



DESTINATION DINING

20 CULINARY ADVENTURES
YOU MUST TAKE NOW
BY ALEXANDRA HALL

WHY SCOTT BROWN'S MEMOIR IS
JUST HIS LATEST CAMPAIGN GIMMICK

BY EILEEN McNAMARA

Boston

THE RED SOX ISSUE

JON LESTER

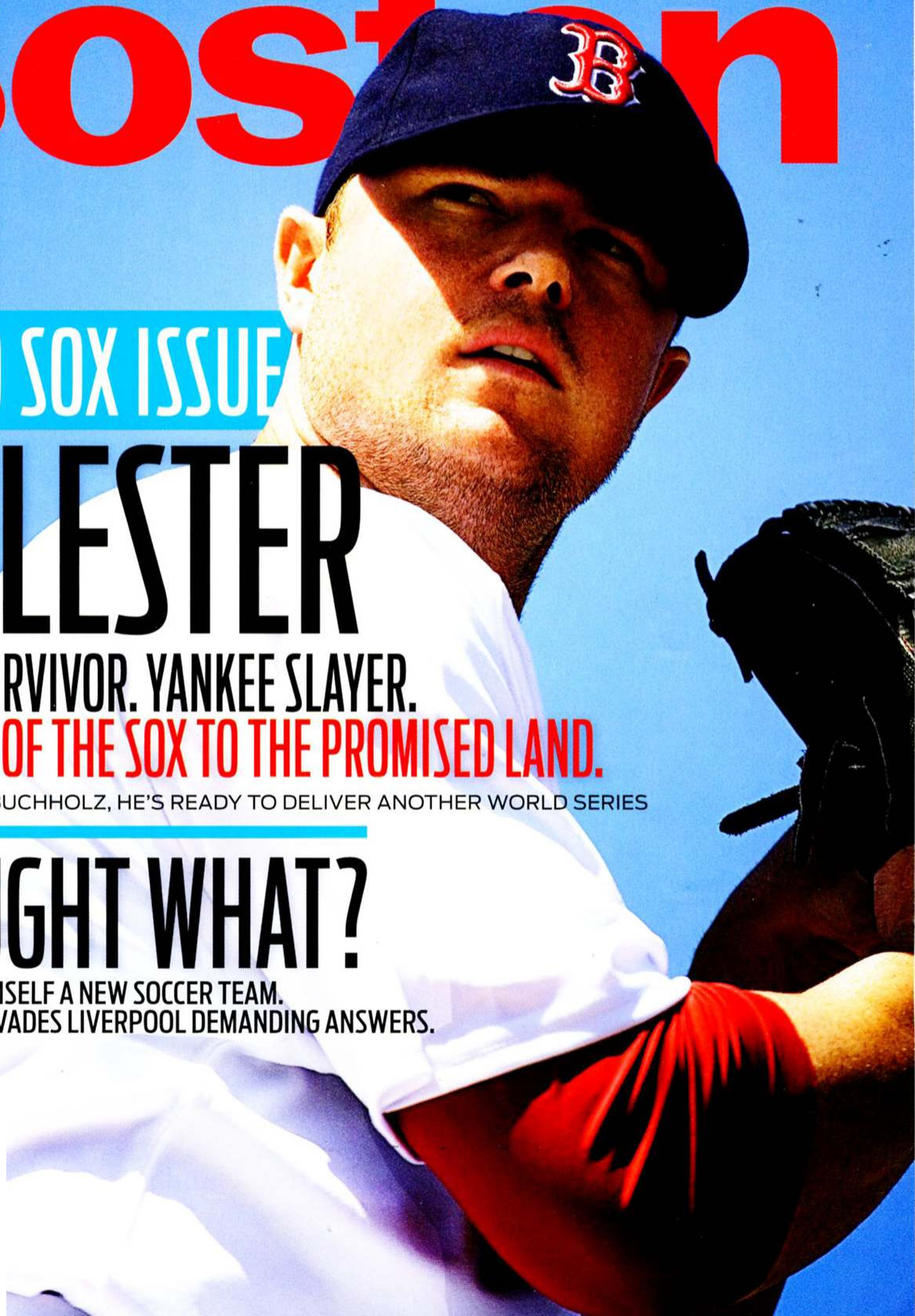
CANCER SURVIVOR. YANKEE SLAYER.

LEADER OF THE SOX TO THE PROMISED LAND.

WITH CO-ACE CLAY BUCHHOLZ, HE'S READY TO DELIVER ANOTHER WORLD SERIES

HE BOUGHT WHAT?

JOHN HENRY GOT HIMSELF A NEW SOCCER TEAM.
JASON SCHWARTZ INVADES LIVERPOOL DEMANDING ANSWERS.



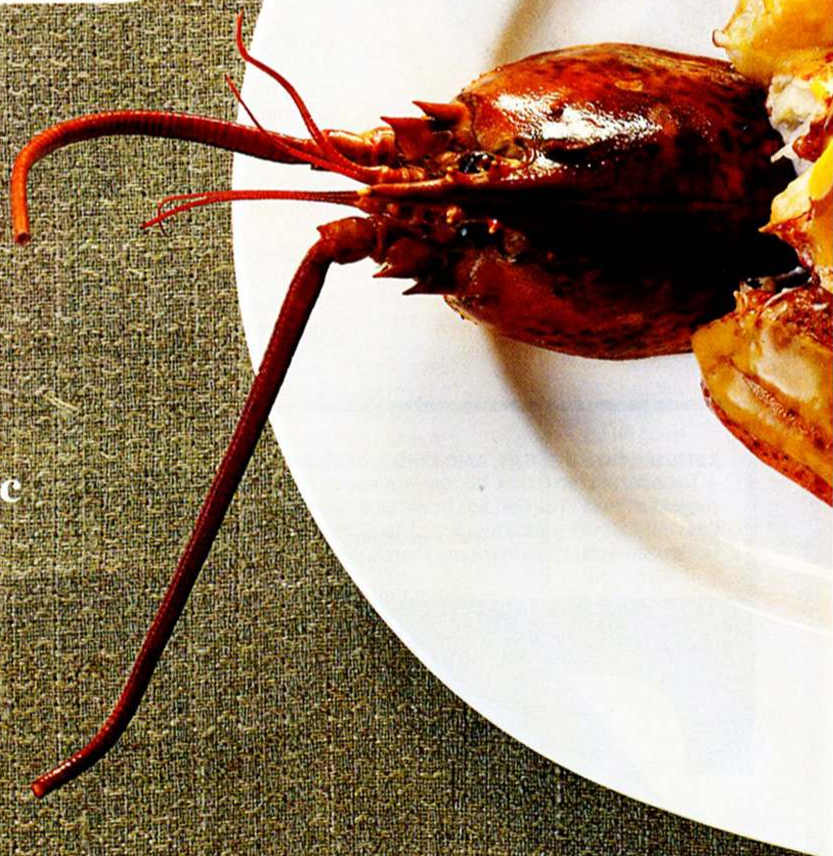
DESTINATION

DINING

More than ever before, there *is* culinary life beyond our city's borders. And then some. New England's splendid restaurants aren't just worth the drive—they've become true gastronomic adventures in their own right. Food lovers, ready your maps.

BY ALEXANDRA HALL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELLEN SILVERMAN



WITH REPORTING BY MICHAEL BLANDING, BRITTANY JASNOFF, ERIN BYERS MURRAY, AMY TRAVERSO, AND CHIN WANG



The White Barn Inn's
glorious steamed
Maine lobster over
fettuccine with cognac-
coral butter sauce.

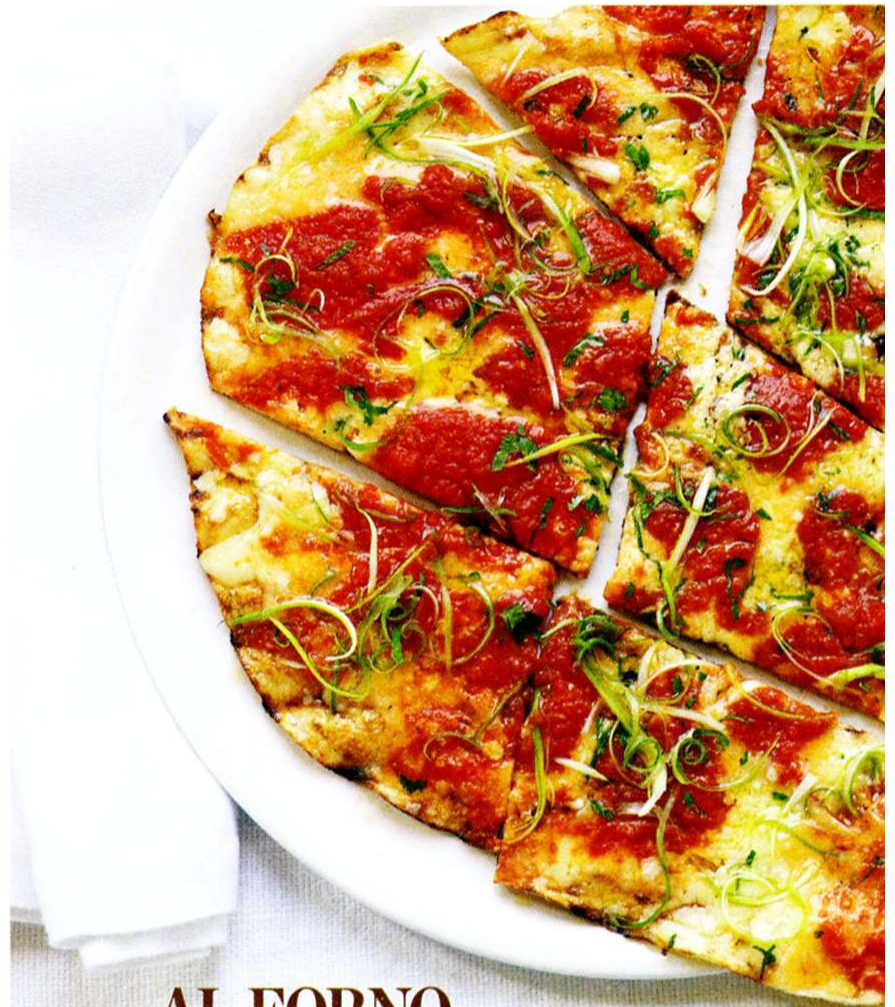
WE

have, no question, become a city of restaurant landmarks. Looking for the State House? Why, it's right there on Beacon, next to No. 9 Park and parallel to Mooo. Where to renew your passport in the Back Bay? Walk up St. James and it's immediately after Post 390. Harvard? Just past Mr. Bartley's Burgers on Mass. Ave. (If you run into Chez Henri, you've gone too far.)

So it's little wonder that when wanderlust sets in, we look to restaurants for travel inspiration. But to warrant the schlep, these places have to offer up more than just exemplary food and service; they've got to provide a palpable shift in vibe, pace, and atmosphere—something very different from what we can get at home. Meaning whether you land in a seaside city's romantic inn, a tiny town's regionally loved bistro, or a resort's locavore lodge, when you step out of your car and up to the host's station, this much should be clear: You're no longer anywhere near Boston...and you're about to experience a meal you'll remember long after you've returned.

What follows are the restaurants that have made themselves bona fide regional landmarks. Our staff journeyed to a long list of contenders to gauge just how worth the trek every last one is. And after countless miles logged and state borders crossed, we narrowed the list down to just 20.

They are the stuff that culinary pilgrimages are made on.



AL FORNO

PROVIDENCE * RI

MILES FROM
BOSTON
COMMON



51

AVERAGE MEAL
PRICE PER
PERSON*



\$

MEAL ON A
SCALE OF
1 TO 10



7.5

Back in the dark ages of New England dining (read: the '80s), Providence's Johanne Killeen and George Germon were among the few gastro-pioneers to preach that food could be transcendent just by being ultrafresh, meticulously cooked, and pretense-free. Al Forno, their now-legendary restaurant, continues to serve simple dishes that are full of bright flavors. An urbane, Prada-heeled crew files nightly into the glowing dining room, which crackles with the crowd's enthusiasm for braised pork-shank ravioli and a thin-crust pizza (pictured above) that rivals any in Boston—or Naples, for that matter.

577 S. MAIN ST., 401-273-9760, ALFORNO.COM.

*MEAL PRICE ESTIMATES DO NOT INCLUDE WINE OR GRATUITY
\$ = UNDER \$75; \$\$ = \$75-\$150; \$\$\$ = \$150-\$250; \$\$\$\$ = MORE THAN \$250

AMERICAN SEASONS

NANTUCKET * MA



The line out the door is your first hint that meals at this humble-seeming nook can be spectacular. It's also your reminder to make a reservation weeks in advance next time. When you finally do get inside, settle in with lovelies such as seared day-boat scallops with dollops of braised oxtail and truffled pumpkin purée—memorable enough even if it weren't served among the dining room's hurricane candle-lit collection of Americana. And don't neglect the wine list: 500-plus of the owners' favorites from their travels to American wineries. Most certainly worth waiting—and veering off the dunes—for.

80 CENTER ST., 508-228-7111, AMERICANSEASONS.COM.

ARROWS

OGUNQUIT * ME

Long before the rest of the world jumped onto the trend, Mark Gaier and Clark Frasier were growing their own vegetables and curing their own prosciutto to supply their farmhouse restaurant. And Arrows continues to draw a stream of discriminating diners up I-95. They come for the romance: the pre-dinner stroll through the orchard, the dining room swathed in flowers, and the coddling service. And they come for the food: thoughtful, ingredient-driven fare. Exhibits A, B, and C: Maine lobster served three ways—a grilled tail with lemon-grass, claws poached in butter, and knuckles in red curry, all accompanied by a vegetable crêpe and grilled Thai corn.

BERWICK ROAD, 207-361-1100, ARROWSRESTAURANT.COM.



ATRIA

EDGARTOWN * MA



Really, who cares if the likes of Sharon Stone and Bill Clinton have been rumored to sup at this, Martha's Vineyard's hottest dinner-meets-nightlife spot? Real folk like yourself will have just as momentous an outing, thanks to specialties like poached lobster with mascarpone gnocchi, washed down with an astutely recommended Jordan chardonnay—or the cioppino, crammed with plump oysters and cod. You'll remember its straight-off-the-boat freshness for years. Or at least till tomorrow, as inspiration while out on your fishing excursion.

137 MAIN ST., 508-627-5850, ATRIAMV.COM.

BLANTYRE

LENOX * MA



Dinner at Blantyre is an undeniably fancy affair—jackets and ties required for men, meals ordered in the ornate main hall over cocktails—but not in a stuffy way. Rather, diners are treated like treasured guests in a good friend's home—if said friend just happened to own a stunning Gilded Age mansion. The menu showcases elegant creations: Lobster arrives on a just-warm buckwheat blini beneath a silky cloud of crème fraîche; exquisite La Belle Farm foie gras comes pressed to perfection. Follow it all up by heading to the Music Room for coffee, dessert, and conversation.

16 BLANTYRE RD., 413-637-3556, BLANTYRE.COM.

BLACK TRUMPET

PORTSMOUTH * NH

Portsmouth is a jumble of lamppost-lined brick sidewalks set against compact and elegant historical buildings. One of them houses Black Trumpet, a humble but gracious boîte that shines with copper-topped tables and candlelight—and a menu of meticulously made specialties: smoky meatballs in bright-flavored Moroccan sauce (pictured below); duck breast with date-orange molasses; and a potato-leek potage fortified with ale and jacked up with black trumpet mushrooms, for which chef Evan Mallett forages in his own backyard. 29 CERES ST., 603-431-0887, BLACKTRUMPETBISTRO.COM.



FOUR COLUMNS INN

NEWFANE * VT



It's one thing to create the quintessential New England dining room, complete with a fire-filled hearth and tweaked versions of classic comfort food (grilled tenderloin with spicy green-peppercorn vinaigrette; seared duck breast outfitted with a sauce of sweetly sour cherry, crab apple, and ginger). But it's quite another to keep the place feeling inventive for 25 years. Chef Greg Parks has done just that. This romantic getaway situated on a perfect village square in the Green Mountain foothills lures celebs and leaf-peepers alike with the promise of a memorable meal. 21 WEST ST., 800-787-6633, FOURCOLUMNSINN.COM.

HEN OF THE WOOD

WATERBURY * VT



By now it seems there are few people on the planet who don't know about this culinary treasure in the heart of ski country that serves the simplest of dishes—heirloom tomato salad, squab under a brick, grass-fed rib-eye. Yet even the most frequent visitors will feel like they've discovered it for the first time as they sup in the gristmill cellar to the sounds of a rushing creek outside. The flavors are revelatory—a combination of locally sourced ingredients and the expert hand of chef Eric Warnstedt, who has an almost instinctive ability to bring out each dish's natural essence. 92 STOWE ST., 802-244-7300, HENOFTHWOOD.COM.

L.A. BURDICK

WALPOLE * NH



Boston dwellers who've sampled the chocolate at Burdick's café in Cambridge understand why cult followers from as far as Canada trek to the company's full-fledged restaurant in New Hampshire. Two parts modern Parisian brasserie, one part fancified country store, it's an enchanting spot to tuck into a lyonnaise salad with duck egg and duck confit—or a roast chicken in calvados jus that's nothing short of ethereal. Dessert, of course, centers on chocolate. That said, the raspberry tart? It'll haunt your dreams. 47 MAIN ST., 603-756-9058, BURDICKCHOCOLATE.COM.

CASTLE HILL INN

NEWPORT * RI

There may be no prettier view in Newport than the one from this cluster of turreted chalets and cottages overlooking Narragansett Bay. But the real attraction is in the kitchen, where chef Jonathan Cambra oversees a menu of artfully presented dishes such as pan-roasted scallops (pictured below), and a chestnut velouté that naps a slow-cooked rabbit. And sure, after all that, you *could* head home. But having dipped into the top-notch wine selection, plus desserts that include *pot de crème* with s'mores and a divine hazelnut tart, it's fairly certain you'll be more inclined to explore those soaring turrets.

590 OCEAN DR., 888-466-1355, CASTLEHILLINN.COM.



THE PITCHER INN

WARREN * VT



Tucked into a Rockwellian village, this charmer is a paragon of rustic refinement. Visitors may be drawn to its stately elegance and wildly themed rooms (a library motif pervades the "School" suite), but they're otherwise distracted once they settle into the dining room. Sue Schickler changes her menu regularly, which means shredded Brussels sprouts and Parmesan tossed into a salad one day, and flounder served dramatically *en papillote* (baked in paper) the next. All the while, service is impeccably timed, but also personal—so your meal will wind up feeling as welcoming as a visit to your grandmother's pastoral retreat. 275 MAIN ST.,

802-496-6350.
PITCHERINN.COM.



You want pomp
and circumstance?
Reserve elsewhere.

But if what you crave is the most flavorful, delectably cooked ingredients, there's still no better table to secure than one at this industrial-chic culinary temple. Fore Street is the nexus of Portland's nationally ballyhooed gastro-scene, and with the first bite of your meal, you'll understand why. If it isn't the tomatoes that are perfectly ripe (they wouldn't have been on the ever-changing menu if they weren't exactly in season) winning you over, then it'll be the succulent turnspit-roast chicken and the inspired wine list, both of which will have you requesting seconds. And then there's the plum-almond tart (pictured at right)—a confection so vibrant, its flavors pack all the grandeur your palate could ever crave. 288 FORE ST., 207-775-2717. FORESTREET.BIZ.

FORE STREET

PORTLAND * ME





THE RED ROOSTER

WOODSTOCK * VT

You don't come to the ridiculously quaint town of Woodstock expecting to break the cuisine sound barrier; you come to revel in the place's ambient cuteness. So brace yourself for dinner at the Woodstock Inn's improbably daring dining room. Ask for a table close to the bubbling water sculpture, and then dive in—to thoughtfully executed plates such as pear with blue cheese and short ribs; a black-truffle risotto so delectable it tastes like dessert; and a velvety duck zapped with mustard spaetzle, tweaked by the bitterness of grilled radicchio, and calmed by the sweetness of stone fruits. 14 THE GREEN, 802-457-1100, WOODSTOCKINN.COM.



SOLSTICE

STOWE * VT

Housed in Stowe Mountain Lodge, Solstice restaurant is a true gastronomic stage, thanks to grand tables and soaring ceilings that mimic the towering peaks of nearby Mount Mansfield. Chef Cody Vasek's upscale comfort menu more than holds its own against the surroundings, with crowd-pleasers that are perfect for warming you up after a run on the slopes—understated but flavorful masterpieces such as Misty Knoll coq au vin and a rich-as-can-be lamb and duck confit cassoulet. 7412 MOUNTAIN RD., 802-760-4735, STOWE MOUNTAINLODGE.COM.

STREET & CO.

PORTLAND * ME

One of the very first great Portland restaurants was Street & Co., which has been serving just-caught, Mediterranean-rustic seafood since 1989. And you can't improve on the setting: a cozy string of brick-walled eating spaces in a converted warehouse in the Old Port. Stick with the classics here—stuffed dates to start; grilled lobster that comes direct from the city's harbor; and scallops in Pernod and cream. 33 WHARF ST., 207-775-0887, STREETANDCOMPANY.NET.



SEASONS

WATCH HILL * RI



There's an upstairs-downstairs thrill in sitting at the open

kitchen's counter seats in the Ocean House inn's restaurant. Hearing the sous yell "Pig!" just before a team of waiters arrives to collect pork tenderloin only enhances the flavor when your portion gets to the table. The same intimacy pervades everything here. These guys do "farm-to-table" right, with a staff "food forager" who sources the freshest meats—like the grass-fed beef (pictured above)—daily from local farms. Entrée choices always include day-boat seafood from the Watch Hill docks; meanwhile, the seaside village boasts a carousel and boutiques that make for lovely browsing before dinner or after dessert (which often includes honeycombs from the inn's own hives). ONE BLUFF AVE., 401-584-7000, OCEANHOUSERI.COM.

152 \$\$\$\$ 10.0

TWIN FARMS

BARNARD * VT

Twin Farms would be one of Boston's toughest reservations were it moved from its idyllic mountainside setting to the city. Reservations are unavailable if you're not a guest at the inn—and room rates hover somewhere in the stratosphere. Thankfully, though, so does the food. With no set menu and a bounty of local food artisans just past his back door, chef Ted Ask churns out mind-blowing cuisine (like hen croquettes over barley-walnut salad; or apple, onion, and cheddar gratins) to just 10 or 20 diners a night. A splurge? Absolutely, but you're worth it.

452 ROYALTON TPKE.,
800-894-6327,
TWINFARMS.COM.

131 \$\$ 8.0

WHEATLEIGH

LENOX * MA

The old-school opulence of Wheatleigh's twinkling façade stands in stark contrast to the hotel's cool, modern dining room, where chef Jeffrey Thompson executes his labors of love in the scenic shadow of Tanglewood. Look for expertly prepared dishes on the four-course menu (there's a chef's tasting available, too), including light-as-air Parmesan gnocchi with root vegetables and hints of maitake mushroom; moist guinea hen bolstered by rich black trumpets; and a dry-aged rib-eye so tender, you hardly need a knife. The surprise kicker, though, isn't so much the roster of delightful desserts, but the epic and magnificently curated cheese trolley—it's a dream team of the world's best. HAWTHORNE ROAD,
413-637-0610, WHEATLEIGH.COM.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

THE 50 BEST RESTAURANTS
NOVEMBER 2010 > BOSTONMAGAZINE.COM/FIFTY
A DICTIONARY OF NEW ENGLAND SEAFOOD
JULY 2004 > BOSTONMAGAZINE.COM/SEAFOOD

WINVIAN

MORRIS * CT

133 \$\$ 9.5

Guests at this ultra-exclusive country resort—a restored 19th-century farmhouse in the rolling countryside of the Litchfield Hills—seem to speak in hushed tones. That may be in reverence for the artful plates constructed by chef Chris Eddy. He has a true gift for balancing ingredients both familiar (truffles, local trout) and exotic (sea urchin, squid ink) so that each somehow stands out on its own while simultaneously contributing to a gloriously unexpected whole. With table service that's both precise and welcoming, and a wine list that pulls from 13 countries and 37 regions, the argument for lingering over a postprandial drink is as compelling as the food itself. 155 ALAIN WHITE RD., 860-567-9600, WINVIAN.COM.





THE WHITE BARN INN

KENNEBUNKPORT * ME



 85
  \$\$
  10.0

The rafters of this 1820s barn-turned-dining room are

full of antiques and wooden animals, calling to mind half-remembered fantasies of childhood. Below, white-jacketed waiters go about making those dreams a reality, offering crisply choreographed service that befits the big occasions diners regularly celebrate here. Chef Jonathan Cartwright's menu is over the top without being showy: The lobster appetizer here is smoked, giving it a subtle bacon taste, while foie gras-braised short ribs would be superfluous atop steak (pictured above) if the dish weren't so delicious. Book one of the inn's plush guest rooms (trust us), and work off dinner the next day with a walk alongside the mansions of Kennebunk Beach. 37 BEACH AVE.,

207-967-2321, WHITEBARNINN.COM.