

LIFE ON THE LINE: ONE CHEF TAKES THE
CREATIVE CHANCE OF HIS LIFE

DINING OUT: TSK ROCKS NEWPORT
WITH AN INSPIRED MENU

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- ➔ Cozy cafes
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we made up that part)

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White birches in the White Mountain region.

on the side ...

Cold Mountain Cafe Cold Mountain is always popular, despite an allergy to credit cards (cash or check please). With exhibits by local artists and live music on certain Thursday nights, it combines fusion food (grilled pork with lemon rosemary sauce, crab cakes with lime cilantro dressing) with the comfort of a neighborhood restaurant. 2015 Main St., Bethlehem, N.H., (603) 869-2500, coldmountaincafe.com.

Wine and Dine

Sugar Hill Inn, Sugar Hill

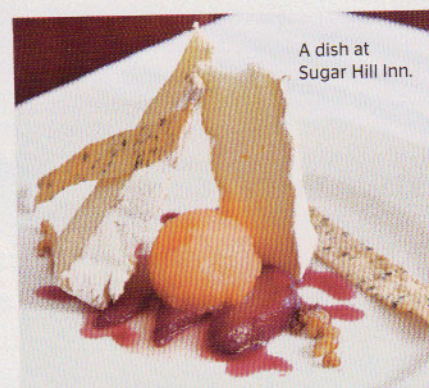
116 Route 117, (603) 823-5621, sugarhillinn.com.
Rooms start at \$180.

In elementary school, Steve Allen's future was sealed when he read the biography of Conrad Hilton. After graduating fifth grade — then college, and the French Culinary Institute in New York City — Allen hunted for a historic inn with acres of land and gorgeous views that needed some TLC so he could engineer its makeover. He found what he affectionately calls

the money pit: fifteen acres near the White Mountain National Forest and a building (parts of which date to 1789) with odiferous water and a roof begging for repair. The former financial services manager soon became a workaholic for the first time. Yes, the property demands attention, but Allen has found his niche.

The inn is decorated with original art: Allen and his girlfriend, assistant innkeeper Karen Cail, forage galleries and street fairs for art by local residents (one of their waitress's paintings hangs in the library). Half of the fourteen rooms have fireplaces, and one of the 1950s cottages has been updated. Allen tore down another structure to design what is now called "The Dream Cottage." With earth tones, exposed beams, cathedral ceilings, a sauna, Eastern pine plank floors, a river stone shower floor, marble vanity and natural stone tiles, it has a Santa Fe or Jackson Hole ski lodge feel. The centerpiece is a fieldstone fireplace that's visible while soaking in the whirlpool tub. On a

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A dish at Sugar Hill Inn.



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Views and dishes at Sugar Hill Inn.

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Patrick Little

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Hartstone Inn

|| CONTINUED FROM PAGE 91

seem fun because "it feels like a dinner party every night." Brink decorated the rooms, making them rich with leather club chairs, radiant flooring, four-poster beds high enough for a step stool, feather beds, down pillows and quilts, and gas stoves. A wakeup call is the faint peal of church bells, but it would be sinful to stir from 650-thread count sheets.

Camden Harbour Inn

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WHAT IT'S KNOWN FOR: Design. Much of the sculptural furniture was imported from Europe, and the decorator has made modern furnishings look at ease in an 1874 building. No detail is neglected. After dinner, guests return to a crackling fire on the plasma TV and slippers that bid them "goodnight." **PERK:** The inn's restaurant, Natalie's, is a style icon. The food and ambience is French, with a heated wraparound terrace, pressed tin ceiling wallpaper, and red tasseled chandeliers against ivory walls. The chef was nominated by *Food & Wine* as one of the best new chefs in 2011. Service is impeccable, and the food is sublime, even the breakfast spread (try the lobster eggs benedict).

Sugar Hill Inn

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clear day, cottage guests gaze upon a view of Mount Lafayette and Cannon Mountain from their private deck with porch swing.

Allen handles breakfast, and Val Fortin, a former chef at the Mount Washington Hotel, is the executive chef. Fortin makes everything from scratch and is known for architectural presentations and creative dishes, such as a meatless soy chorizo sausage or chili-rubbed pork with blue corn polenta. Beyond the kitchen door is a culinary herb garden where Allen and Fortin snip dill for scrambled eggs or chives for potato dishes. Special culinary programs are offered, from how to make an apple tart to maple sugaring weekends.

The inn also hosts wine dinners and seminars, such as the ABCs of white wine (Anything But Chardonnay). Sugar Hill Inn received the Distinguished Restaurants of North America Achievement of Distinction in Dining award for the past



three years and *Wine Spectator's* 2011 Award of Excellence. (Allen visits wine country as a hobby, and the selection includes more than 100 wines from around the world.) Dinner is a four-course, prix fixe menu. On chilly nights, a fire blazes in the dining room and candles set the stage. "There is no rush to turn the table," says Allen, who uses linen tablecloths and outfitted one table with couch seating. "We've rediscovered the lost art of fine dining."

Inn at Weathersfield

|| CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

crackers for s'mores over the fire pit. Twelve rooms have different features, such as spa showers, towel warmers and antique claw-

foot tubs. With fifteen fireplaces and twenty-one acres, the inn makes others green with envy (and is the epitome of green as Vermont's first hotel with an EV-charging station for electric cars).

As a business partner with the Sandelmanns, chef Jason Tostrup has a vested interest in every dish. He worked for top chefs such as Daniel Boulud and Jean-Georges Vongerichten before finding innkeepers who shared his philosophy of regional cuisine using local ingredients and were based in an agrarian community where "his soul could be connected to the land." Jason and Jane grow much of the restaurant's produce in the garden, and guests can head off with a picnic, a cooler and a map to nearby farms to gather the same beef, cheese, cider, ap-

ples and eggs served at the inn. Private party tasting menus happen in the wine cellar (near the root cellar where Tostrup cures prosciutto, sopressata and other charcuteries, along with tomato jam and ramp puree). Custom dinners have paired artisan cheeses and honey, or beer and exotic mushrooms, where the mushrooms were grown in beer mash.

Woodstock Inn

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Rockefeller. Oil paintings and a ten-foot fieldstone fireplace in the lobby create the impression of an elegant lodge. Its Red Rooster restaurant exemplifies the "haute barnyard" trend of sourcing from local suppliers. The dining space is spare and modern. Much of the furniture — tamarack woodwork, Vermont marble, white oak tables — is handmade by Vermont artisans.

PERK: The \$10 million, 10,000-square-foot Shaker-style spa highlights Vermont artisans with glass by Simon Pearce, furniture by Charles Shackleton and pottery by his wife, Miranda Thomas. The inside has museum-worthy wood || CONTINUED ON PAGE 94

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