

# globalfoodie

## Hudson Valley Food Fare

### THE TAVERN, THE VALLEY, AND THE BIRD AND BOTTLE

by Emilie C. Harting  
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Dinner at the Tavern at the Highlands Country Club or at its sister restaurant, the **Valley**, as the sunset folds down over the mountains and river, is a sublime conclusion to a day in the Hudson Highlands. Both have accolades from The New York Times and Esquire, and a number of food magazines.

Several miles away **The Bird and Bottle**, a restored stagecoach inn, built in 1761, hugs the side of the lane on a wooded section of the Old Albany Post Road. Perhaps because

we stayed there while attending the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, the inn reminded me of small hostelries in England. I was especially drawn in by the 18th century décor, the wide planked floors, and the rambling hallways. The Bird and Bottle, whose new chef Douglas Gardner is a graduate of the French Culinary School and a devotee of Chef Jacques Pepin, just received a *Wine Spectator Award*.

All three restaurants are in the midst of hiking and biking opportunities because a ten mile or so swath of the Appalachian Mountains crosses the Hudson River in this area. In addition to the Shakespeare Festival at Boscobel, the Storm King Art Center, the Dia-Beacon Museum, the Russell Wright Design Center, and the village of Cold Spring, with its many smart shops and cafes, are close by.

On a recent summer evening we chose to eat dinner on the covered porch of the Tavern. The farm to table philosophy came to life as we read the menu and saw the long list of local farms that supply baby lettuce, cucumbers, beans, spinach, squash, pork, beef, and other items.

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Chef Eric Gabrybiwicz, who left a job as sous chef at the Union Square Cafe, has been inspired by New York ethnic recipes and by his Italian grandmother. The subtle spices, along with the flavors of fresh meat and produce from the surrounding area, were noticeable in the dishes we chose: Soup with Jerusalem Artichokes, Tavern Pasta with Bucatini, Meiller's Farm Beef Ragu, and crispy homemade Crostino. Each time a dish was brought to the table, the attentive staff explained where the ingredients for each dish

came from and how it was made.

Our desserts were a combination of city and country: Fudge Brownie Sundae with Cayenne Ganache and Pear Crisp a la Mode. The fresh pears from a local orchard and ice cream made at a nearby dairy farm blended together into a heavenly sweetness. Their extensive wine list had a variety of red and white California and New York wines to choose from, and the ales, lagers, and other beers came from the popular Brooklyn Brewery and other spots in New York.

See <http://www.highlandscountryclub.net/tavern> for hours, days closed, and Sunday family dinners at the Tavern.



The dining room at the slightly more formal Valley, three miles away and also on the east side of the river, has an enormous wall-sized window that gives a panoramic view of the Hudson as it winds its way through the mountains and makes a turn. In late October the vegetables, fruit and meat seemed just as fresh as those in summer, proof that co-chefs Brandon Collins and Vin Morcarski make sure there is no lag between the picking of food and its arrival at the restaurant.

Chef Collins says that the fish comes from all over the world. It is brought to the restaurant by F. Rozzo and Sons or Litchfield Farms, which is a completely sustainable company. They often have snapper, john dory, lobster, prawns, or tuna. Accompaniments are often delicate squash, brussels sprouts, baby beets, celery root, baby fennel, risotto, and different varieties of potatoes.

Because of the way the flavors of the fish and vegetables seemed to mix with mellow spices, my favorites on the menu were the Chilled Potato and Leek Soup, the entrée of Grilled Scallops with



pea leaves, cauliflower, and scallop jus. Guests at the next table were raving about the Duck Breast with pomegranate glaze, fingerling potatoes, and spinach.

Chip Allemann, General Manager of The Garrison and Highlands Country Club, says chefs at both the Tavern and the Valley work closely with local farmers, and that the Garrison's own farm is a model for Glynwood <http://www.glynwood.org>, an advocacy group that helps communities save farms.

See The Valley on [www.thegarrison.com/inn](http://www.thegarrison.com/inn).

Check out the rooms at the Garrison. They are modern and bright, and many have views of the rolling green lawns, the forest covered hills, and the Hudson River.

The dining rooms at the Bird and Bottle, with its colonial furniture, low ceilings, and light flickering against the windows, have an intimate feel. We ate there on a Thursday, when tavern-inspired fare is served, and the fixed priced menu is \$17.61. Executive Chef Douglas Garner calls it informal compared to nights designated as "fine dining." Yet tables were set with linen clothes, the service was attentive, and had I not been reminded of the theme because of a few entrée choices like the Bistro Burger with Caribbean Jerk or the Quesadilla du Jour, I would have assumed we were there on one of the "fine dining nights."



The tomato, broth, and spices melded together so smoothly in the Pasta with Salmon and Sauce de Jour, a perfect match for a salad with local blueberries and mango vinaigrette. For dessert our table shared, and raved over, Summer Trifle with layers of pound cake and various fruits, and a special order Warm Chocolate Cake topped with Mexican chocolate sauce and enhanced with Kahlua. Chef Doug stresses that every dish from the kitchen is made from scratch, including the pastas, chutneys, marmalades, and breads, and that he does not use a freezer.

Also, he emphasizes that every dish is individually cooked for the diner. "I don't cut salmon for an entrée until the appetizer is done, so that everything is fresh and hot when it reaches the table."

He really enjoys cooking with seafood because, he says, "it gives me a chance to be creative." However, he is equally at home with Duck Confit, a centuries' old French dish which is made with the leg of a duck. Duck Confit, he says, "will never leave the menu. It's a signature dish and guests count on it being there. Actually, the preparation is quite an involved process. We marinate the duck from Sunday to Thursday. Then each piece is ready to be cooked individually in its own juices, and the flavors deepen."

Constant change and discovery seem to be his motto, and he enjoys experimenting and shifting dishes around so that no menu is the same. "It's an international tour for the staff every week. One week it's a new Jamaican dish, another week a Greek, French, or Italian one. In fact, menus for the special Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day dinners are all different.

Owner Elaine Margolis says that one of the smallest dining rooms is often requested for proposals, and that the chef will pamper the couple, and will make special arrangements for food and wine. This year the Bird and Bottle received a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence for its well chosen, quality wine list that matched the menus thematically.

At the Bird and Bottle we parked our car for the night and enjoyed being pulled back in time. We stayed in one of the three upstairs bedrooms, and had small porch overlooking the front lane. There is also a separate cottage.

Spring, summer, and fall the views, the ambience, and the multitude of fine choices make for a pleasurable evening at any of the three above restaurants.

PLEASE NOTE: On the map The Hudson Highlands is the area between the Beacon-Newburgh Bridge to the north, the Bear Mountain Bridge to the south, I-87 to the west and the Taconic Parkway to the east.

TAKE HEED: Hudson Valley tourist sites and restaurants are sometimes closed in the middle of the week, so check such details on the web as you plan the trip. When this article went to press, The Tavern [www.highlandscountryclub.net](http://www.highlandscountryclub.net) was closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, and open for lunch and dinner from Wednesday to Sunday. The Valley <http://www.thegarrison.com/dining> was open for dinners on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights and for Sunday Brunch <http://www.thegarrison.com/dining>; and the Bird and Bottle <http://www.thebirdandbottleinn.com> was open for dinner from Thursday through Sunday, and served both Sunday brunch and dinner.