

Life in the Country

Here Comes the Sun

A lifelong Californian changes her career focus from water to land to run an organic farm and farmstand where the offerings shift with the seasons.



meet Carla!

Farmer Carla Malloy uses the cosmos, strawflowers, and zinnias that bloom at her family's Elder Flat Farm to craft fresh and dried bouquets and wreaths.

Roma tomatoes are thick on the vine at Elder Flat in late summer, when the farm's harvest also includes cucumbers, watermelons, lettuces, and green beans.

Growing up, Carla Malloy had no plans of becoming a farmer. In fact, she began her career focused on the ocean—not the land—working at surf brand Hurley in Orange County, California, where she met her husband, Chris.



"Then I planted my first garden and instantly knew this was my calling," she says. As she honed her agricultural skills working on ranches and farms, her family began looking for land they could cultivate themselves.

Then, five years ago, a listing for 102 acres in the tiny California desert town of Los Alamos in the Santa Ynez Valley appeared, and the Malloys knew they'd found their spot. They dubbed it Elder Flat Farm (*elderflatfarm.com*)—"Elder" is because our own elders mean so much to us, and "Flat" is for the mesa our home sits on, which is really the heartbeat of the property," says Carla. Kids Lucas (16), Pearl (13), and Cooper (8) pitch in raising sheep, heritage breed chickens, and Black Angus cattle and growing a variety of fruits and vegetables to sell at their in-town farm shop and to local restaurants. Carla also hosts seasonal retreats (*preserve-restore.com*), which include lessons on food and preservation techniques like pickling vegetables (above), as well as crafts and wellness activities.

"Of course there are hard days with farming," says Carla. "But the sweet moments—enjoying a meal with food we've just harvested, seeing a beautiful sunset over the hills—make me know that being here is the right thing for us."



ABOVE: Bred to thrive in the hot climate, the California Red sheep at Elder Flat are shorn once a year for knitting yarn.
LEFT: At the farm shop, visitors browse organic produce and flowers, Carla's wreaths and bouquets, artisanal foods, and more.

Elder Flat's farm shop is situated on Los Alamos's main strip. Follow @elderflatfarm for details about in-store classes on topics such as flower arranging and charcuterie board styling.

take note

A soothing coat of mossy green (Sterling Forest by Benjamin Moore) lends a "come-on-in" air to the shop's rustic exterior.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA SAMPLE; OPPOSITE PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) MIKAELA HAMILTON; BETSY PEACE; JESSICA SAMPLE; REBECCA NUSS.

