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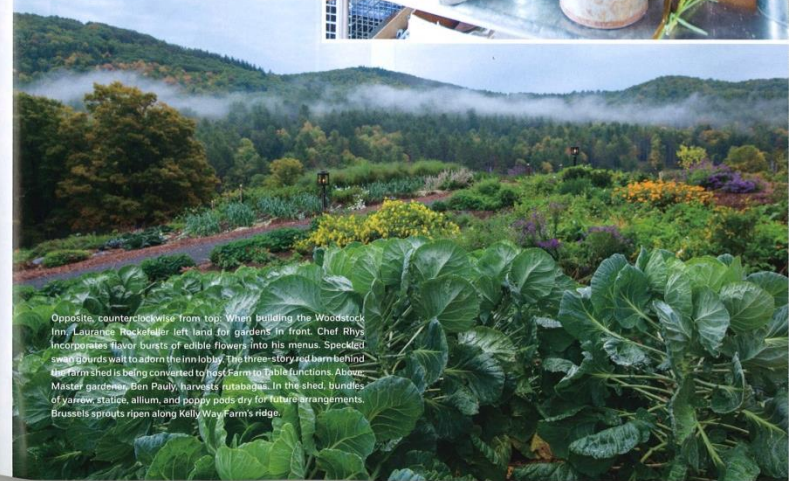
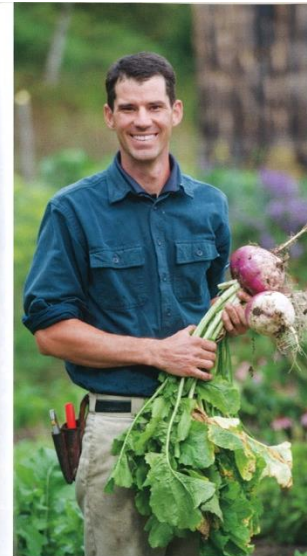
FALL 2017



Garden to Guest

Autumn puts a snap in the Vermont air, but it also delivers bushels heaping with farm fresh vegetables to the Woodstock Inn's restaurant

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Opposite, counterclockwise from top: When visiting the Woodstock Inn, Laurance Rockefeller left land for gardens in front. Chef Rhyz incorporates flavor bursts of edible flowers into his menus. Speckled gourds wait to adorn the inn lobby. The three-story barn behind the farm shed is being converted to host farm-to-table functions. Above: Master gardener Ben Pauly harvests rutabagas. In the shed, bundles of yarrow, statice, allium, and poppy pods dry for future arrangements. Brussels sprouts ripen along Kelly Way Farm's ridge.

Something about the crisp autumn air whips up an appetite—especially when you're able to select your own heirloom tomatoes to slice into the arugula salad. Such is the case at the Red Rooster restaurant at Vermont's Woodstock Inn. During the growing season, the vegetables served in its on-site restaurants flourish just a mile down the road at the inn's Kelly Way Farm under the experienced eye and swift spade of master gardener Benjamin Pauly.

In a unique liaison between plow and pantry, an innovative young gardener linked with a daring and resourceful chef to craft a menu that is bound to tantalize tastebuds while redefining the local food movement. The experience of munching on flash sautéed Brussels sprouts served on a bed of buttery lettuce drizzled with tarragon pesto to tucking into an heirloom squash, potato, and turnip pavé dinner, under the director of resident chef Rhys Lewis (aka Chef Rhys), is beyond savory.

It all started in spring 2013 when Ben Pauly reluctantly put in his notice. The newly minted architecture/agriculture graduate did not want to leave. And yet, his position as the inn's concierge was not fulfilling his training. Similarly, the feeling was mutual because the inn asked how they could persuade Pauly to stay. That's when he hatched the idea that had been simmering in his dreams for several seasons. He wrote up a detailed proposal for a chef's garden, and a week later he was on his way to ordering seeds. In just four years, the garden has expanded to three acres with further plans to harness more rolling farmland owned by the inn.

The scenic knoll where squadrons of kale, beets, cabbage, fennel, leeks, and lettuce stripe the organically tended fields at Kelly Way Farm is just one of many parcels that the inn has acquired in this idyllic New England town. If the region exceeds the definition of bucolic, that was all part of the original plan when Woodstock resident Laurance Rockefeller, grandson of John D. Rockefeller the oil industry tycoon, made it his mission to revitalize Vermont. His plan included bolstering the local economy by luring tourists while also protecting the environment. Rockefeller bought and rebuilt the Woodstock Inn in 1968 while turning it into a resort complete with a country club and nearby ski slopes. Meanwhile, as part of an ingenious scheme to bolster property values, he purchased surrounding acreage. Kelly Way Farm, with its iconic barn red outbuildings, is one of many parcels owned by the inn. Because the farmland was cleared and formerly agricultural, Ben Pauly saw the opportunity to feed the inn's hungry clientele with all the organic produce they could possibly savor.

Ben Pauly's proposal for the farm was brilliantly specific. Before creating his seed order, Pauly meets with Chef Rhys to synchronize crops. Then, spreadsheets predict the exact poundage of each vegetable from arugula to



zucchini delivered to the kitchen weekly. The liaison has proven so successful that the garden now furnishes close to one hundred percent of the restaurant's needs during the growing season. If anything, Pauly tends to overproduce, leaving the kitchen with a superabundance of goodness.

But the farm/inn's interaction doesn't end with menu fulfillment. Pauly also produces a bounty of blossoms for reception areas and events. Guests are offered tours and classes in everything from seed sowing to flower arranging. Meanwhile, the inn is converting the barn to a teaching venue and will soon be featuring hands-on programs in cooking and gardening. Plus, guests are invited to gather around several firepits in the evenings to admire the simmering color as autumn leaves go aglow along the ridges of nearby Mount Peg. Chances are, Pauly will just be packing up his tools for the evening while tucking the tomatoes in for the night. If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of Chef Rhys's toque blanche as he wades the rows, surveying the ingredients for his next menu while the barn swallows make one more swoop before dusk. This farm feeds the soul. ■

At nearby Billings Farm, Southdown sheep graze the pastures. Guests at the Woodstock Inn are encouraged to tour and spend time admiring the farm's prize-winning Jersey herd. The animals are responsible for the warm creamy cheddar fondue served in Woodstock Inn's restaurants. Chef Rhys likes to say that the farm fresh lettuce harvested minutes before serving "tumbles onto the plate" in his salads.



Worn, but still useful farm tools hang on the garden shed door, ready to be put into full action. The farm is not just about the growing of food—bright helenium flowers glisten on the hill before being harvested for inn bouquets.