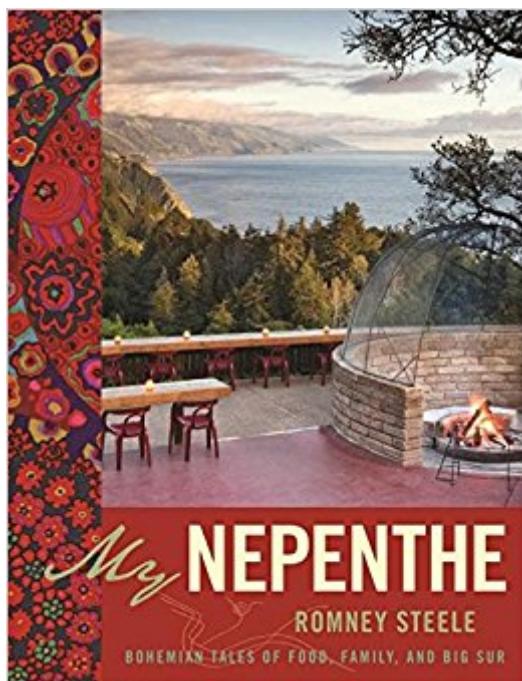


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# My Nepenthe: Bohemian Tales Of Food, Family, And Big Sur



## Synopsis

More than sixty-five years after it first opened, Nepenthe restaurant is still today a favorite tourist destination on the scenic drive along Highway 1 to Big Sur, California. Now available in paperback, *My Nepenthe*, captures the interesting history and people, myriad wild stories, delicious recipes, and stunning photography of this famous location. *My Nepenthe* weaves together stories and tales about the famous California restaurant perched on the majestic cliffs of Big Sur. Located 808 feet above the Pacific Ocean, Nepenthe Restaurant boasts sweeping views of the rugged Santa Lucia Mountains and the wild south coast of Monterey County. Angular mountains plunge into the crashing surf below, and on a clear day there is no limit to the scenery, unspoiled and immense in nature. It is nestled among native oak trees and a historic log cabin (now faced by brick) that was once owned by Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth. The magic and history of place are celebrated through food and the Fassett family who opened Nepenthe in 1949. A lyrical feast written by the owners' granddaughter, Romney Steele, who grew up at the restaurant, *My Nepenthe* is as much about a family enterprise as it is about the Fassett family and their legacy. It recounts stories about the family's more than sixty-five year history on the coast, the arts and architecture, and the colorful people who were the genesis of this legendary restaurant. *My Nepenthe* marks the restaurant's vibrant past as a gathering place and noted bohemian haunt, and its foray into the film industry during the shooting of *The Sandpiper*, featuring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. It also explores the lively scene that played out into the '70s, and onward through the current decade where it showcases Nepenthe's unique relationship with Pisoni Vineyards, owned by the renowned winemaker family. *My Nepenthe* includes more than seventy-five special recipes from the Fassetts, the restaurant, and the cafe, along with spectacular photography that completes the tale. Ultimately, *My Nepenthe* is a story about food, family, and the culture of place, and how it all unfolds around the table and why that matters.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A very special book about a very special place." --Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food* (Michael Pollan)"What a world Romney Steele has given us in *My Nepenthe!* This personal tale is as tender and bright as a bite of Nepenthe Cheese Pie and will transport me--and you--to Big Sur and the days and nights of this magical place. My Nepenthe serves a big, gorgeous slice of American culture that I loved visiting through words and memory."

--Deborah Madison, author of *What We Eat When We Eat Alone* and *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone* (Deborah Madison)"Romney Steele grew up in the lively bohemian milieu of Nepenthe on the Big Sur coast and knows all the stories worth telling. In *My Nepenthe*, an intimate, richly illustrated memoir with recipes culled from the restaurant's 60 years, she writes marvelously about her "crazy stew of a family" and especially her beloved grandmother, whose kindness and hospitality were legendary. --Caroline Bates, contributing editor, *Gourmet magazine* (Caroline Bates, *Gourmet magazine*)

Romney Steele is a writer and cook, the granddaughter of Bill and Lolly Fassett, creators of Nepenthe Restaurant. Nani, as she is known to family and friends, grew up at the family restaurant and opened Cafe Kevah, located on the grounds of Nepenthe. She is the co-owner and cook of The Cook and Her Farmer, a cafe, oyster, and wine bar located in the historic Swan's Market in Oakland, California. She is also the author of *Plum Gorgeous*. She has two children.

This is one of the best books I have ever read. It is about the wonderful Nepenthe restaurant in Big Sur, where we have stopped many times. The views of the Pacific ocean and mountains are enough, but the food is great too. Reading about the history of the place since 1947 and the generations of the family that still run it makes the place even more interesting. A bonus: lots of wonderful old photos of the family and guests, and a surprise of beautifully photographed food with recipes included.

I have such a history of Nepenthe's. I've been coming here for over forty years, since it's only 40

minutes away from where I live. Their Ambrosia burger is still my favorite lunch to order, with a small basket of their fries. To eat here, is outrageously expensive-- but somehow, the gorgeous view of the Big Sur Coastline makes it all worthwhile. I love this book. I love their stories. I have bookmarked many of the recipes, and I want to start with the Ambrosia burger. What is it about that burger? It's char-grilled, juicy, flavorful... gotta have my fix at least once a year. Any good cook would love this colorful book with a lot of simple, delicious and healthy recipes.

I have had this on my wish list for a few years and I finally bought it. I had some specific reasons for wanting to read it and it met my expectations. I came of age in the late 60's and loved reading the account of this very bohemian family. There are great recipes throughout as well.

Quirky Big Sur draws me into its isolated California charm, and Nepenthe, with its unique history, is pretty much the center of the Big Sur World. This book is a paean of love written by a woman who was fortunate enough to spend her childhood in residence at Nepenthe, when her grandmother owned and ran the place. There are some good recipes scattered throughout, as well as quite a bit of family history, but mostly, it's just a lovely homage to a Different World from the one we live in today. Relax, and enjoy the ride!

I have made two of the cakes in the book so far and was more than pleased with the outcome. I have enjoyed reading the story about Nepenthe. I have not had the cook book for very long so I am sure I will try other things in the book.

I loved this book; the story, the pictures, the recipes, the place. Steele weaves a perfect amount of history in with her familial anecdotes. After finishing the book I visited Nepenthe last weekend, and it truly is a special place. Words cannot describe the setting, and having the insight into the history behind the establishment made it that much more magical. I recommend to anyone who hasn't done so already, read "My Nepenthe" and then see for your self the beauty that is Nepenthe; you honestly will forget your hardships and troubles while you are there.

Romney Steele has written one of the most interesting, beautiful and useful books I have ever owned. Whether or not you've been to Nepenthe, in Big Sur, California, you will treasure this book. I have bought five copies, so far, and have given them as gifts to friends. Of course, I kept one for myself--it is a treasure!

When you open My Nepenthe by Romney Steele, you release layer upon layer of energies, cultures, colours, textures, tastes, sounds, happenings. The cannister springs open and out come the characters, flavours, aromas, the spirits of Nepenthe and the original tribal nature of the essential Big Sur which shall remain intact no doubt through every challenge living perched on the edge of the continent in the wilds can throw at the natives. I know them, have lived and worked surrounded by their courage and creative stubbornness and I recommend My Nepenthe to anyone who passes through Big Sur and to everybody who wishes they could linger to absorb the rarified atmosphere. My response to 'Nani" is "way to go" and my advice to you all is "buy and savour the book", a keeper.

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