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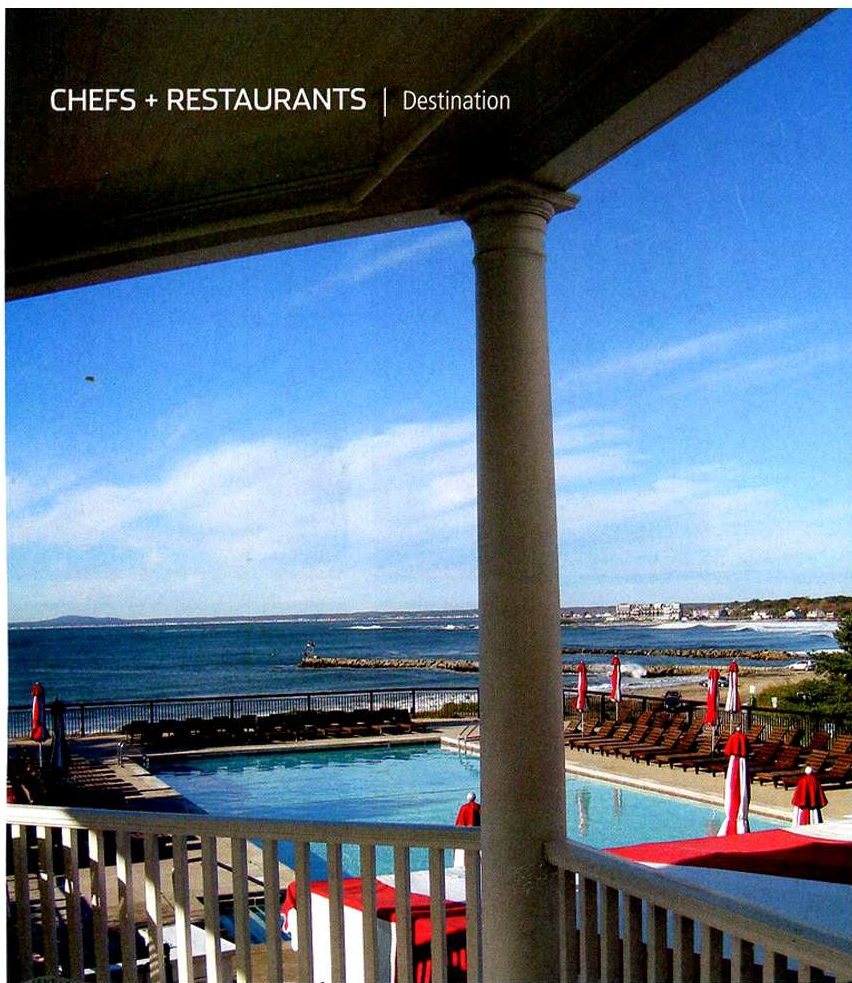
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Clockwise from left: Poolside overlooking the ocean at the Colony Hotel; The elegant dining room at the White Barn Inn; Chef Jonathan Cartwright plates his signature Lobster Spring Rolls (recipe on page 20).

Classic Comfort and Great Chefs: A Visit to Kennebunkport

BY JEAN KERR

EVER SINCE THE LATE 1800s, Kennebunkport has been known as one of the most attractive — and poshest — resort towns on the Maine coast. With gorgeous summer homes like Walker's Point, (the Bush compound) and food and lodging to suit just about every taste, Kennebunkport remains a thriving destination for both great food and luxury accommodations.

Timeless Elegance

The **Colony Hotel** (www.thecolonyhotel.com) gives visitors a peek into Kennebunkport's past, and the pastimes of its genteel visitors. The hotel maintains such traditions as afternoon tea, shuffleboard and lawn games. There are no flat screen TVs in the rooms, and no fitness center,

though the Colony has arrangements with local clubs. The Colony is decidedly pet friendly, with dog blankets supplied for visiting canines.

The Colony is beautifully but simply appointed, with rooms that harken back to its origins in 1914. It has been in the same family since 1948, and clearly the owners maintain the proud tradition of simple luxury and gracious service. The ongoing process of refurbishment and historical preservation are evident throughout the hotel.

The bay window in our room overlooked the breakwater at the entrance to the harbor as well as gorgeous views of the Atlantic with Mount Agamenticus in the distance. Simple, elegant décor is the rule,

with many pieces of original furniture lovingly restored. Sea breezes blowing through the gauzy curtains will transport you back in time.

Our room overlooked the heated salt-water swimming pool and the Colony's private beach. And the Colony's lavish breakfast buffet will get your day off to a terrific start.

But not everything harkens back to the past. In 1994 the family launched the Colony Hotel Ecology Group, becoming the state's first environmentally responsible hotel. Its practice of energy conservation, recycling, waste reduction and cultural stability helped to qualify it as a U.S. Backyard Wildlife Habitat in the state of Maine.



Photograph by Trent Bell/Kennebunkport Resort Collection.

Al fresco dining at Earth at Hidden Pond.

Heaven at Earth

Executive Chef Justin Walker, along with acclaimed Chef Ken Oringer, are the culinary forces behind this incredible Kennebunkport dining destination. Part of the Hidden Pond Resort, **Earth at Hidden Pond** (www.earthathiddenpond.com) is known for its farm to table ethos, romantic outdoor dining and stunning decor.

Chef Walker has created a menu comprised of house-made pastas, cheeses, breads, charcuterie and desserts and locally sourced meats and seafood. Herbs, flowers and heirloom vegetables are grown in Earth's 800-square foot organic garden. Even cocktails are prepared using ingredients from the garden.

Tim Harrington, one of the property's owners, drew inspiration for Earth's eclectic décor from a favorite café in Uruguay. Outdoor seating overlooking the "hidden pond" is illuminated by hanging lanterns and tables are placed among herb and flower gardens.

Walker, named a Rising Star by StarChefs, continues to push the envelope

with ultra seasonal offerings like garganelli with wood roasted rabbit, ramps, brown butter and artichoke mustard; and local chicken with spring vegetable confit, black trumpet mushrooms, fava leaves and goat whey. Or try starters like seared foie gras with fennel yogurt, sweet chili, a citrus crumble and lovage. Or Nonesuch River oysters with Meyer lemon-hyssop cocktail sauce. Locally raised grass-fed beef tartare was on the menu when we visited and it was superb.

Not surprisingly, tables can be hard to get in the busy summer months. Reservations (even for resort guests!) at least two weeks in advance are recommended.

Surrounded by Luxury

The **White Barn Inn** and British-born Grand Chef Jonathan Cartwright have become Kennebunkport institutions since 1996 when Cartwright became Executive Chef at **The White Barn Inn Restaurant** (www.whitebarninn.com), one of only five AAA Five Diamond restaurants in New England.

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Stripers' Executive Chef Gary Caron.

Accommodations include traditional rooms in the original farmhouse as well as cottages and suites with a bountiful Continental breakfast and afternoon tea included. If you're heading to the beach, order a picnic hamper to take along. Browse the Inn's signature spa treatments online and be prepared to be pampered.

"We're selling a little bit of happiness for a few hours while our guests are here — that's actually priceless."

Riverside Elegance and the Freshest Seafood

The **Breakwater Inn and Spa** (www.thebreakwaterinn.com) now under the aegis of Hay Creek Hotels, consistently gets rave reviews for its ultra comfortable accommodations and lovely waterside location. Located in a historic building, the rooms offer views of the entrance to Kennebunkport Harbor and the breakwater that marks the inlet. The building may be classic old New England, but the rooms are updated and luxurious. You can stay in the original building or in a spa room or suite, with more contemporary décor and elevator access. The Waterside Cottage is right over the water and offers the ultimate in privacy and comfort, as well as a front row seat to the water traffic you'll see coming and going throughout your stay.

The Spa is a haven of serenity. Brushed glass walls and doors in blue and green tones give a feeling of being in a retreat made of sea glass. Spa staff is welcoming and professional with a great variety of signature treatments. A fully equipped fitness room also overlooks the river.

Stripers restaurant specializes in local meats and seafood with inspired twists. The Sunset Lounge opens long before sunset with raw bar selections as well as more traditional pub fare. The dinner menu boasts eight different lobster preparations and an extensive list of fin fish entrées based on what's best and freshest that day.

In addition to lunch, brunch and dinner, Stripers boasts some of the vantage points in Kennebunkport. Pull up an Adirondack

When asked how he stays inspired after all these years, given his dual role as Grand Chef Relais & Châteaux and Chief Operating Officer of US Hotels New England Management Corporation, Cartwright says simply, "I'm a chef—I love food," he says. "I will always have a passion for that."

In fact, he not only seeks to cultivate a similar zeal within his kitchen staff, he seeks to nurture them as human beings. "We don't play much on hierarchy here," he says. "People work shoulder to shoulder everyday, which is why we'll help people and make sure they feel cared for."

As for what inspires his menu creations, he cites a wealth of local, quality ingredients and growers willing to grow almost

anything for him. Featuring fresh, local seafood caught in the waters off Kennebunkport, Maine as well as native game and poultry, Cartwright says recipes from his menu, which changes seasonally, rely on simplicity. "We try not to overcomplicate the dishes with too many ingredients fighting on a plate," he explains.

Signature dishes include the Lobster Spring Roll with carrot, daikon radish and snow peas in a sweet and spicy sauce, Maine Salmon Medallions with spinach polenta and an eggplant puree, Pan Roasted Duck with rhubarb raspberry chutney, pommes soufflé and foie gras sauce. Desserts are inspired seasonally as well, like the Blueberry hibiscus soufflé with frozen blueberry yogurt and blueberry compote.



David's KPT at The Boathouse.

chair on the front lawn and sip a Striper's signature cocktail, dine on the deck or in the dining room—all overlooking the water.

Executive Chef Gary Caron says, "I love being in a place where we can provide our guests with a dozen beautiful Maine raised oysters and a cocktail or Maine brewed craft beer while they relax on the lawn, and then turn around and create a multi-course dining experience for them that evening."

Not Your Average Boathouse

The newly renovated **Boathouse Waterfront Hotel** (www.boathouseme.com) is yet another jewel in Kennebunkport's crown. With 25 newly renovated rooms, some with balconies, the rooms are luxuriously cutting edge, with amenities like Apple TV, flat screen televisions and I-pod docks. The design and décor reminded me of a small but luxurious cruise ship. There is a rooftop deck for the warmer months and great views of the water. During the summer get in a sail on the schooner *Eleanor* and the Boathouse can supply a bottle of wine for your cruise.

The Boathouse offers "Stay Enhancements" like a "Sun, Sand and a Beach Bag in Your Hand" which equips you with sunscreen, bottled water, towels, maga-

zines and a parking pass. The "Three Sheets to the Wind" enhancement offers a Boathouse martini shaker with your choice of their signature cocktails. You keep the shaker as a memento of your stay. "Oh Those Summer Nights" includes a Boathouse fleece blanket to cuddle up in and a bottle of bubbly to share with your sweetie.

Add to this the culinary prowess of acclaimed Portland chef and veteran restaurateur David Turin, whose eleventh restaurant, **David's KPT** is on premises, and you've got quite the package. Turin, whose KPT menu includes great (and great value) happy hour noshes and bargain drinks, is the perfect relaxation after a day on the beach or the water.

The tasting menu that we sampled included a Tartar Duo, with steak, truffle and Pacific Rim tuna and Fried calamari with lemon, spicy aioli and cilantro. Entrées included a Magret of Duck with risotto, and a lobster and oyster stew. Last but by no means least, we loved David's white chocolate mousse served with almond cookies and a raspberry coulis, just one of several luscious dessert offerings.

Recipes on the following page.

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**Hay Creek
Hotels**

www.haycreekhoteles.com

Photograph by Trent Bell/Kennebunkport Resort Collection



Riverside dining at the Breakwater Inn.

Fried Oysters with Padron Pepper Relish

At Earth the peppers in this recipe are charred in a wood oven, and seasonally, come from their farm. “The relish is great on vegetables, seafood or just about anything,” says Danielle Walker, General Manager at Earth. Chef Justin Walker (yes, they’re a team!) garnishes these tasty morsels with crispy crumbled bacon and fried sage leaves. The relish can be made up to three days in advance.

For the pepper relish

- 2 green bell peppers
- 2 Padron peppers
- 1 tablespoon minced shallots
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- ¼ cup Sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt to taste

1. Char the peppers under the broiler or on a grill until the skin is blackened. Wrap loosely in a towel and allow to cool.

2. When cool enough to handle, peel off charred skin. Quarter and seed the peppers and pulse in a food processor until relish consistency.

3. Place all ingredients in a non-reactive (stainless steel or enameled) saucepan and simmer until thick and jammy.

For the oysters

- 2 dozen oysters shucked, stored in their liquor, deeper bottom shell rinsed and reserved
- 1 cup corn flour
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Corn or peanut oil for deep-frying, enough to come two inches up the side of your pan

1. Heat the oil in a saucepan to 350°F. Season the corn flour with salt and pepper to taste.

2. Dredge oysters in the seasoned corn flour. Shake off excess flour and fry until crispy.

3. To serve, place a spoon full of the relish in each clean oyster shell.

4. Place a fried oyster on the relish and serve immediately.

Serves 4

Lobster Spring Rolls

This dish is adapted from the recipe for the White Barn Inn’s elegantly presented appetizer.

- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 pound cooked lobster meat, chopped
- 2 large carrots, cut into thin strips
- 1 medium daikon, cut into strips
- 10 snow pea pods, cut into thin strips
- 1 tablespoon ginger, finely chopped
- 4 egg roll wrappers
- 1 egg yolk for wash to seal rolls
- 1 teaspoon oyster sauce
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- Peanut oil for frying
- Cilantro oil (recipe follows)
- Your favorite Thai sweet chili sauce

1. In a sauté pan, heat the sesame oil and stir-fry all the vegetables for about a minute. Add the soy sauce, ginger and oyster sauce to the vegetables. Cool.

2. In a mixing bowl combine the lobster and half the stir-fried vegetables, squeeze out all the excess liquid. Divide the drained mixture into four rolls. Wrap each one tightly in an egg roll sheet egg washing the sides before rolling and sticking down the end.

3. Heat oil to 350°F. Gently place spring rolls in oil and deep fry for approximately five minutes. Serve them on hot plates with the remainder of the stir-fry vegetables and cilantro oil and Thai sweet chili sauce.

For the cilantro oil

- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro

1. Drop the cilantro into boiling water for a few seconds and refresh in ice water.
2. Squeeze the blanched cilantro dry. In a high-speed blender or food processor, blend the oil and cilantro together for 30 seconds and strain through a fine sieve. Keep in a glass container.

Maine Redfish with Pickled Mushrooms and Soba Noodles

Chef Gary Caron at Stripers created this dish for a customer who is also an avid sport-fisherman. Gary says, "I made this dish for him and he was amazed that the 'little red things with the nasty spines' that he had been throwing back were this delicious."

- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- ½ cup light soy sauce
- ½ pound mixed mushrooms, such as shitake or cremini, cleaned and broken into roughly uniform pieces
- 1 cup apple cider
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ⅛ cup red miso
- 1 pound of buckwheat soba noodles, cooked according to package directions
- 4 half- pound redfish fillets
- Salt, dried coriander and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- Daikon or radish, coarsely grated for garnish

1. In a saucepan, combine sugar, rice wine vinegar, and soy sauce. Bring to a boil. Add mushrooms and cool for a couple of hours or overnight.
2. In a large pot or Dutch oven, combine apple cider vinegar, maple syrup, and miso paste. Blend well and bring to a simmer. Add the mushrooms and soba noodles and keep warm.
3. Heat canola oil in a large sauté pan. Season fish filets with salt, pepper and coriander and fry redfish skin side down, until crispy. Turn the filets over and turn off heat. The flesh side should be just golden and the filets cooked through.

4. To serve, divide noodles between four wide bowls. Place a piece of fish in each and pour mushrooms with their marinade over. Garnish with daikon or radish and serve.

Serves 4

Berry and Apple Crisp

Chef David Turin makes this simple but delicious dessert in his restaurant at The Boathouse in Kennebunkport.

For the filling

- 1 Macintosh apple, peeled, cored and chopped
- 1 Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored and chopped
- ½ pint raspberries
- ½ pint blueberries
- 1 quart strawberries, rinsed, cored and sliced
- ½ cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon Cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
- ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg
- Dash ground cloves
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

For the topping

- ⅔ cup flour
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup white sugar
- 4 tablespoons butter, partly softened
- 1 cup your favorite granola
- ½ cup nuts, such as almonds or pecans (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 325°F.
2. Combine all ingredients for the filling in a mixing bowl and toss well. Turn mixture into an ovenproof baking dish.
3. Combine the topping ingredients in a bowl. Using pastry blender or your fingers, cut ingredients into butter until the mixture is the consistency of corn kernels.
4. Spread the topping over the fruit and bake about 12 to 15 minutes until the filling is bubbling and topping is crisp. May be made ahead of time and reheated. Serve with vanilla ice cream if desired.

Serves 6 to 8 ❁

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