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# HOME & AWAY

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Great with  
Hubert Keller**

**Head for the Lake,  
Lorain County  
Awaits**

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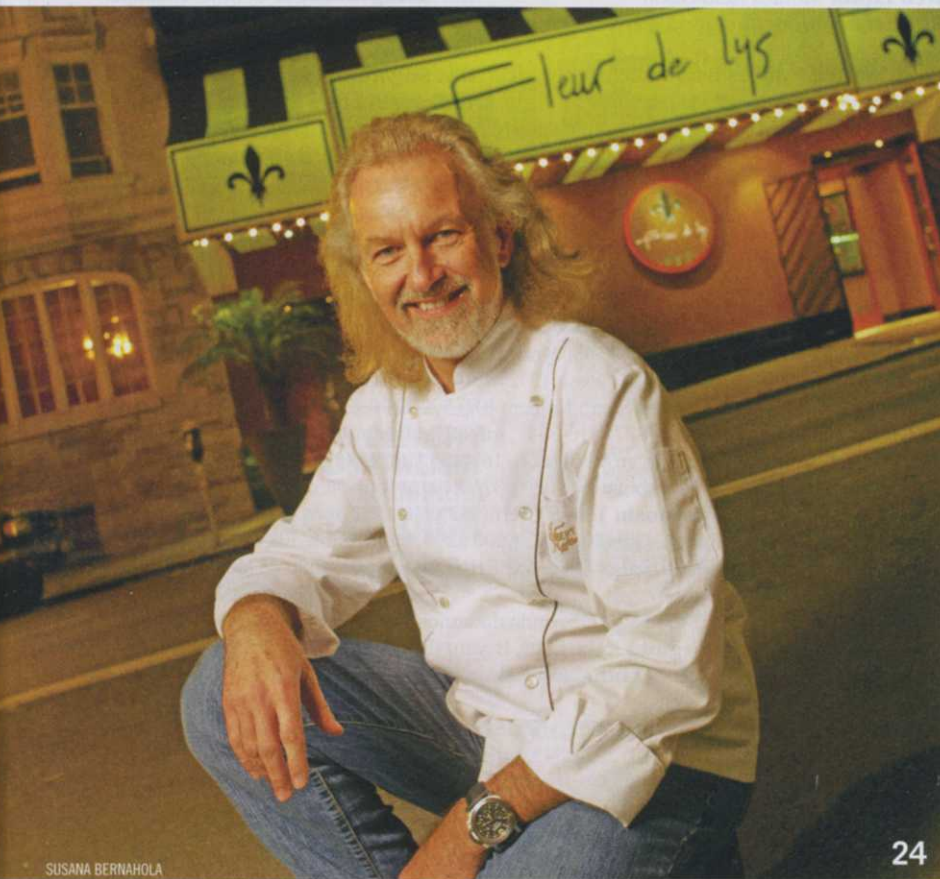
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# HOME & AWAY

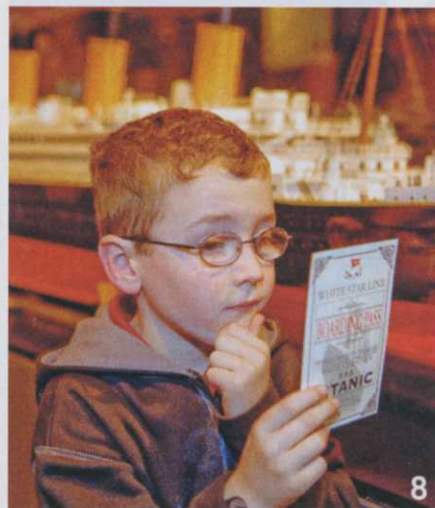
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SUSANA BERNAHOLA

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## ABOUT THE COVER

Africa's Okavango Delta in northwestern Botswana is the world's largest inland delta and provides a seasonal habitat for dozens of species, including the African elephant. Because of successful conservation efforts and a minimal amount of poaching, Botswana boasts the largest savannah population of African elephants—approximately 150,000.

PHOTO BY GLOW IMAGES/PHOTOLIBRARY



**I had the oddest sensation** when I was in San Francisco. It happened every time I took a bite at Chef Hubert Keller's restaurants. Suddenly I was filled with a deep sense of pity for all the people not around me, because they weren't tasting the exquisite flavors I was at that moment.

For those who've watched Keller on *Top Chef* or *Secrets of a Chef* and wondered if his culinary creations were really that good, they can wonder no longer. They are.

Keller is a man whose career has inspired fans to create a page on Facebook titled "The Man, the Legend, the *Top Chef* Master." He was named one of 10 Best New Chefs in America by Food & Wine magazine in 1988, and he has proved the judges highly prescient.

Keller has created successful restaurants in St. Louis, Las Vegas and San Francisco. He's written three books and starred in television programs airing on PBS and Bravo. He taught White House chefs how to cook healthy meals for U.S. presidents. As if that weren't enough, Keller is an accomplished disc jockey who adds his musical talents to charitable and special events when he gets the chance. Clearly he's come a long way from Alsace, France, where his story began. After working all over the world, he's chosen San Francisco as home base for himself and his flagship restaurant, Fleur de Lys.

BY BARBARA WAYMAN "They say you fall in love with San Francisco

and it's really true," Keller said. "It happened to me and my wife. We were supposed to come here for six months to open a restaurant. Then we were going to move on to Spain, but we never made it. That was 25 years ago, and we're still here."

Although these days Keller divides his time between San Francisco and Las Vegas, the City by the Bay has his heart.

"There's something so magical about this city," he said. "I think it's the natural layout, the beauty of the Bay Area, the quality of life, the melting pot of the people, the amazing restaurants we have here. It's the way it all comes together. This is home."

### A Passion for Flavor

Residents and visitors agree San Francisco has something special. Readers of Condé Nast Traveler magazine have voted the city number one in the U.S. every year for the past 17 years. In September 2009, San Francisco was named one of the happiest cities in an article on Forbes.com, which listed "urban centers closely associated with unmitigated joy." With attractions such as cable cars, the Golden Gate Bridge, Chinatown, Alcatraz and Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco draws more than 16 million visitors each year.

Food is a major focus for visitors and residents alike. The quality, diversity and sheer number of restaurants make San Francisco an unparalleled gastronomic getaway that keeps foodies coming back

# Hubert Keller's SAN FRAN





The City by the Bay  
has all the right  
ingredients for a  
top chef.

CISCO



for more. With more restaurants per capita than any other cosmopolitan city in the country, San Francisco offers tastes ranging from Afghan to Burmese and everything in between. Being surrounded by some of the country's best wineries, coastline and farmland doesn't hurt either. Keller said the high standards of the populace have played a key role in the city's reputation for culinary excellence.

"In order to be a great restaurant city, the people who live there have to support restaurants," Keller said. "At Fleur de Lys, we went through recessions, we went through earthquakes, we went through fires. We lost the whole restaurant in a fire once. People keep coming back. It's the whole spirit here. People have high expectations, and they comment and participate. As a restaurateur, you either jump on the bandwagon with freshness, quality and innovation or you don't make it here."

Keller suggested an approach for visitors determined to taste as many delights as possible. They should make a reservation at a top pick the first night of their stay and then, while there, take the opportunity to talk with the management about recommendations for future dining experiences. Keller said restaurant management will likely be knowledgeable about the latest in the food scene, and in many cases may even be able to help tourists snag coveted reservations.

As a starting point, Keller's Fleur de Lys offers award-winning French cuisine, while his newest restaurant, Burger Bar, serves up gourmet burgers of all types. Chez Panisse, Masa's, Ame, Bocadillos and Coi are but five more of 4,300 possible choices.

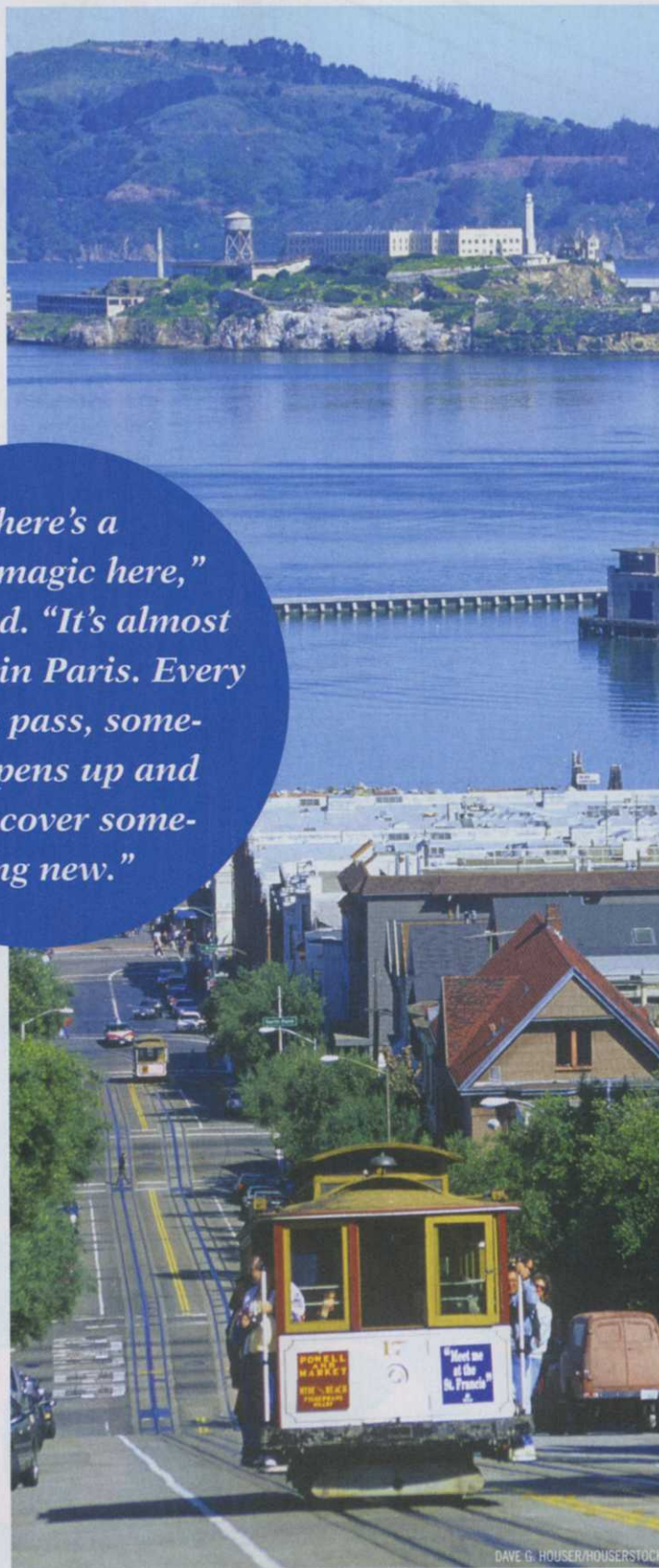
### In the Bag

If shopping is on visitors' agendas, they need look no further than Union Square, one of San Francisco's hottest retail destinations. It's home to many of the city's largest department stores, such as Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue. Hundreds of specialty stores fill the streets surrounding the central plaza, once used to rally support for the Union Army during the Civil War.

Today, tourists are likely to see ice-skaters gliding across the seasonal ice rink or worn-out walkers taking a load off, laden with bags from Barney's, Crate & Barrel, BCBG or Cartier. Exclusive boutiques and sidewalk bistros give a European feel to the area. Keller's Burger Bar presides above it all on the sixth floor of Macy's with floor-to-ceiling views of the plaza.

San Francisco's cable car system is as iconic as Fisherman's Wharf and Alcatraz—located in San Francisco Bay—all on view from hilly Hyde Street.

*"There's a special magic here," Keller said. "It's almost like being in Paris. Every hill you pass, something opens up and you discover something new."*



DAVE G. HOUSER/HOUSESTOCK



## Hubert's Picks

**Eat:** "It's so hard for me to name specific restaurants because someone will always be left off the list. My best advice is to seek out the small authentic restaurants, not chains. Thai, Vietnamese, Greek—we have it all here, and it's authentic, not touristy at all."

**Shop:** "My wife and I love to shop for antiques. We look for French pieces with a modern touch in the shops around Union Square. Gump's on Post Street is really interesting and has been here for many years."

**Party:** "Ruby Sky is a great high-end club. It's in an old theater, and it's rated as having one of the best sound systems in the country. The Supper Club is also really fun."

**Do:** "Walk! Don't drive. San Francisco reveals itself to the visitor with patience. Put on some great walking shoes and explore all the parks and neighborhoods. If something smells good, go find out what it is and give it a taste."

**Union Square's plaza is chock-full of shops, galleries, theaters and salons today, though it got its start as a spot for rallies supporting the Union Army during the Civil War.**



JAN BUTCHOFKY-HOUSER/HOUSERSTOCK

## Natural Beauty

For a different visual appeal, tourists should head to Golden Gate Park. More than 1,000 acres of public land and an abundance of nature-inspired features have made it the third-most-visited park in the nation. Keller often jogs here in the morning, treasuring the way the park has remained a constant despite years of urban development.

"The park is a beautiful spot to visit," he said. "You have the view of the Golden Gate, but then you run a little bit up a hill and it's like a forest. Just five minutes on the trail and it's like you're by yourself 20 years ago."

Taking in views of the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco Bay is also on the chef's not-to-be-missed list.

"For all the years we've lived here," he said, "every morning when I get up, I go out and sit for three or four minutes and look at the bay. Every day is different with the clouds and light and the fog. I never tire of it."

Walter Cronkite once said, "Leaving San Francisco is like

saying goodbye to a sweetheart. One lingers as long as possible." With unrivaled attractions, breathtaking views, unique neighborhoods and delicious flavors, San Francisco has stolen more hearts than George Clooney. Take it from a top chef: "There's a special magic here," Keller said. "It's almost like being in Paris. Every hill you pass, something opens up and you discover something new."

Barbara Wayman is a regular contributor from Dublin, Ohio.

## Planning Your Trip

For trip-planning assistance, contact a local AAA Travel agent or visit [AAA.com/travel](http://AAA.com/travel).

Be sure to ask for The City by the Bay package, which includes two nights in San Francisco and a CityPass Sightseeing Ticket Book, including a seven-day cable car passport and admission to attractions such as the Museum of Modern Art, Exploratorium, Blue and Gold Fleet Bay Cruise, Asian Art Museum, and Legion of Honor/Steinhart Aquarium. **H&A**