

Vermont's Woodstock Inn & Resort Launches Synergy Between New Chef And Master Gardener

Sylvie Bigar Contributor 

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Matthew McClure, Executive Chef and Ben Pauly, Master Gardener WOODSTOCK INN & RESORT

“From arugula to zucchini, at this point, we’re at letter P,” joked Mr. Pauly.

History and concern for the environment loom large in and around Woodstock in the Green Mountains. Over time, this stunning town, with its 19th-century red brick buildings and clapboard churches, has harbored three generations of nationally significant conservationists: George Perkins Marsh, who help found the Smithsonian Institution and later wrote about the potential destruction man could wreak on the environment; Frederick Billings, a lawyer and railroad baron whose family farm is now a living museum; and Laurance and Mary Rockefeller, who would donate their summer home along with 555 acres of forestland to the National Park Service to create the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Vermont’s first national park.



WOODSTOCK, VERMONT, UNITED STATES - 2018/10/15: The charming Woodstock Inn and Resort.
(Photo by ... [+] LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES)

Back in town along Main Street, The Woodstock Inn first opened in 1882 on the site of the Richardson Tavern, a time when nightly rates ranged from \$2.50 to \$4.00 including meals! In 1967, Laurance Rockefeller, an entrepreneur and philanthropist, bought the property as well as one of the oldest ski areas in the country nearby, established the working Billings dairy farm and museum (their smoked cheddar is delicious), and as part of his efforts to beautify the village, buried its power lines.



"Rural Vermont scenic (Woodstock, Vermont)." GETTY

But among the reasons that drew Chef McClure to take the helm of the Inn kitchen and its five restaurants, after fifteen years in Arkansas, were the Kelly Way Gardens and the collaboration with Mr. Pauly.

“Chef is restructuring the kitchen to focus on seasonality and local produce,” said Mr. Pauly, who first studied architecture before giving in to his passion for gardening, but in fact, Mr. McClure is vowing to go further.

“The typical mindset of a chef,” said Mr. McClure, “is to conceptualize a dish and then get on the phone to order what’s needed. My plan is to turn that around. We will take what Ben grows in peak season, fill up our walk-ins and create dishes around these parameters.”

Obviously, the chef, who is currently working on new menus, knows that this approach will force him to be more creative. Besides the five restaurants, weddings and special events take place there year-round.

“We hope to offer these new seasonable menus through our catering department as well,” he said. “Ideally, we don’t see a fresh tomato in January!”



VILLAGE OF WOODSTOCK, WOODSTOCK, VERMONT, UNITED STATES - 2015/10/15: Billings Farm Museum workshop ... [+] LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

Mr. McClure is reorganizing the operation to ensure the kitchen doesn't suddenly receive hundreds of pounds of the same thing on the same day, as was the case a few weeks ago when 400 pounds of green tomatoes showed up to be pickled while the kitchen team was prepping for a wedding and 200 dinner guests.

So how to decide what to grow?

"Oh my God," said the chef, "I look at a catalogue and I say, I want everything!"

That's where Mr. Pauly will bring in his experience with the Gardens and the Vermont climate, as well as his connections with local farmers and meat purveyors. By next spring, both men hope to utilize, cook, and serve everything the Kelly Way Gardens produce.

My goal," said Chef McClure, "is for the Inn to become the culinary destination in New England. There's more to Vermont than maple syrup and apples!"

New menu items will include:

- Ham Brined Hog Chop with B&B cabbage, Kelly Way kohlrabi and pecan relish
- Roasted Maple Wind Farm Chicken with Kelly Way red kuri squash, shell beans and chermoula
- Kelly Way beets and apple salad with mint, yogurt and candied walnuts
- Butter-milk-fried Chicken with cayenne honey and Kelly Way pickled green tomato