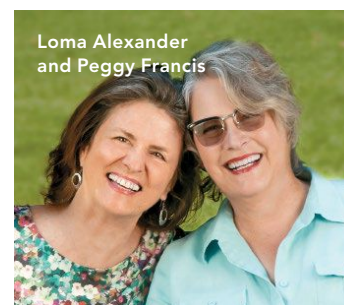
Indeed, guests are enjoying the spa as much as they’ve enjoyed the Inn over the years, something that is likely to help it continue to be a wine-country favorite. “It is intimate and authentic,” says Lee. “Everything is genuinely of the place, which is what makes the Farmhouse Inn so unique.” ■



The Inn offers a country charm that was inspired by the owners’ upbringing on a family farm in the area.

BRIGHT SPOT

Meet **Loma Alexander** and **Peggy Francis**, the dynamic duo who first started working together at Auberger du Soleil (Napa, CA) and eventually teamed up to form the much-sought-after spa consultancy firm of Francis & Alexander.



a nail tech, and a massage therapist. We pulled it off.

Where do you think the industry is heading? **Alexander:** As people are learning about the ravages of stress on their physical health, personalization of treatments will be important. Spas are moving toward preventive health, fitness offerings, and wellness. Vitamin infusions, acupuncture, personal trainers, and life coaches are what we will see more of in the future.

What is the strangest client request you’ve fielded?

Alexander: I had a guest insist on getting her hair styled, and I had never done anything like it. We did not have anyone on staff to accomplish it, so I gave it a shot—she had really long hair. (She left bald, but was happy in the end...just kidding!)

Francis: A client wanted five hours worth of spa services done on her in two hours. We had three therapists working on her at the same time—an esthetician,

What is the most bizarre treatment you’ve experienced?

Alexander: In India, the therapist did some kind of slapping massage therapy. I had to stop it, because it was horrible. Maybe he had it out for women or Americans. I’m not sure, but I am glad my partner was in the room.

Francis: A very rough Chinese massage. He spoke no English, and I spoke no Chinese. It was painful.

If you could work in any other profession in the world, what would it be?

Alexander: I would be a photographer, and I would love to work with little children in a nurturing capacity.

Francis: Artist, I am a painter and enjoy every minute I can get in my studio.

➤ Visit www.americanspa.com for our full interview.

THE SPA AT FARMHOUSE INN (FORESTVILLE, CA)

OWNERS: Catherine and Joe Bartolomei

SPA DIRECTORS: Loma Alexander and Peggy Francis

OPENED: December 2014

CLIENT BASE

60% female
40% male

SPACE

3,500 square feet;
4 treatment rooms

PRODUCT LINES

Body Bliss, Coola,
DermaQuest,

Tara Spa Therapy,
René Furterer

EQUIPMENT

Biotic Wave by
Beauty Wellness
Tech, Living Earth
Crafts, Mind/Body
Online

ARCHITECT

SB Architects
(San Francisco)

INTERIOR DESIGNER

Myra Hoefler Design
(Healdsburg, CA)

SPA CONSULTANT

Francis & Alexander
(Napa, CA)