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# Vermont Resort Woos Foodies With Farm To Table Menus And Organic Gardens

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The [Woodstock Inn & Resort](#) was once the pride of Laurance Rockefeller's RockResorts group, alongside iconic hotels including Mauna Kea and Little Dix Bay. But when he sold the brand and the other properties, he kept this one and put it into the Woodstock Foundational, a 501(c3) nonprofit he launched in 1968. The Foundation now owns the Inn and the nearby [Billings Farm & Museum](#), one of the region's most popular family attractions.

For nearly seven decades the current hotel has sat in the heart of town, overlooking the village green of Woodstock, Vermont's most popular tourist town, with a prime location surrounded by galleries, shops and restaurants. But its in-town setting bellies the extent of its vast facilities, which are broken into separate parcels and linked by on-demand shuttles for guests. Like many of the other original RockResorts properties, it has a classic [18-hole golf course](#) by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., Rockefeller's preferred designer, as well as a large separate sports club with fitness center, tennis and croquet, set a couple of miles down the road. There is a large freestanding spa, and the Inn even has its own downhill ski resort, [Saskadena Six](#), with three lifts and 24 trails, plus a full-blown mountain bike park in summer. The Inn also has a very extensive Nordic center for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.





With all of this, the Woodstock Inn has always been a top choice for those visiting Vermont in spring, summer, winter and the incredibly popular fall foliage season. But in recent years the hotel has quietly been upping the ante on its culinary program and is now positioning itself as a foodie destination—in one of the best states for food lovers.

Vermont was way ahead of most of the rest of the country on artisan farms, farmers markets, boutique producers and craft beer, with more breweries per capita than any other state. It is by far the best cheese producing state in the country, forgoing mass market factories for small craft dairies and racking up awards while excelling at all kinds of cheese, hard and soft, from the milk of cows, goats and sheep.



The Woodstock Inn has embraced this local flavor, starting several years ago with the addition of its extensive [Kelly Way Gardens](#). In 2013 they broke ground on an old farm site across the street from their golf course, and since then it has grown to 3-acres of intensely managed and productive organic gardens producing fruits, vegetables, herbs, mushrooms, honey and cut flowers, supplied directly to the resort's restaurants. In 2018, they renovated an existing structure into the Red Barn, an onsite culinary center, demo kitchen and restaurant, and began offering culinary programming and gardening classes.





This all came to a head in 2022, when the resort lured Matthew McClure away from the vaunted 21c Hotel group, where he last ran Hive, an ingredient-driven farm-to-table eatery in the 21c location in Bentonville, Arkansas. He was a semifinalist in the prestigious James Beard Foundation's Best Chef South award seven times in his last nine years there. He now oversees all five food venues at the Woodstock Inn and works closely with the master gardener at Kelly Way Gardens to develop seasonal ingredient focused menus.

The top tier year-round dining at the Inn is the [Red Rooster](#), which I have had the pleasure of eating at, and which just won a 2024 Wine Spectator Award of Excellence for its revamped list. The dinner menu is a Who's Who of Vermont sourced products, including local free-range chicken, beef, cheddar cheese made in town, other cheeses from leading Vermont producers, and lots of produce from the resort's garden. In fact, practically every starter and main dish on the dinner menu includes curated local ingredients, so anyone staying at the Inn any time of year can get the farm to table experience.



But for a deeper dive, try to schedule a visit to coincide with [the culinary series at the Red Barn](#) at Kelly Way Gardens. The resort provides shuttles for guests, and the main event is a guest chef Thursday dinner series that runs from June through September, along with resort culinary staff series on Sundays. Very few resort hotels have this big a slate of specialty dinners.

The Thursday events are a bit more formal and feature a cocktail hour that allows for exploration of the extensive gardens, followed by a four course dinner with wine pairings. The most recent one (last week) was with Chef Vishwesh Bhatt of famed [City Grocery](#) and sister restaurant [Snackbar](#) in Oxford, Mississippi, home of the Southern Foodways Alliance. The 2019 winner of James Beard Best Chef South and 2019 Southerner of the Year from *Southern Living Magazine*, Bhatt had never been to Vermont before, but McClure recruited him, and he gave every guest a signed copy of his new James Beard Award-winning cookbook, *I Am From Here*. This is the kind of talent McClure knows from his 20 years in the high-end restaurant business, and every dinner is by someone notable.





The Sunday Suppers are more casual 3-course family-style meals, also with cocktail hour and wine pairings. There are also regularly scheduled farm tours and tastings, flower arranging classes, gardening seminars, and the gardens are open to visitors just about all the time. From spring to fall, the town's farmers market is held on Wednesdays on the green in front of the hotel, and The Woodstock Inn also does an extensive slate of special occasion events and [holiday dinners](#), including elaborate presentations for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years.



If you find time to go offsite there are many standout restaurants—all within easy walking distance—including longtime fine dining standout [The Prince & The Pauper](#), upscale Caribbean specialist [Melaza Bistro](#), and Italian-inspired [Sante](#), which features heritage breed pork, beef and eggs all raised on a Woodstock farm. No matter when you visit, you probably will not leave town hungry.

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