



SAMPLE

DINING

Epicurean Escapes

Inventive cuisine meets rustic charm at these getaways from New York City. **By JOYCE KEHL**

JUST AS FINANCIERS J.P. Morgan and Alfred Vanderbilt loved to embrace the great outdoors at their elaborate Adirondacks camps and Berkshires cottages during the Gilded Age, today's New Yorkers like nothing better than to flee the madness of the city and lose themselves in the wilderness. The good news is that it's surprisingly easy to go north and find bucolic destinations that reward the foodie and adventurer alike. You can dine on a stellar root vegetable casserole for dinner after skiing a black-diamond slope by day.

As you pull into Lake Placid, a serene town of mountains and lakes in upstate New York, you can smell the freshness in the air and picture yourself hurtling down the bobsled run at the Olympic Sports Complex that was constructed for the winter games in 1980. Make tracks for Lake Placid Lodge, a luxury hotel that was

painstakingly rebuilt and upgraded after a devastating fire in December 2005 that destroyed the lower level of the main building. With stone fireplaces, leather armchairs draped in red and orange blankets and carefully positioned moose heads on the walls, the new resort is more Ralph Lauren light than rough-hewn.

Artisans is the formal lodge restaurant where chef Kevin McCarthy offers farm-to-table New York region-inspired cuisine. Winning autumnal selections were the sweet roasted parsnip and pear soup with cider-braised pork belly and crispy

Michael's on the Hill in Vermont serves food with flair in a woody setting.

COURTESY OF MICHAEL'S ON THE HILL

sage and pan-seared breast of guinea hen with truffle risotto.

In temperate weather, sit outside on the stone terrace in one of furniture artist Barry Gregson's handcrafted curly maple chairs and enjoy the expansive view of the lake and Whiteface Mountain.

Across town at The Interlaken Inn, a restaurant and Victorian guest house, Executive Chef Richard Brosseau offers an extensive menu of complex dishes that hinge on multiple fresh ingredients. Combinations can be quirky: Tangy capers surprised me in the roasted corn salad piled under my sauteed halibut with avocado sauce. Warm chocolate polenta cake was topped with popcorn ice cream and corn coulis. I stayed in one of the 10 guest rooms, making it convenient if not easy to waddle up the stairs after my three-course feast. The Frette linens were welcome, but the restaurant is definitely the reason to stop at the inn.

If you've spent much time in the Berkshires, you know the pain of a dining experience like this: You creak down a rickety flight of stairs and sit down to an overly sweet French toast in a twee breakfast room as the house varmint winds around your feet.

A fine antidote can be found in New Marlborough, Massachusetts, at The Old Inn on the Green. Once a stagecoach stop,

the 18-century building is now an inn and restaurant. Chef-owner Peter Platt serves a rotating new-American menu with French influences in the candlelit dining rooms (there's no electricity) five nights a week. I sat in a Windsor chair and tackled juicy slices of veal paired with a tangle of angel hair pasta and savory roasted multicolor beets. My friend's hearty portion of halibut with peas, carrot puree and saffron sauce was lighter but no less flavorful.

Platt has tweaked his cold-weather menu to include autumn vegetable risotto with chanterelles and lamb and cod dishes. He's a board member of Berkshire Grown, an association that works to connect area chefs and farmers. He says his local suppliers are able to keep him in fresh greens through the December holidays.

If you're staying overnight, spring for one of the six antique-filled rooms in the Thayer House. My suite had a fireplace, Jacuzzi tub and a private porch overlooking the outdoor pool. And there wasn't a teddy bear in site.

In Vermont, the focus on fresh, slow and local cuisine was the norm long before today's food mania made it a household concept. In Waterbury Center near Stowe, Michael's on the Hill combines the Green Mountain state ethos with European flare to produce distinctive dishes such as riesling-and-spice-braised

rabbit. Swiss-born chef Michael Kloeti logged hours at Lespinasse in Manhattan before opening his own restaurant in the 1820s farmhouse where he also teaches cooking classes. It was there on a snowy evening in the Trout Room, one of three dining areas, that I found the perfect pot pie of lobster with a creamy tarragon and cognac sauce, a flaky crust and sweet root vegetables. Maple creme brulee was earthy but not cloying.

Entrees start at around \$25 for all of the restaurants. Special holiday menus and packages make these perfect spots for enjoying end-of-year breaks from the five boroughs. You'll catch yourself humming Irving Berlin tunes in no time.

Lake Placid Lodge, lakeplacidlodge.com;
The Interlaken Inn, theinterlakeninn.com;
The Old Inn on the Green, oldinn.com;
Michael's on the Hill, michaelsonthehill.com

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Michael's **lamb navarin with fall vegetables**, left; a dining room at **Lake Placid Lodge** set for a holiday meal

