



fresh strawberry
served over cold zabaglione
and italian espresso
at cafe allegre – madison, ct

photo by hadyn lassiter

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Providence, RI

Linda Kavanagh

holland red pepper stuffed with ground beef, bread crumbs, black olives, fresh mediterranean herbs and parmigiano reggiano served over chef silvio's famous sunday sauce at cafe allegre – madison, ct

photo by hadyn lassiter





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* Letter from the Editor

When Kim first mentioned the idea of creating a magazine that reflects the style and energy of her various websites, I thought, why hadn't other entertainment based websites already scooped up this idea? Makes perfect sense to me! An existing audience, an additional outlet for our advertisers, and the opportunity to further toot the horn of this dynamic state of ours – it's a no-brainer.

On a personal note, whenever I have the opportunity to write about food and wine, talented chefs, unique restaurants, and fabulous destinations, I jump at the chance. I'm one of "those" long-time hospitality industry burnouts. You name it, I did it; hostess, bartender, waitress, manager, cook behind a hot and steamy kitchen line, run banquets, own a catering company...it's a list that most of us industry folks have been through. And, why? Because we love it. It sucks you in and never lets you go. Look at me! Okay, so I'm not behind the line at the sauté station anymore, but I still can't tear myself away from the business.

I'm excited to play a part in the start-up of this magazine. Yes, we all feel like we are taking a chance, but, just like any new venture, as long as there's a strong team behind it, a new idea, a viable product, and, most of all, passion, we've already achieved a level of success and gratification that has made it all worth-while. Besides, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

This first issue was to have been out in 2006. In fact, we were so behind schedule, each time we realized that we had blown yet, another deadline, we all had to redirect and re-research much of the magazine's content. While we were able to plug away at getting this publication on track each time, it became clear that we would never run out of ideas or options. Connecticut just has so much to offer. We'll never be short on material!

Our approach to the Culinarymenus.com portion of the magazine promises to be unlike any other publication in this area. There won't be any restaurant "reviews" or rating systems whatsoever. We will venture to each corner, and every place in between this 5,544 square mile state of ours to explore CT's gastronomic world. You will get to know some of our most gifted chefs through our Chef Q & A, explore the world of wine and spirits in our Libations pages, travel Over the Border to unique culinary destinations, and dine out with us in our Tables section. We'll even let you in on some delicious Food Stuff and tasty events to experience.

I invite our readers to ask questions and offer suggestions. I'd love to hear from all of those restaurants out there as well. We may only be the 48th largest state in the country, but we sure do have a lot of great places to eat. It's a challenge to keep track of them all. No worries. I'm up to the challenge!

Enjoy the first issue of Excursionz Magazine. We look forward to sharing even more great things about living in Connecticut in issues to come!

And We're Off!

* Linda

foodchick@excursionzmagazine.com



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CONNECTICUT WATERFRONT DINING

The Harbor Lights Way

One of the reasons many of us live in Fairfield County is its proximity to New York City and its shoreline communities. Perched along the Long Island Sound, and its many inlets, are numerous waterfront restaurants offering global fare and calming views throughout the year. No longer reserved for summer time dining, Connecticut restaurants that are fortunate enough to have this prime ocean side real estate continue to offer diners great food and panoramic views throughout foliage, snow, and the rebirth of warmer weather to come. A favorite amongst locals, bordering the trendy South Norwalk district known as SoNo, is Harbor Lights, once a penny arcade in the early 1900's. After many transformations throughout the years, Chris Gavrielidis, his brothers Mike and Andreas, and sister Carol, purchased the entire property, and with the harbor view as its focal point, built a restaurant from the ground up that would attract diners all year round, and not just as a seasonal respite.

The stately stone facade gives way into a sophisticated, yet casual, bar area and high ceiling dining room, replete with breezy fans, large open-air windows, brilliant wooden architecture, and low lighting. While lunchtime is a bright and sunny experience, the evening hours are dazzling with the twinkling of the water's edge lights in the distance, soothing waves and ripples, and the restaurant's celebratory atmosphere.

The menu pulls from mostly Mediterranean shores, along with hints of the owners' Greek heritage. Icy raw bar seafood and crustaceans include clams, oysters, lobster, and jumbo Gulf shrimp (mkt \$). Appetizers (\$10-\$12) consist of the usual suspects such as calamari fritti with two dipping sauces, plump east coast oysters Rockefeller, and clams casino with garlic butter, bacon, and toasted breadcrumbs. More exciting starters are the mussels a la Provencal with a spicy garlic, white wine, tomato and herb sauce served with plenty of crunchy bruschetta to soak up the wonderful

flavors. My favorite is the tender “Octopus Mediterraneo” of grilled octopus in a citrus infused dressing with fresh herbs. This dish is often attempted, but seldom victorious. Here, it shines. Baked brie wrapped with crispy phyllo sheets is served with candied walnuts and a honey and red wine spiced pear, which is fabulous while lingering over a glass of chardonnay.

Harbor Lights is primarily a seafood restaurant, but gone are the clam shack days of deep fried morsels and French fries (which can be found at Overton’s Seafood stand located on the same property and owned by the Gavrielidis brothers). More refined dishes utilize daily fresh fish deliveries, seasonal produce, and aromatic herbs. Lamb and filet mignon, as well as a scrumptious chicken in a marsala and dried fig sauce, make an appearance, but this is not the place to satisfy the carnivore in you. This is a place to enjoy the bounties of the sea. Entree (\$22-\$35) portions are generous, so, I recommend sharing a variety of dishes

with your entire table. Before we go any further, I have two words of advice: Lobster Santorini. By far their most popular dish, the 1 pound lobster is stuffed with a wild mushroom, crabmeat, shrimp, bell pepper, and herb creation, then broiled with a creamy gratin. Need I say more? Somehow the lobster meat stays tender and sweet under all those flavors, making this an indulgent dish to be savored.

Some more tasty examples of the restaurant’s signature dishes include: oven roasted Mediterranean sea bass over a mélange of sautéed artichokes, fennel, grape tomatoes, red onions, and celery in a Dijon vinaigrette; pecan encrusted salmon served with sweet mashed potatoes, wilted spinach and asparagus in a basil cream sauce; creamy saffron lobster risotto with pan-seared scallops, chunks of lobster meat, green peas, tomatoes, and scallions with a drizzle of cilantro oil; and crispy potato-crust red American snapper with sun dried tomatoes and sautéed zucchini.

The menu descriptions may seem overwhelming, but the simple preparations and fresh ingredients maintain the integrity of the fish.

Desserts (\$7-\$8) are as light and refreshing as you want them to be, or as indulgent as you are in the mood for. Seasonal berries and fresh fruit sorbets such as passion fruit, mango, blackberry cabernet, and lemon flavors are a fabulous way to end a hearty meal. If you’re craving something a bit more naughty then the silky crème brulee or dense flourless chocolate cake will hit the spot. The key lime pie was done right here, a tart-sweet contrast with a crumbly crust, and the banana spring roll put us over the edge. Or, maybe it was the bottle of wine with dinner...The wine list is rather extensive and quite global, accommodating all tastes and wallets.

Harbor Lights is a fun place to linger, as the view, no matter what the seasons may bring, is gorgeous. Its location, away from the mayhem of downtown SoNo, is convenient, with plenty of parking and an outdoor deck adjacent to Overton’s Seafood stand next door. There are 12 boat slips for those who are nautically inclined to dock their boat right at the restaurant.

Look for the Gavrielidis brothers to expand their domain in the near future, as this dynamic team has a few more ideas that are sure to be just as successful and pleasurable as Harbor Lights.

**82 Seaview Avenue
Norwalk, CT
(203) 866-3364**

www.harborlightsrestaurant-ct.com

SO, YOU WANT MORE?

Let’s travel up the coast a bit for some more of Connecticut’s charming coastline dining destinations. (see next page!)



culinarymenus.com



New Haven County

FBucci's Beachhead Restaurant –

This beachside restaurant and gathering place is the perfect place for those deep fried, whole belly clams and shrimp with fries that you crave. Italian specialties, fresh catches of day, and house favorites such as shrimp and scallop Veneziana and baked stuffed shrimp can be savored on the outside deck overlooking Long Island Sound.

3 Cosey Beach Ave., East Haven, CT
(203) 469-5450

www.beachheadct.com

Guilford Mooring, Seafood Restaurant –

The owners of this unique restaurant say it the best: "Our goal is to create a restaurant that successfully marries a poetic and genuine New England ambiance with outstanding, indigenous and unique flavors of Nor' Eastern seafood cooking in a bright and festive atmosphere." Built in 1836, and situated on the shore of Long Island Sound, the Guilford Mooring is headed up by Chef Bob Anello. Here you will find plenty of seafood and Italian dishes, and one of the best Lazy Man's Lobsters around!

505 Whitfield Street, Guilford, CT
(203) 458-2921

www.guilfordmooring.com

Middlesex County

Bill's Seafood – Located at The Singing Bridge, this seafood house is a popular place for boaters to dock their boats and grab a bite to eat. New England lobster roll, hearty clam chowder, Maryland blue crab cakes, and Bill's famous seafood platter are served with a side of ocean air on their outside picnic tables along the edge of the Patchogue River.

548 Boston Post Road, Westbrook, CT
(860) 399-7224

www.billsseafood.com

Dock & Dine – Inside or out, year-round dining with breezy ocean side views at Saybrook Point are teamed with seasonal raw bar selections, seafood stuffed mushrooms, grilled fresh tuna Nicoise, New England cod with a potato crust, and classic Bouillabaisse brimming with lobster, shrimp, clams, mussels, scallops, and fish in a tomato-saffron broth. Operated by JTK Management Restaurants, Dock & Dine is one of their five distinct restaurants along the Connecticut/Rhode Island shoreline. Other restaurants include: Go Fish, Steak Loft, and Ten Clams in Mystic, CT; and Dead Eye Dick's on Block Island, RI.

Saybrook Point, Old Saybrook, CT
(860) 388-4665

www.dockdinet.com

New London County

Boom, Fine Waterfront Dining – This year round restaurant, located at Dodson Boatyard on historic Stonington harbor, offers upscale dining, fabulous views, and genuine hospitality. Ahi tuna tartar with Asian slaw, BBQ duck quesadilla with chipotle creme fraiche, pan roasted halibut, and grilled sliced hangar steak with gorgonzola demi-glaze are just some of the menu highlights that made Boom so successful that they even opened a second location at Brewer's Pilots Point Marina in Westbrook.

194 Water Street
Stonington, CT
(860) 535-2588
Pilot's Point Marina, US 1,
Westbrook, CT
(860) 399-2322

www.boomrestaurant.net

Sunset Rib Co – Fantastic sunsets, live entertainment (music and comedy), and, yes, their mouthwatering ribs is what has family and friends gathering at this casual restaurant and nightclub along the Thames River. The menu is full of fun finger foods, ribs and chicken, fresh seafood, and hearty sandwiches. A must try is the "pachos," a baked dip with cream cheese, cheddar cheese, chopped pepperoni, and cherry peppers served with tortilla chips. Yummm...

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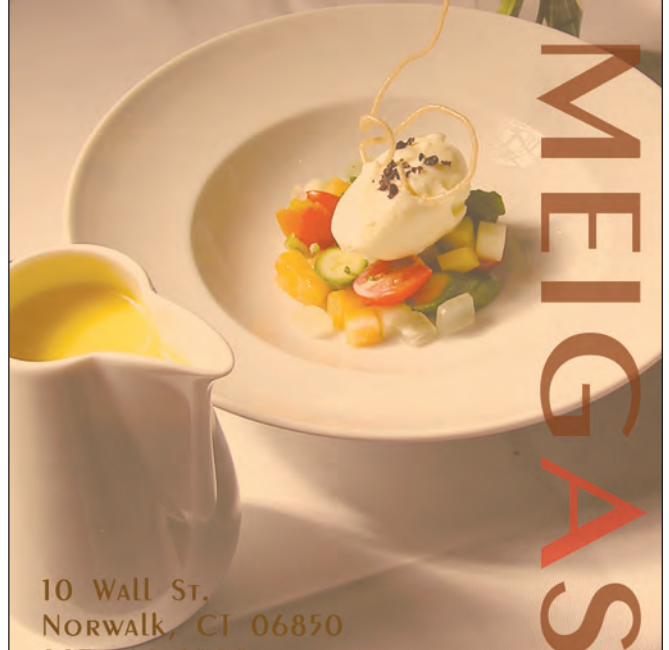
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Kitchen Not-So Confidential

By Linda Kavanagh



Chef Prasad Chirnomula

Thali, Regional Cuisine of Indian in New Haven

One of my favorite radio show interviews was with David Rosengarten, a passionate food historian and cookbook author. The entire show revolved around food myths and misconceptions. You know, that cheese is a major ingredient in Mexican cuisine (so untrue!) and sweetbreads are a cow's "unmentionable parts" — (who started that one?). One of the most universal misconceptions was that of Indian food tasting primarily of curry. David was quick to come to this misunderstood cuisine's rescue.

The Facts are This:

- * Curry is not a spice in itself, but rather a blend of spices.
- * Commercial sweet yellow curry powder is a generic blend of spices that just happen to take off in the retail market.
- * Curry blends include: pepper, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin, ginger, mace, turmeric, cardamom, tamarind, fennel, chilies, and many other aromatic herbs and spices.
- * There are Asian and American curry blends, as well as Indian.

Taking a more modern approach to Indian cuisine, style, and décor, Thali has brought this wonderful, bold, and aromatic food experience to New Haven. Chef/Owner Prasad Chirnomula, upon the success of

his New Canaan and Ridgefield locations, continues to grow his empire of exciting restaurants and gathering places. The large space, across from the extinct coliseum, is broken down into three separate dining rooms, a long bar and lounge, and a cozy alcove replete with fluffy pillows and colorful lights. Vibrant colors and comfy furnishings make it all too easy to linger for hours on end. There is a slight noise level exuding a comfortable energy.

Prasad takes traditional Indian ingredients and preparations and presents them in a more contemporary fashion. Appetizers, such as jinga or gobi manchurian, Asian influenced crispy fried shrimp or cauliflower in a hot

soy and garlic sauce, chicken tikka kabab, breast meat marinated in yogurt, garlic and spices then grilled in the tandoor oven, and tawa crab, flaked crab meat tempered in mustard seeds, ginger, green chilies and tomato sauce, are popular starters and really get the taste buds going. House breads (paratha, nan, poori, and kulcha) are always served hot out of the tandoor and fill the room with a constant stream of intoxicating aromas.

Sizzling iron skillets of tandoori delicacies include jumbo prawns and Thali's signature lamb chops rubbed with nutmeg, cardamom, caraway and mace. Daily fish deliveries are always intriguing at Thali – combining

the bold flavors of India to everything from Chilean sea bass to sweet sea scallops. My constant need for hot and spicy food always brings me back to the adu isthu, deviled lamb curry in black pepper reduction, and prawn gassi, large shrimps in roasted coriander, red chilies and coconut milk.

Vegetarian dishes include my beloved (spinach) saag paneer, and more innovative items such as bagar dal, yellow lentils tempered with cumin, garlic and curry leaves, baigan dahiwal, eggplant in yogurt sauce, and chole peshawri, chick peas simmered in ginger and ground spices. I recommend using the fragrant basmati rice to gather up all the wonderful sauces.

Enjoy creative cocktails, top shelf spirits, and an impressive wine list created by sommelier Raju Somerpet. Indian beers, such as Taj, are great with this type of fare, as are peppery pinot noirs and sweet gewürztraminers.

Date Opened: June 2006

Concept/Cuisine:

Authentic Regional Indian Cuisine / Modern Interpretations

Thali Regional Cuisine of India

4 Orange Street, New Haven
203-777-1177

www.thali.com

Chef Prasad Chirnomula

Hometown: Hyderabad, India

Career Highlights:

- * Considering I came from a family of doctors, I got away with graduating from college with a degree in Hotel/Restaurant Management & Applied Nutrition.
- * Coming to America
- * Landing my first job as Sous Chef at Akbar Restaurant in New York City
- * Spearheading several Fairfield County restaurants and educating consumers about Indian cuisine
- * Receiving "The Best Indian Chef And The Most Exciting Indian Chef In America" June 2006 David Rosengarten, The David Rosengarten Report

Family/Children:

Happily single and living with my two beautiful children and my great parents

Was being a chef / restaurateur even a blip on your radar when you were growing up?

No and yes! No, because I wanted to be a pilot and fly planes and have fun traveling the world. Yes, because I was enjoying my mom's food and was always peeking into the kitchen to watch and learn.

What else would you like to accomplish, in or out of the restaurant business?

Of course I want to be able to open world renowned restaurants in New York City, London, and Paris, and eventually explore the hotel business again – maybe on an island so I can relax and not work 16-hour days, seven days a week!

What was your first job in the industry?

At 21 years of age I was managing 200 employees within three multi cuisine specialty restaurants in a 232-room hotel in India.

Do you recall the first dish you mastered?

Biryani, a slow cooked basmati rice dish with layers of meat or vegetables or seafood.

According To Prasad

Cookbook To Live by: Larousse, and of course the internet

Favorite Cooking Tool: Chef's knife and the sharpening rod

Favorite Secret Ingredient: Fenugreek

Most Misused/Overused food/Ingredient: I cannot imagine

Music To Cook By: Contemporary Jazz and Reggae

Favorite Food Indulgence: Roti canai — a form of puffed bread served hot with curry or dhal (lentils)

Least Favorite Food: Mexican

Beverage of Choice: Johnnie Walker Black on the rocks w/splash of Coke

Sexiest Food: Sushi

Favorite Dinner Companion: My daughter

Dream Job: I have one

Chef Perks: Food, wine, friends and the media!



New York Times, "Excellent"

"Thali is an innovative new restaurant ...whose chef, Prasad Chirnomula, is determined to change the way we think about Indian food..."

Stephanie Lyness | September 16, 2006



Thali

Regional Cuisine of India

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libations

By Monica Brown

Cellar XV Wine Market,

Ridgefield, CT

www.cellarxv.com



Jonathan Edwards Winery

Only a few hours from Ridgefield, Connecticut, on a warm spring day, rounding a corner I see nirvana on a hill in front of me. Vines, bare vines, still a few weeks from bud break. My mouth waters with delicious thoughts of the grapes in the glass to come. I approach a majestic, fresh, white, 18th century dairy barn that feels delightfully warm and welcoming.

I arrive at Jonathan Edwards Vineyards, a trip that has been three years in the making (what a shame, since I'm so close). I forget how a short day trip can revitalize and remind you of all the great things that are so close to us in Connecticut. It was just three years ago when I first tasted Jonathan's wines from Napa Valley. At first I was a skeptic – a wine from Connecticut with the catch of Napa grapes, interesting? Wonderfully, the wines were eye opening. His production at that time included: Cabernet, Merlot, Zinfandel and Chardonnay.

The Jonathan Edwards winery is only seven years old and began with a young couple's dream. Jon and his wife Rachel met in grad school, got married, and settled in Washington, D.C. With the help of Jon's parents they began pursuing their dream and love of wine. They moved to Napa Valley, CA to learn the wine trade. It was in Napa that Jon gained the friendship and stewardship of Winemaker Vincent Arroyo. Along with working at Vincent's winery, Jon took classes in winemaking and vineyard management at the University of California at Davis.

After two years of training, Jon began to seek out his own winery. Jon and Rachel initially looked in Napa, but their heartstrings pulled them back to the coast. So began the quest of finding the perfect location for their winery in pursuit of both of their passions, wine and family.

On their vision quest of wineries and site locations from Virginia to Rhode Island, they found Crosswoods Vineyards. Located in North Stonington, CT, the winery had lain untouched for a decade. The grape vines were sick and diseased, and



although the winery and vineyards were in complete disrepair, Jon and Rachel realized they had found home.

In 2000 the yearlong renovation of the vineyards and winery began. The first major hurdle was a high water table, which was not suitable for growing grapes. After surveying the farm, an extensive drainage system called "tiling" was put in place to remove the excess water from the vineyards. The first vines were planted and the old dairy barns were restored. Jon was now ready to make wine.

It would be three years before Jon would be able to make wine from his Connecticut vineyard. So, in keeping with their plan to bring together the best of the East and West, Jon headed back to Napa to fortify his grape contracts with his five key vineyards throughout the valley. Each location was selected for its optimal environment of each grape varietal to make the best wine possible. The yearly routine had begun; a week or two in CT in the spring to check the vineyards (20-acres) and to work with the farmers on what his expectations were for the coming season, then back to Napa for up to two months in the fall to oversee the harvest, crushing, fermentation, stabilizing, and the shipping of the juice in refrigerated trucks to Connecticut.

Once the young juice reaches Stonington, the wine will then spend 12 to 18 months in a barrel

(French and American), before the final blend is made and bottled. The rest of the year Jon enjoys the other end of winemaking, which is farming. He enjoys the ability of controlling every aspect of the vineyards. When planting the new vineyards the grapes are carefully selected to best suit the climate. Short growing seasons make it difficult to grow certain vinifera varieties (i.e. cabernet, merlot, syrah) on a consistent basis, and as Jon puts it, "I'm not interested in making so-so wine." The grapes selected were based on other historic cool weather wine regions such as Germany and Alsace, France. Vineyard Manager Tim Barry, along with Jon, selected the vinifera (not hybrids) varieties of Chardonnay, Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris and Cabernet Franc. They purchased cultivated American rootstocks and grafted European vines to combine growth vigor with resistance to disease. They then selected the best location for each variety and planted the vines according to vine density, row direction, and spacing to maximize each variety's ability to produce the best juice possible. Jonathan Edwards' 18-acres of vineyards have the advantage of being on a hill only nine miles from Long Island Sound. Believe it or not, the grapes enjoy the warm coastal breezes and southern exposure to the sun.

All of this hard work and planning has been paying off for Jonathan. The Vineyard annually produces approximately 9,000 cases of Napa Valley and 1,000 cases of Connecticut Varietals, growing to 3,000 cases this year. The new releases planned for this year are Cabernet Franc and Petit Syrah Port. The Vineyard now averages just under 10,000 cases per year.

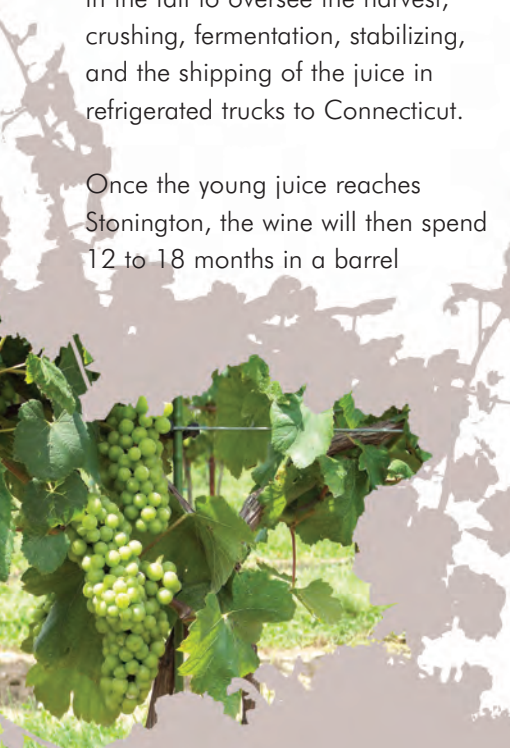
Along with The Vineyard's great wine tasting room, visitors can also indulge in wine friendly picnic foods and take in the views of the Connecticut shoreline and the vineyard's 50-acres of breathtaking pastures. You can enjoy your glass of wine when it is cold outside by the tasting room fireplace, or when the weather permits, on the front field stone patio, surrounded by the herb gardens, or on the back deck overlooking the vineyards. There is also a gift shop and loft gallery, as well as an active spring and summer schedule of events, such as a live music series, food festivals, and their famous Harvest Fest where you can stomp grapes if you would like. The winery is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. for tasting. Wine tours are held at 2 p.m. where you can experience the winery and barrel room and learn how the wine is made.

Now that I'm sitting looking over the vineyards and feeling the afternoon sun, I can understand why Jon reflected about this particular site over all others, "Not a spot I would rather be," beams Jon. I could not agree more, but unfortunately, I can only stay for a couple of hours and not a lifetime. But now I know that when I feel the need for a little "Napa," I'm only a car ride away.

Jonathan Edwards Winery
74 Chester Maine Road
North Stonington, CT 06359
Phone: 860-535-0202
www.jedwardswinery.com

Tasting Notes:

Napa Valley; Chardonnay, Merlot, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Zinfandel Port, Syrah Port Connecticut; Gewürztraminer and Chardonnay. Riesling and Cabernet Franc (not yet released).



FOOD STUFF

Savored by
Linda Kavanagh

NODINE'S SMOKEHOUSE

To coin a phrase, it's a pork fat thing! And, for whatever reason, Americans love bacon and all things pork. According to the ERS, USDA, pork ranks third in annual U.S. meat consumption, behind beef and chicken, averaging 51 pounds per person each year. The Nodine family, which includes Ronald, Johanne, and son Calvin, are no doubt, loving those statistics, as they are the masterminds behind Torrington's popular Nodine's Smokehouse.

Originally a small custom smokehouse that began in 1969 in Goshen, CT, Nodine's quickly outgrew the petit space due to the high demand, expanding product line, and overwhelming production needs. What was once the local place to grab various cuts and flavor varieties of bacon, sausages, and holiday hams and turkeys, soon blossomed into an extensive gourmet meat, cheese, and fish retailer, wholesaler, and mail order business. The new production plant, a state-of-the-art 20,000-square foot facility in Torrington, opened in 1989, while the original location still acts as Nodine's storefront.

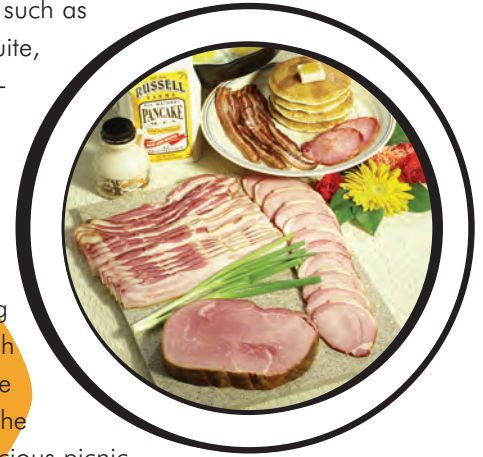
NODINE'S SIGNATURE ITEMS INCLUDE:

- Woodland Hams
- Whole/Boneless Breast of Turkey
- Bacon (non-nitrated, juniper, double smoked, apple, pepper)
- Smoked Fish (mackerel, salmon, trout, peppered bluefish)
- Sausage (pork and chicken kielbasa, chicken apple cranberry, Italian, beef summer)



Also available are duck, chicken, paté, game meat, and various cheeses, such as cheddar and mozzarella. Nodine's produces over 4,000 pounds of bacon every month, between 6,000 and 8,000 pounds of sausage, and up to 4,000 of turkey and ham, and will double their sales volume throughout November and December. "These products are fabulous throughout the holidays," explains Calvin, "Not only are they flavorful, but they are simple to prepare, most of them pre-cooked and ready to go."

Smoked foods are wonderfully tasty, taking on various flavors and aromas when prepared with savory wood, such as hickory and mesquite, and numerous dry-rub combinations and herbs. Simple accoutrements, such as mustard, chutney, and mayonnaise, along with a crusty French baguette and some cornichons, have the makings for a delicious picnic.



Smoked foods also make for fabulous gift giving, as they are often considered to be an indulgent item, and certainly, unique.

A LITTLE BIT ABOUT "SMOKING":

"Hot smoking" is a several-hours-long process that can be used to fully cook meats or fish; barbecue is a form of hot smoking. Generally, hot-smoking involves holding the food directly above the fire, or in an enclosure that is heated by the fire. The cooking temperature in a hot-smoking environment is usually between 130-180°F. The temperatures reached in hot-smoking can kill microbes throughout the food.

"Cold smoking" is an hours or even days-long process in which smoke is passed by food, which is held in a separate area from the fire. Generally, the food is held at room temperatures (60-80°F) as it is smoked. Since no cooking takes place, the interior texture of the food generally isn't affected; neither are any microbes living within the meat or fish. For this reason, cold-smoking has traditionally (frequently) been combined with salt-curing, in such foods as ham, bacon, and cold-smoked fish, such as smoked salmon.

The method of smoking is a useful preservation tool, as are salt-curing and drying. For oily fish, smoking is

especially useful, as its antioxidant properties delay exposure to oxygen causing surface fat rancidity. This antioxidant effect could be especially important for salted meats and fish, since salt itself is a prooxidant. Some heavily salted, long-smoked fish could keep without refrigeration for weeks, or even months.

SO, WHERE DO YOU FIND NODINE'S FOODS?

Adams Super Food Markets
 (various locations throughout Connecticut)
 Country Grocer, Thomaston, CT
 Bishops Orchard, Guilford, CT
 Tulmeadow Farms, West Simsbury, CT
 Mail Order: 800-222-2059
www.nodinesmokehouse.com



NODINE'S SMOKEHOUSE

Production Plant
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Connecticut Magazine November 2005

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Over the BORDER

by Linda Kavanagh

Providence, Rhode Island

The Hotel Providence and L'Epicureo

In a recent squabble with my sweetheart over whether we would continue to live in Fairfield County, it became quite clear to me the many reasons why I have chosen to live in Connecticut, let alone its southern most corner. "The best of all worlds" I touted to my befuddled boyfriend, "I have the ocean to my side, the city below, the country all around, and easy access to it all, with its glorious change of seasons, scenery, and sensations!" Damn. I should be a writer....



A favorite road trip destination of mine is two hours north, straight up I-95 to the exciting city of Providence, RI. Recognized by Forbes Magazine as one of the "Top 50 Cities for Business and Careers," named one of the "100 Best Communities for Young People" by America's Promise Alliance and acknowledged by American Style's list of "Top 25 Arts Destinations," this charming city's entire downtown district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its fabulous architecture, manicured streets and parks, enriching museums and galleries, as well as its progressive retail, dining, and entertainment offerings make this a wonderful city to escape to for a quick respite. Wishing I could give you a complete overview of this fun destination, I'll have to narrow it down to the last adventure I had there – a romantic dinner and overnight stay.

The newly opened Hotel Providence, located in what's referred to as The Downcity Arts and Entertainment District, a mere jaunt away from many of the city's sights, is a stylish hotel unlike any other lodging in the area. Its turn-of-the-century architecture has been preserved, whilst modern amenities and impeccable service are at the forefront. "Boutique" and "Corporate" are not typically used in the same sentence when describing a hotel, but here, the two marry quite well. An "urban sanctuary" is how the website defines it.

There are 80 guest rooms, which include suites and deluxe accommodations. Upon entering our room we immediately felt we were in the lap of luxury. Rich fabrics, bold colors, plush furnishings, and original artwork by Nancy Friese, a nationally recognized artist from the Rhode Island School of

Design, are in every room. We especially loved (dove onto) our two-poster bed with fresh linens, fluffy comforter and lots of pillows. An oversized desk with an ergonomic chair is another staple in all of the rooms, accommodating those on business (or those who just can't pull themselves away from the frickin' computer!). Always disappointed in boutique hotels with teeny-tiny bathrooms, here we were quite pleased with the pedestal sinks, rain head showers, marble floors, and plenty of space in our abode.

With toiletries and computer unpacked, clothes hung, and the bed already disheveled from our super hero dives, we were off to explore what new things had taken place since our last visit and track down an aperitif, of sorts. A favorite spot to have a cocktail before dinner is across town, past



City Hall at The Capital Grill located at the Union Station Complex. Martinis pack a wallop and their homemade potato chips are perfectly spicy and addictive. There are a few neighboring restaurants in the area and lots of great places to meander (Kennedy Plaza and the Canal Walk are a few).

We were looking forward to dinner at L'Epicureo, a landmark Italian restaurant originally located in the Federal Hill district, and after nearly ten years relocated to a larger space at The

gnocchi, and baby carrots in a red wine reduction. A sinful butter poached Maine lobster tail was next on our tasting menu. Simple, sweet, and perfectly tender, this was clearly the best lobster either of us had ever enjoyed.

Another dish that we'd come back for is the slow roasted Atlantic salmon with braised leeks, black beluga lentils, endive marmalade, and red wine vinaigrette. The flavors and contrasts in this preparation were pure perfection. In the mood for pasta,

for us. We were going all the way! I'm talkin' chocolate ganache bread pudding with port caramel sauce. Rich and decadent. One more for the road, a rustic granny smith apple crostada with a flaky free form pastry crust drizzled with caramel sauce and unsweetened whipped cream. And to ensure a restful night's sleep, a warming glass of Tawny Port (although, we could hear our bed upstairs calling to us...or was that just the wine speaking...) The wine list runs the gamut from medium-high price points, offering a



Hotel Providence. We anxiously weaved our way back through the bustling streets. Upon entering the restaurant one cannot help but be moved by the Renaissance inspired décor. Likened to the hotel's design, the stately manor, dark wood furnishings, lush fabrics, large crystal chandeliers, and magnificent artwork is most impressive. I recommend a visit to the piano bar with its beautiful stained glass bar, comfy leather back chairs, jazzy tunes, and intoxicating cocktails.

As we perused the menu and sipped our wine we continued to admire the impressive artwork (Mona Lisa and the like). The Italian menu features classic dishes and more modern interpretations of some of my favorites. We began with the hot and cold foie gras (pate and seared) and then a mouthwatering dish of braised escargots with wild mushrooms, chive

we split the veal Bolognese with herb pappardelle, parmigiano reggiano, and fresh basil. The sauce was a rich reduction of mirepoix, pork fat and lean veal. True to form, and feeling like we could conquer the world, or at least some more food, we had the chef prepare us something of his liking for that evening. Out of the kitchen came braised short ribs with caramelized celery root, potato puree, and haricots verts, with an earthy porcini mushroom bordelaise. The beef fell apart with every touch of the fork, and once again, a rich reduction that can only be accomplished with patience and care, made this dish shine.

Too full for dessert...I had you fooled for a moment, didn't I? Of course we ordered something sweet. There was no turning back now. None of those light sorbets or fresh berries

wide selection of Italian and domestic varietals. Some more global selections are also available.

L'Epicureo is reasonably priced (entrees \$19.95-\$34.95) and, more importantly, offers quality food and exceptional service in a lovely atmosphere, which is all relative in the scheme of things. The same goes for The Hotel Providence rooms, ranging (superior/deluxe) from \$170-\$359. Look for on-going special rates and packages.

The best is waking up in the morning knowing that home is only a few hours away. No schedule to keep, plane to catch, or time to kill. Just enough time in the car together to reminisce and talk about where we want to go next! Next issue...

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