

# FOOD&WINE

## With a Brand New Culinary Center, Vermont's Woodstock Inn Joins the Growing Pack of Hotels Putting Food First



**From Vermont to Argentina, hotels are going all in to become culinary destinations in their own right, and this iconic New England retreat just upped the ante.**

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From the [Nomad](#) in NYC to [Meadowood](#) in Napa, it goes without saying these days that [hotel restaurants](#) are some of the best places to eat. For the serious food lover, it's possible even to plan an [entire trip of eating at Michelin-starred restaurants](#) without ever having to step foot outside. In some cities (ahem, New York), it feels utterly unremarkable to learn that the hot new opening is housed in a hotel.

With bucket list-worthy on-premise dining options all but a prerequisite these days, hotels have had to take extra measures to deliver a culinary attraction that stands out to travelers. From cooking classes and cocktail hour to food tours and garden walks, hotels are pulling out all the stops to become culinary destinations in their own right.

Take Vermont's [Woodstock Inn & Resort](#), which, after 126 years, just opened a culinary center called [Red Barns](#) on May 1.



Situated in the middle of the three-acre Kelly Way Gardens—which is home to 65 varieties of heirloom tomatoes, two beehives, and edible flowers galore—Red Barns will offer cooking classes, wine tastings, demonstrations, tastings and flower arranging workshops. It will also serve as a space for private dinners or events. The renovated space that was previously used for storage has a charmingly rustic feel, furbished with reclaimed wood—countertops are made with wood from an old bowling alley—and ethically forested trees. Impressively, all the work was done by executive chef Rhys Lewis and master gardener Benjamin Pauly—the heart and soul of the resort’s culinary operation at the resort. Lewis and Pauly works in tandem to provide the resort’s restaurants with seasonal dishes like a spring salad with pea shoots, radishes and local chèvre or a filet of beef with Kelly Way garden vegetables, carrot top pesto, gemstone potatoes, and oyster mushrooms.

When it comes to making food a major part of a hotel's attraction, the Woodstock Inn is in good company. Just a short, 20-minute drive away in Barnard, VT, the enchanting Twin Farms boasts its own exquisite culinary operation, with custom menus that guests can enjoy in the dining room or by picnic out on the property. And this spring, a series called “Spring on the Farm” will include Michelin star guest chef dinners, wine pairing dinners (the resort has a 15,000-bottle wine cellar) and cooking classes. The similarly luxe and intimate Inn at Dos Brisas, about an hour outside of Houston, also offers garden tours and cooking classes, which makes sense, since it’s situated on an incredible 42-acre organic farm.

Wherever you look, all over the world, you’ll find hotels beefing up their culinary experiences. Take The Vines Resort and Spa in Mendoza, Argentina, where if it wasn’t enough that Francis Mallman was at the helm of the restaurant, Siete Fuegos (“Seven Fires”), guests can also go to winemaking camp and create their own blend, take empanada-making classes or watch Mallman cook in an outdoor kitchen. Chewton



Glen in Hampshire, UK, which was already known for its culinary chops, just opened The Kitchen, a 12-station cooking school and restaurant, led by celebrity chef James Martin, last year. Back in New York, The Peninsula is celebrating 30 years this spring with special dinners with inside access at some of the city's best restaurants, including Per Se, Daniel and The Modern.

Indeed, the Woodstock Inn had long been a champion of local food and one of the best places to eat in the state—the dining rooms were sourcing local ingredients before it became a *thing* and a popular activity has always been the Billings Farm and Museum, where visitors can taste the farm's incredible raw Cheddar, walk the orchard and check out farm animals—but that wasn't enough for Lewis or Pauly. Nor was it enough for today's food-loving traveler—the one who is driven as much by his/her next bite as by the next sight. Kicking off on May 19, their summer events series includes a "five senses" garden tour, and tea time, which will showcase herbs grown in the garden and honey from the hives. The "Tour & Tasting" series will highlight a different vegetable each week, with a demonstration in the kitchen. First up, Lewis and Pauly will focus on asparagus, with shaved asparagus salad and zucchini pancakes, grilled asparagus salad and asparagus pistachio ice cream. The programs usher in a new chapter for the iconic New England getaway, just as much as they represent a new normal in the world of food-driven escapes.

*Red Barns opened May 1 and encourages locals and guests to tour the garden and check out the classes.*

<https://www.foodandwine.com/travel/woodstock-inn-red-barns>