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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FROM SEA TO TABLE: MONTEREY COUNTY RESTAURANTS SERVING UP SUSTAINABLE FARE**

*Local Chefs Create Sustainably Sourced Seafood Dishes*

**MONTEREY, Calif., September 26, 2016** – From Salinas Valley, also known as the “Salad Bowl of the World,” to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, often called the “Serengeti of the Sea,” Monterey County offers a bounty of local and sustainable food which makes the region an ideal destination for foodies and wine lovers. With the sanctuary right in our backyard, many local chefs and businesses continue their commitment to being better stewards of the sea by using sustainably sourced ingredients and educating their staff about ecologically conscious seafood choices.

“Protecting our oceans and marine life falls into our belief in the importance of sustainability,” says Tammy Blount, President and CEO of the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau. “We have one of the largest marine sanctuaries in the nation here in Monterey County with an incredible variety of sea life, and we hope to inspire others to help in preserving our natural environment and destination for future generations.”

Nearly three dozen restaurants, hotels and businesses in Monterey County participate in the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program including Sierra Mar Restaurant at Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur, La Balena in Carmel-by-the-Sea, The Sardine Factory in Monterey, Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove and Porter’s in the Forest in Pebble Beach. The program helps consumers and businesses make choices for a healthy ocean by choosing seafood that is fished or farmed in ways that protect sea life and habitats. Restaurants that agree to participate pledge to serve only items from the Seafood Watch “Best Choices” and “Good Alternatives” list of seafood suggestions.

“One of the things that makes Monterey County so special for visitors and residents alike is the health of the bay and the abundance of marine life here,” says Jennifer Dianto Kemmerly, Director of Global Fisheries and Aquaculture at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. “By relying on the expertise of Seafood Watch, consumers, chefs and seafood buyers are able to choose seafood that’s caught or farmed in a sustainable way. This is having a direct impact on the health of the ocean, here and around the world.”

Passionfish in Pacific Grove has been at the forefront of the sustainable seafood movement and was the first restaurant in Monterey County to partner with the Seafood Watch program and the first eatery in the county to be certified as a Green Business. Owners Ted and Cindy Walter have been dedicated to using ingredients from sustainable farms and fisheries on their menu even before joining the program.

“Because of the fact that 75 percent of the seafood sold in the United States is purchased by chefs and restaurants, that makes us the gatekeepers to the ocean’s health and wellbeing, and I think that we need to be responsible business owners,” says Cindy Walter, co-owner of Passionfish.

While the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program sets standards locally and around the country for responsible seafood menus, sustainable efforts don’t stop there in Monterey County. The region’s number one industry – agriculture – leads the way in producing the freshest locally-grown food and wine for culinary choices, helping to reduce the carbon footprint from transportation. Local hotels have been awarded designations and certifications for implementing and measuring standards in waste diversion, energy and water conservation and education. And businesses in the county lead the industry in sustainable business practices.

This year, the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau launched its “Sustainable Moments” initiative, and as part of the effort, the organization takes personal responsibility to help protect the destination's incredible natural assets and pristine landscape by educating visitors on the importance of sustainability and giving back to the community.

Blount says, “It is our hope that here in Monterey County, both visitors and residents experience unforgettable sustainable moments today, tomorrow and for years to come.”

#### **ABOUT MONTEREY COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

The Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau (MCCVB) is a 501©6 organization that drives tourism for Monterey County and in recent years has led the destination to record levels of growth. Tourism is the largest industry on the Monterey Peninsula and the second largest in the County. The MCCVB is a partnership of the hospitality community and local governments that aims to drive business growth through compelling marketing and sales initiatives that maximize the benefits of tourism to our guests, members and the community. Travel spending in Monterey County was more than \$2.7 billion in 2015, representing a 4.5 percent increase from 2014, and per person/per day spending rose to \$333. Visitors in 2015 also generated \$109 million in local tax receipts, a 7.4 percent increase and supported 24,390 jobs.

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