



HOW THE ROCKEFELLERS & A SOUTHERN CHEF TURNED A VERMONT TOWN INTO CULINARY HEAVEN

Luxury meets history and culinary excellence at Vermont's elegant Woodstock Inn & Resort, formerly part of the Rockefeller family's hospitality holdings.

JARED PAUL STERN • JUL 14, 2025

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Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

When the renowned Michelin Guide debuted its Michelin Key hospitality awards last year, it was perhaps no surprise that the historic [Woodstock Inn & Resort](#) in Vermont was one of only a handful of properties in New England to receive the honor. You could even say that former owner Laurance Rockefeller would have expected nothing less. The financier, philanthropist, and conservationist, son of John D. Rockefeller, oversaw the Inn's transformation from local tavern to world-class resort back in the 1960s, and set up a non-profit organization to preserve the property and its 2,000 acres in perpetuity.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

However, more than 20 years after Rockefeller's passing, the Woodstock Inn, still owned by his non-profit and now a five-star member of both Preferred Hotels & Resorts LVX Collection as well as the Historic Hotels of America, is entering an even more auspicious era, of which the Michelin Key might just be a harbinger of things to come—perhaps even a Michelin star when the legendary guide expands the awarding of such laurels to the Green Mountain State. And it's all thanks to a chef from the deep south.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

In 2022, Matthew McClure, a native of Arkansas, who was a semifinalist for the prestigious James Beard Foundation's Best Chef South award seven times, joined the property to helm the kitchen at its signature fine dining restaurant, Red Rooster. He since added a dining series in the property's historic Red Barn, using produce from its own extensive gardens. And this season he has relaunched the Richardson's Tavern, the Inn's more casual dining venue, bringing it up to James Beard standard as well, with a menu featuring locally raised quail and duck. Rockefeller would be proud to say the least.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

“When I first visited the resort, I couldn’t stop thinking about the potential to take it to the next level as ‘the culinary destination of New England,’” McClure says. “In meeting with Master Gardener Benjamin Pauly, this clearly is a place where food tells a deeper story, rooted in the soil, seasons and soul of Vermont. This reimagined Richardson’s Tavern, a beloved community spot, not only reflects our commitment to quality and craft but marks a new chapter in the resort’s culinary journey, one that is distinctly Vermont, and inimitably ours.”



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

“Laurance Rockefeller’s vision and forward-thinking approach around land stewardship, agritourism and sustainability continues to guide our work today,” Bruce Grosbety, President of Woodstock Inn & Resort, tells us. “His legacy lives on through our use of local resources like Kelly Way Gardens and Billings Farm, which shape everything from our seasonal menus to immersive experiences like Red Barn Dinners and garden tours. It’s this deep connection to the land, and our natural surroundings in the Green Mountains, that set the Woodstock Inn & Resort apart as one of New England’s premier culinary destinations.”



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

Prior to joining Woodstock Inn, McClure, who was named Best New Chef 2015 by *Food & Wine*, held leadership positions at Harvest Restaurant in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and most recently The Hive, a restaurant at the 21c Museum Hotel in Bentonville, Arkansas. Red Rooster, holder of a AAA Four Diamond rating as well as a Wine Spectator award, focuses on homemade and local offerings including specialty cheeses, heirloom produce, and organic meats. The setting evokes a casually elegant farmhouse, with an adjoining bar.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

Standout menu selections include Oysters Rockefeller with arugula, spinach, asiago, and herbed breadcrumbs, and Seared George's Bank Sea Scallops with whipped potatoes, garden vegetables, roasted corn and tomato relish, basil pesto, and lemon butter sauce. Richardson's Tavern offers a more casual atmosphere in a historic-inspired Vermont tavern setting complete with large fireplace, rich wood paneling, cozy banquettes, and seasonal porch seating.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

Woodstock has long been recognized as one of the “prettiest small towns in America”, and the 142-room Inn has put it on the map globally, “evolving into a world-class destination while preserving its quintessential New England charm.” The interior of the property—which began with a tavern that operated on the site in 1793—“masterfully blends historic elements with contemporary rustic luxury, setting it apart from comparable properties throughout the region.”



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

Thanks to the foresight of the Rockefellers, the property has always had the money to pay for renovations and upgrades, including a \$16.5 million enhancement completed in 2018. It's motto "wrapped in luxury and history" is most evident in its six Legacy Suites inspired by Laurance and his wife Mary Rockefeller's legacy. The crown jewel is the Laurance S. Rockefeller Suite, the hotel's finest accommodation. This stately 880-square-foot, three-room residence draws inspiration from Rockefeller's personal rooms at their former private mansion near the Inn, and honors his profound influence on Woodstock's preservation.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

Furnished with custom Federal-era pieces, the suite features a striking black-and-white marble entryway, a living room with fireplace, a separate dining room with butler's pantry, and king-bed sleeping quarters with a plush window seat. A hand-painted wrap-around mural in the dining room depicts Vermont's rolling hills, while luxe amenities include warming drawers for robes and slippers in the walk-in cedar closet, and a spacious Italian-tiled bathroom with both steam shower and soaking tub.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

This being Vermont, the outdoor life is of course extremely important. Resort activities include an 18-hole championship golf course, fly fishing excursions, falconry, tennis, and mountain biking, among others. The resort's Activity Center "connects guests with local experts who recommend outdoor experiences based on individual fitness levels and interests, helping visitors discover new hobbies or develop family traditions." There's also an outdoor pool for swimming or lounging.



Courtesy Woodstock Inn & Resort

In 2010, the resort added an impressive 10,000-square-foot, LEED-certified spa facility featuring 10 treatment rooms and a welcoming Great Room lounge with a wood-burning stove for chilly days. “Custom treatments and therapies are infused with Vermont’s natural essence, complemented by a Scandinavian cedar sauna, heated outdoor whirlpool, and fully equipped fitness center.” So whether you’re seeking outdoor adventure, culinary excellence, or simply a peaceful retreat in one of New England’s most beautiful settings, the Woodstock Inn should be high on your list.

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