

POLL WINNERS + CRITICS' PICKS

THE BEST RESTAURANTS

New Jersey

MONTHLY

WHERE TO EAT NOW

Our **25** top picks

PLUS: 134 READER FAVORITES



Martyna Krowicka, chef of Restaurant Latour at Crystal Springs in Hamburg, twirling a summer-squash crudo.

Restaurant Latour

HAMBURG

The elevator one takes to Restaurant Latour on the top floor of the Grand Cascades Lodge at the Crystal Springs Resort is metaphorical as well as physical. Every year since Latour opened in 2004, the food, wine and overall dining experience have been, to say the least, elevated. Tucked into the rural northwest corner of the state, Latour is worth the drive from anywhere. Entering the handsome dining room, with its well-spaced tables, one is struck by the panoramic view over the Kittatinny Ridge. But that is surpassed by the extraordinary 75,000-bottle wine list overseen by sommelier Susanne Lerescu and maitre d' Gianni Chiodi, and especially by the food. Over the last two years, under the mentorship of resort executive chef Anthony Bucco, chef de Latour Martyna Krowicka, 29, has come into her own (for more on her background and their working relationship, see opposite page). Krowicka's technique, while advanced, is rooted in maximizing the flavors of superb ingredients (not least the vegetables) and combining them in dishes that exceed the sum of their parts. Recent triumphs included seared veal loin with caviar and sweetbreads tossed in tomato-

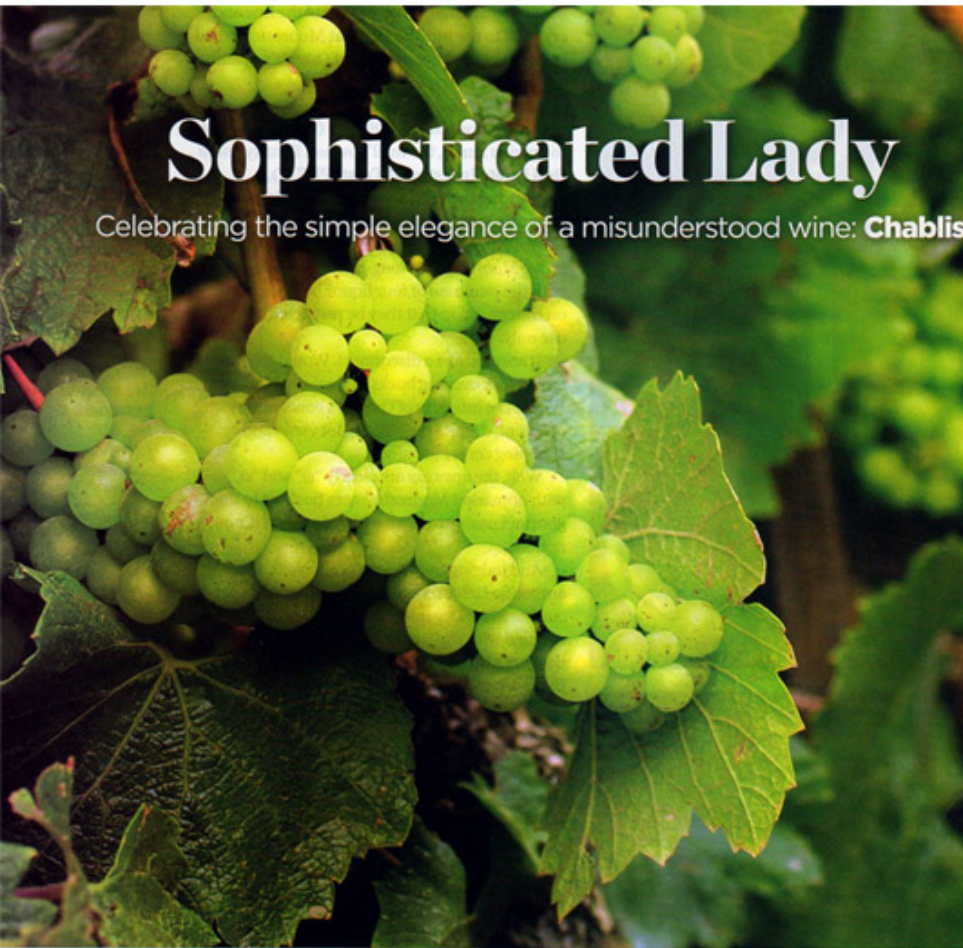
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The Star-Ledger

Inside Jersey



Sophisticated Lady

Celebrating the simple elegance of a misunderstood wine: **Chablis**

OF ALL FRENCH WINES, Chablis may be the easiest to pronounce ("shah-blee") but perhaps the hardest to comprehend. Although long recognized as a classic, there are few good examples on the shelves of most New Jersey wine shops.

That's too bad, because Chablis embodies everything I love about white wine. It has mouth-watering aromas that stimulate the appetite. Its flavors

are understated and elegant, ideally suited for fresh seafood and other summer fare. It is crisp and vibrant, thanks to a high level of natural acidity. And it has moderate alcohol (no more than 13 percent) compared to a typical California wine (14 percent or more).

Robby Younes, the wine director at Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, presides over one of the world's largest collections of French wine,

with dozens of vintages from all of the greatest Bordeaux and Burgundy estates, stretching back to the 19th century. But he has a special affection for Chablis. "I see Chablis as a beautiful lady with no makeup — simplicity," says Younes, whose knowledge and experience tasting French wine is unequaled. "She has a very natural beauty with a deep, confident personality."



Robby Younes, wine director at Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, handles one of the world's largest collections of French wine, with some vintages dating back to the 19th century.

‘I see Chablis as a beautiful lady with no makeup — simplicity.’

ROBBY YOUNES,
wine director at Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg

was another word for jug wine," he says.

Wine drinkers of a certain age will recall that in the 1960s and 1970s, big California wine companies — such as Almaden, Gallo and Taylor — adopted the term Chablis for their jug wines. Soon, Chablis became synonymous with cheap white wine. At restaurants, women routinely asked for a glass of Chablis when their husbands ordered scotch and water.

By the 1980s, however, chardonnay had entered Americans' wine lexicon and soon upstaged Chablis as the white wine of choice. But here's where things get really confusing: Chablis and chardonnay are one and the same thing.

Chablis is the name of a French village southeast of Paris where, for centuries, vintners have been growing the chardonnay grape to produce the region's ultra-crisp white wines. Indeed, the grape's track record in Chablis and the nearby Côte de Beaune area is precisely why Robert Mondavi and other pioneers of the modern California wine industry started growing chardonnay in the 1950s and 1960s.

But what is perhaps hardest for American wine drinkers to grasp is how Chablis can taste so completely different from most California chardonnay, despite the fact that both wines use the same raw ingredients. Martin Sinkoff, marketing director for Chablis importer

Frederick Wildman and Sons in New York, explains that chardonnay can be roughly grouped into three basic styles. There's the "new world" style typified by California chardonnay, marked by lush, tropical fruit flavors and a relatively high alcohol content. There's the more elegant, "buttery" style, represented by the great white wines of Burgundy's Côte de Beaune district, such as Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet. And

Depending on the occasion and what I'm eating, I would almost always choose a \$25 bottle of Chablis over a comparably priced California white. And yet even at a restaurant as sophisticated as Latour, the dining room at Crystal Springs Resort, Chablis is a tough sell, Younes says.

Why?
"The word Chablis is confusing in our country because, in California, it

▶ Continue on Page 103

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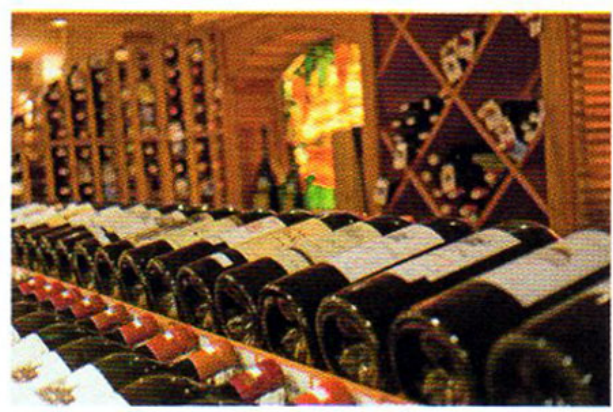
WINES
REVIEWED AGE 95

TOP CHABLIS
FOR SUMMER AGE 84

CRAFT BEER'S
HOTTEST TRENDS AGE 82

WINE ENTHUSIAST

AUGUST 2015



Restaurant Latour

Hamburg, NJ

crystalgolfresort.com/dine/latour

New chef Anthony Bucco's seasonally driven menu is inflected with foraged ingredients that play well with the restaurant's renowned 135,000-bottle wine cellar, appraised at more than \$25 million. Sommelier Susanne Lerescu curates a list that's loaded with rare producers like Château Latour, Screaming Eagle, Cheval Blanc, Araujo, Ausone, Dalle Valle, Haut-Brion and Mouton Rothschild that extend back for decades, not to mention coveted bottles of Le Pin and Lafleur. For the best of both, opt for the five-course customizable Anthology menu with wine pairings.

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AMERICA'S

100 BEST WINE RESTAURANTS 2015

THE DEFINITIVE LIST OF WHERE TO DRINK AND DINE RIGHT NOW PAGE 38

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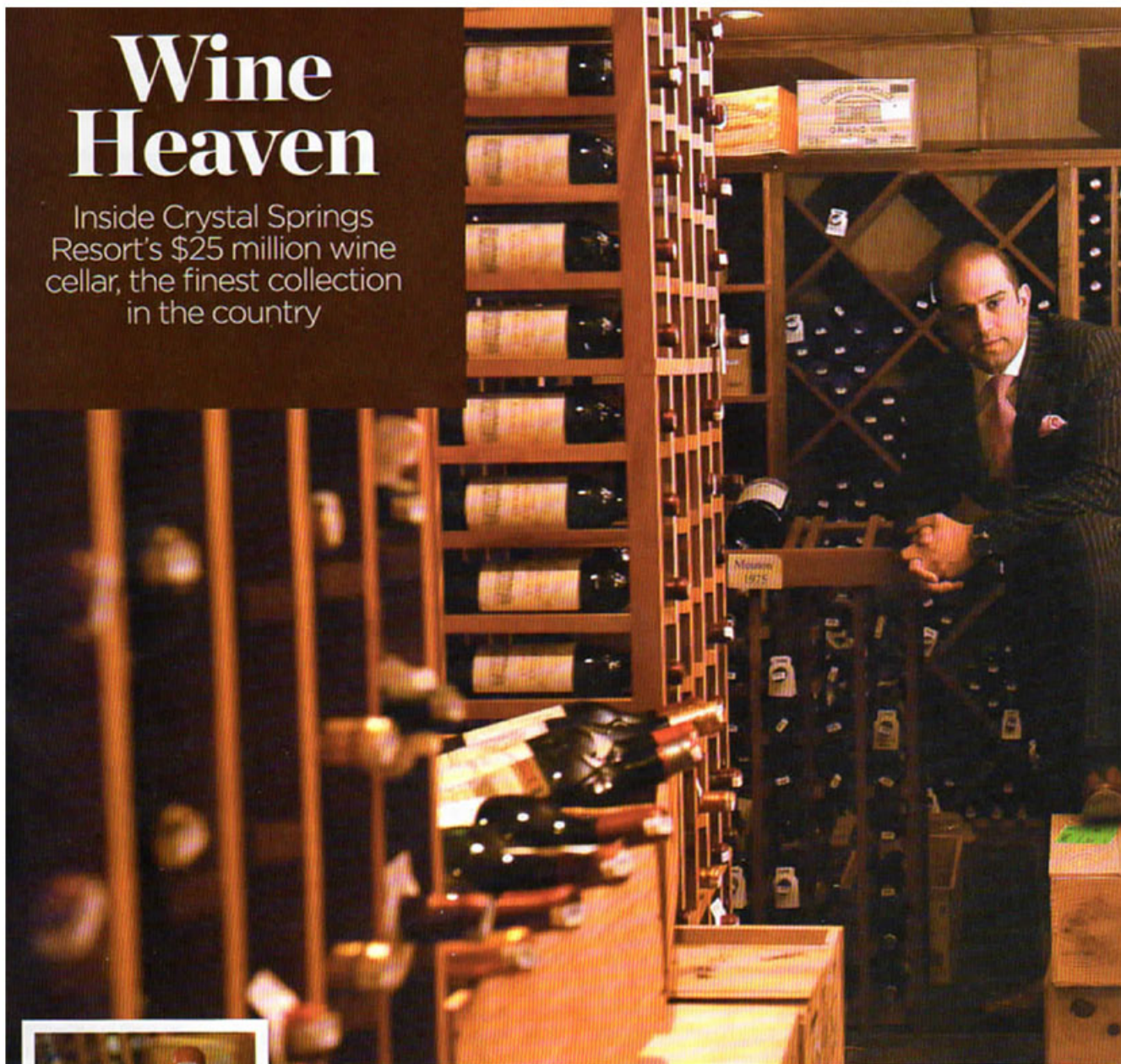


Winemag.com

Inside Jersey

Wine Heaven

Inside Crystal Springs Resort's \$25 million wine cellar, the finest collection in the country



ROBBY YOUNES HAS MY DREAM JOB, the ultimate gig for anyone who fantasizes about opening century-old bottles of Bordeaux and other rarities affordable only to Hollywood stars and hedge fund moguls.

As the wine director at Crystal Springs Resort, Younes presides over one of the world's most remarkable wine cellars. The cellar itself is an architectural marvel, encompassing nine interconnected chambers totaling more than 6,000 square feet dug into the side of a mountain in the Sussex County borough of Hamburg (adjacent to the Mountain Creek ski resort).

During a recent tour of the cellar, Younes led me down a dimly lit passageway, constructed

of local stone and dark wood molding, to a large window showcasing the first temperature-controlled chamber. "This whole room is Montrachet," he said.

As I peered in, my jaw dropped at the sight of dozens of bottles of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti Montrachet — perhaps the rarest white wine on the planet. It's extraordinary enough to find a single vintage of DRC Montrachet on a restaurant wine list. But here were 23 vintages going back to 1969, available from \$4,000 to \$10,500 a bottle.

"Do you ever sell these bottles?" I asked naively.

"Oh, we sell them," Younes said, recalling the

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 24, 2014

DINING | SUSSEX COUNTY

A Challenging Dinner, Layer by Layer

At Restaurant Latour, the chef builds meals with ingredients from very near, or very far.

By MARISSA ROTHKOPF BATES

About a half-mile away from a restaurant called "That Italian Joint," and down the road from the disaster-courting Action Park, sits Restaurant Latour, a rarefied establishment where matcha green tea cocktails are served with yuzu bubbles and local pickled elderflowers grace buttermilk granita.

This unexpected restaurant is tucked into the Alpine-flavored Crystal Springs Resort, a 4,000-acre hotel and golf destination in bucolic Sussex County. The property isn't new — there has been a high-end restaurant on site since the resort opened in 2004 — but the chef is. Jean Paul Lourdes, a New Zealand native with a Michelin-starred pedigree, is only seven months into his first job in the United States, and he has already attracted the attention of the James Beard Foundation and many of New Jersey's foodies.

But before you flee from the preciousness of it all — no one wakes up craving pickled elderflowers, do they? — it is important to note that Mr. Lourdes is close to creating a world-class eating experience.

Latour is hidden away. We checked in at the Crystal Tavern and were ushered upstairs five minutes later through heavy wooden doors into what felt more like a private dining room at the State Department than a restaurant.

The staff descended, treating us like dignitaries. Persian cucumber slices and lemon were offered for our water. Bread arrived, along with salted and unsalted butter and a detailed description of the organic sourdough starter, which was a bit much to take on an empty stomach. We studied the minimalist menu with its three-week course descriptions, such as "Pear/Avocado/Guava." We didn't quite know what to expect.

Mr. Lourdes trained as a biochemist in France and then worked as a perfumer in Switzerland before he became a chef. Once he did, he worked at Pierre Gagnaire in Paris, one of the famous forefathers of French modernist cuisine. He then spent four years traveling around Asia as a chef for the Shangri-La hotel group.

After a brief stint developing recipes for the likes of Morimoto and Buddakan, he packed up everything he learned, it seems, and brought it to the wilds of Northern New Jersey. The skills Mr. Lourdes used as a perfumer, layering scents to create one unified perfume, are evident in his kaiseki-style meals. (Kaiseki, the traditional Japanese food ritual, is a course-by-course homage to the seasons and local flavors, with each dish building upon the next.)

In a phone interview with him after I dined, Mr. Lourdes said he was hesitant to mention kaiseki out of fear that people would think his restaurant was Japanese. Hear this: It's not Japanese. It's also not "gee whiz" modernist cuisine. This is kaiseki for the New World.

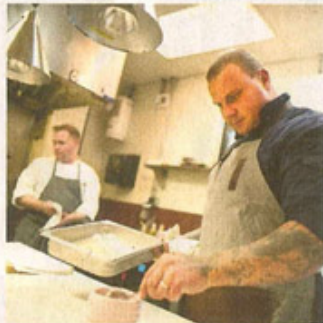
Our table of four ordered the five-course tasting menu. That was the easy part. The restaurant sits on top of one of the largest wine cellars in the United States, with over 9,100 labels and vintages that go back to 1795, said Robby Younes, the wine director and resort vice president of hospitality. The 135,000-bottle cellar contains as many, if not more back vintages of Chateau Latour than the label's headquarters in France, according to Frédéric Engerer, the president of Chateau Latour, who visited recently.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREGG VIGLIOTTI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



The restaurant overlooks a golf course and the Kittatinny Mountains. Above, from left: for a first course, a gold-painted egg is filled with custard and apple gelée; Jean Paul Lourdes has been the chef for seven months; some dishes incorporate flowers, like the broad bean stew with wild blossoms.



We were handed an iPad with a 350-page wine list app and were so overwhelmed by choice, we stupidly ordered wine by the glass, instead of asking for help.

The first course in kaiseki is meant to awaken the palate and senses. A gold-painted egg was placed in front of us. My spoon ventured through the creamy, barely sweet custard to find tiny cubes of green apple gelée that released small bursts of acid in my mouth, a highly calculated counterpart to the rich custard.

The following course was a blend of raw and acidic flavors. The oyster and Champagne served on the grazing menu was remarkable for its initial taste of briny sea, which was swiftly followed by an unexpected wave of intense acidity. (The briny quality was enhanced, I later learned, by rehydrating the Kusshi oyster from the West Coast with seawater from Cape Cod.) The harvest menu offered a shockingly cold mound of buttermilk granita accompanied by slices of cucumber pickled in chardonnay and Persian cucumber that had been compressed in cucumber juice. Dill oil and pickled local elderflowers (there they are!) completed the dish.

There is not enough time to explain the lengthy processes that go into the prep-

aration of the third course. Something as seemingly simple as the fried potato beignet that arrived on our table had required three days of preparation, involving two kinds of potatoes, potato stock, dehydrators, immersion circulators and the gelling agent methylcellulose. Not to mention a deep fryer and Amazon.com, which provided the Aquitaine caviar from Brittany. Just as with a great perfume, it's probably better to enjoy the end result, rather than focusing on what went into it.

The third and fourth courses both highlight richer umami flavors. Chicken with endive kimchi was served with a thick smear of truffle paste. It was comfort food with Chanel style.

The summer vegetables in seaweed broth were among the most delicious I've eaten. The buttery-tasting broth was made from a variety of seaweeds, including a red moss from Scotland that turned the broth pink.

The menu changes weekly, but it is tweaked daily to reflect what freshly foraged morsels are available. Mr. Lourdes prides himself on using "the best ingredients the world has to offer." He has mushrooms foraged by a Native American in the Pacific Northwest named Red Squirrel,

while local flora are provided by a couple from Wantage who scour the nearby Kittatinny Mountains. On any given day there could be truffles from Western Australia and watercress from South India.

On Sunday, only brunch is offered and the food is, for lack of a better word, more understandable. The room seems cheerier, with plenty of natural light coming through the floor-to-ceiling windows along with a stunning view of the Kittatinny Mountains. We left feeling relaxed and indulged, rather than challenged and invigorated as we had with dinner.

There are quirky takes on breakfast staples like eggs Benedict (the hollandaise sauce is aerated and folded into the eggs) and pancakes (they are cooked Moroccan-style and topped with spicy tandoori apples). Throughout the meal, warm baked goods were brought out as little surprises. The wild blueberry almond muffin, with its delicate crumb, should be held up as a perfect example of petite cakedom. A warm Cheddar and bacon scone appeared held together only by the chewy melted cheese on top. Here, too, the kitchen had taken a simple idea and turned it into something exceptional.

Go for dinner. Stay for brunch.

RESTAURANT LATOUR

CRYSTAL SPRINGS RESORT,
1 WILD TURKEY WAY, HAMBURG
(855) 977-6473
CRYSTALGOLFRESORT.COM/DINE
/LATOUR/

Excellent

The Space The restaurant is hidden away and has an elegant interior, if a bit sterile and corporate in feel. Striking views from floor-to-ceiling windows over the golf course to the Kittatinny Mountains.

The Crowd Well-dressed adults of all ages. Children under 12 are not permitted at dinner. The atmosphere is quiet and serene, with low murmurs of conversation. Standard-issue ambient music was a little too loud at brunch.

The Drinks One of the most expansive wine cellars in the United States, with over 135,000 bottles. Fifty wines available by the glass from \$10 to \$32. Elaborate cocktails from \$14 to \$28. Mexican Coca-Cola, favored because it's made with sugar, not corn syrup, and homemade sodas from \$6 to \$9.

The Dress Code When your reservation is confirmed you will be reminded that attire for dinner is "smart business casual."

The Bill The five-course tasting menu is \$115, plus \$55 for beverage pairing; the seven-course tasting menu is \$145, plus \$65 for beverage pairing. There are two menu options: "harvest" (vegetarian) and "grazing." For brunch, the petite tasting (two choices from the menu) is \$45, and the grand tasting (three choices) is \$65. Beverages are included with brunch.

What We Liked Oysters and Champagne; potato beignet, chicken with endive kimchi, summer vegetables in seaweed broth; homemade jams, eggs with smoked Scottish salmon, barley with lychee and membrillo, blueberry muffin, chocolate financier, and Cheddar and bacon scone.

If You Go Dinner served Thursdays through Saturdays, 5 to 9:30 p.m. (last seating). Brunch served Sundays from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Reservations recommended; check in at the hostess desk outside the tavern. A staff member will escort you to the restaurant. There is plenty of parking.

Ratings Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor.

New Jersey

MONTHLY

fall GETAWAYS

Golden opportunities beckon across the state, from archery and hiking to hayrides, historic inns, beer gardens, pumpkin patches and good old cider and doughnuts.

Autumn Is Awesome At Crystal Springs

By Eric Levin

If fall foliage could talk, it would say, "Hey, you with the plaid scarf! Don't just stand there gaping. Do something! It'll keep you warm."

It's sound advice, and if you want a place where you can do much more than leaf peep, the Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg abundantly fills the bill. A sybaritic duchy of 3,000 acres spread across Sussex County, Crystal Springs encompasses three hotels, 12 restaurants, two spas, seven golf courses, plenty of family activities and a glass-enclosed Biosphere with a pool and water slide suitable for year-round swimming.

The main hotel—the 230-room Grand Cascades Lodge—has four restaurants, from the Crystal Tavern (excellent at dinner, under chef de cuisine Scott Tolhurst) and the Italian Bistro to the *NJM* Top 25 Restaurant Latour of chef Jean-Paul Lourdes. The outdoor Chef's Garden usually stays open until mid-October. Beneath the hotel, the late Gene Mulvihill built a catacomb to house his staggeringly deep and varied 135,000-bottle wine collection. No one knows it better than sommelier Susanne Lerescu, who conducts daily tours at 3 PM, with themed lectures the first Sunday of each month. Grand Cascades and the smaller 175-room Minerals

Hotel have modern, full-service spas.

Every Saturday in October, Minerals and Grand Cascades each host a pumpkin-decorating class for kids at 2 PM (\$10 per child). At 12:30 PM on Saturday the 25th, Minerals will throw a Halloween costume party with games, arts and crafts and snacks (\$15 per child).

Year round, Crystal Springs brings in children's entertainment every Saturday—a traveling zoo, a magic show, a reptile show, a ventriloquist—to Grand Cascades (at 3 PM) and Minerals (5 PM). For adults on November 15, Minerals will host a four-course Murder Mystery Dinner (\$85) beginning at 7:30 PM, featuring John Avner and the Killing Kompany.

Back at the Grand Cascades, weather permitting, kids can enjoy free marshmallow roasts (and s'more making) on the Fire and Water Terrace every Friday and Saturday. Little ones ages 5 through 12 can join the Kid's Klub (\$40), also Fridays and Saturdays, for dinner (mac and cheese or chicken fingers), crafts, games and a movie. Saturdays at 8 PM, families staying at Grand Cascades are invited to enjoy the free movie night at the Biosphere.

After Thanksgiving, build and decorate your own gingerbread house in the Napa Room at Grand Cascades or the Art Room at Minerals. Sessions are held at 10 AM every Saturday from November 29 through Christmas Eve. Cost: \$30 per house.

The resort's seven golf courses are open late into November, weather permitting. This fall, the Cascades nine-hole course is set up for a growing sport called footgolf. Each player kicks his own soccer ball from the tee to a wide round hole cut near the green. Fewest kicks wins. When snow finally blankets the ground, the resort organizes snowshoe hikes (snowshoes included) along the fairways of the Great Gorge course.

Mountain Creek, part of the mini-empire and the Garden State's largest ski facility, gets going before the first flakes fall. Every Saturday and Sunday through mid- to late-October, Crystal Springs presents its family-oriented Adventure Center Mountain Top Experience—archery, canoeing and fishing at the lake (stocked with bass and pike) on the peak. The price (\$49) includes all equipment and shuttle service to and from the mountaintop. See crystalgolfresort.com for all the details. ■

< PREVIOUS

ALL



OCTOBER 4, 2013

VIEW FINDER

A quick, easy, awesome mountain retreat



Booked that long autumn weekend yet? The one in Vermont you swear you're going to take this year? Yeah, neither have we.

Four hours is a haul. New Jersey, however, is right next door. (Here us out.) We just discovered a gem of a getaway: [Crystal Springs Resort](#).



Breaking news: This is in New Jersey.

Only an hour-and-a-half drive from the city (down a gorgeous winding road, mind you), it's seriously a slice of Burlington in the Garden State. Think: mountains, trees, fire pits, the usual lodge suspects. Except here, you're definitely not roughing it. There are three hotels to choose from, two extensive spas, seven golf courses (if that's your thing), food at every turn and even a glass-encased, heated [pool complex](#). (Did we mention it's in Jersey?)

Bottom line is, it's comfortable. Regardless of what you choose to do during the day (apple picking, horseback riding and kayaking are available nearby), by night you're wrapped in a cozy sweater, sitting on a veranda, breathing crisp air and stuffing yourself with s'mores.

Don't feel obliged to tour the East Coast in search of that idyllic autumn experience. It's just on the other side of I-287.

Weekend room rates start at \$299; [Crystal Springs Resort](#), 3 Wild Turkey Way, Hamburg, NJ; 973-827-5996 or [crystalgolfresort.com](#)

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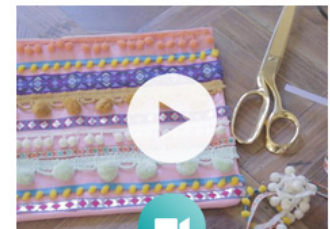
Forward Article



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VIEW NOW



DINING

REVIEW

Hamburg's Restaurant Latour is stunning

By **Cody Kendall**
For The Star-Ledger

Restaurant Latour is not just an excursion into fine dining — it's an experience.

Entering the clubhouse at the Crystal Springs Resort in Sussex County, visitors are warmly greeted, then whisked by elevator to the floor above. The aura is that of a quiet, private dining room, with a view of mountains and evergreens on evenings during daylight saving time, or at Sunday brunch.

Napkins are delivered to tables with tongs, courtesy of a staffer unfazed by any question or request, knowing exactly when to drop by, and when not to. And then — get ready to walk the culinary high wire — you look at the menu.

It's likely you will need to call on outside expertise, unless Dungeness crab with ajo blanco (a "snow" of white garlic soup) and arbequina (oil from an aromatic variety of olive) is in your comfort zone, or you're familiar with the nuances of charred eggplant given a status boost by Earl Gray tea and katsuobushi (translated, that's smoked dried tuna).

Explanations are not on the menu, they're in your server's lexicon. You can get details, which tend to be fascinating, or wing it without the subtlety of dishes that aren't quite as exotic; such as wild Mediterranean turbot with fall vegetables and lightly smoked prime rib that rises to the occasion coupling with charred Vidalia onions and wild chives, underlining the rich tenderness of the meat.

Happily, there are only four choices for the food. The menu is in two parts: harvest (vegetarian) and grazing (meat, poultry and seafood). So pick one,



The dining room at Restaurant Latour at Crystal Springs Resort. Left, steamed Alaskan king crab with cured egg yolks and woodruff. (DAVID HANDSCHUH/FOR NJ ADVANCE MEDIA)

decide whether you want five courses (\$115) or seven (\$145), and you're good to go.

"Beverage pairing" is \$55 or \$65. Those seeking something more extravagant can dip into the 138,000-bottle wine cellar, with expert guidance from a sommelier.

If you want a cocktail, however, you can choose from several options. Why

not try the top-of-the-line \$26 champagne cocktail, which comes with an ice cube of pureed strawberries that slowly dissolves for a fruity frisson, and a refill of Ruinart champagne to top things off. It's pricey, yes, but definitely first-class fun.

As an alternative, look at the selection of beers or hand-crafted sodas (\$9) in unusual combinations,

such as Bing cherry and yuzu.

The menu changes with the availability of its elements and the inspirations of Jean Paul Lourdes, a rugby player turned food scientist and master chef from New Zealand who joined the restaurant this year. He has cooked everywhere, from France to Beijing, Sydney and Tokyo, pulling in ingredients from around the world, in addition to produce foraged locally and across the country.

"I have the freedom to do whatever I want," said Lourdes, and he takes advantage of it with cuisine that is often complicated but always emotional. His style is "to push the envelope every day."

Some might think Latour

is trying too hard, but it's really just stretching to be the ultimate in food, drink and hospitality. The offerings are cutting-edge creative, going beyond mere craftsmanship into artistry.

Even the desserts are unique, benefiting from Lourdes' whimsy. One is based on a deconstruction of his childhood New Zealand favorite candy bar, the violet crumble, including honeycomb, chocolate sorbet, Mexican vanilla ice cream and crystallized violet petals. After dessert, we enjoyed little house-made sweets, including citrus marshmallow and sea salt caramel.

There are a few things visitors need to know about Latour. If you want to come on a weekend, make reservations more than a

Restaurant Latour

Where: 1 Wild Turkey Way, Hamburg

Hours: 5-10 p.m.
Thursdays-Saturdays, 11 a.m.-3p.m. (brunch)
Sundays. Closed
Mondays-Wednesdays.

For more information:
crystalgolfresort.com/
dine/latour,
855-977-6473

week ahead, because that's when it's in demand. Though the chef estimated only about a small percentage of the customers are local, people do come out from New York City to dine, and a hotel on the premises often hosts them overnight so they can follow their Saturday dinner with Sunday brunch.

The restaurant does not admit children under 12 (why would you bring them anyway, and what would kids eat here?). It also asks patrons to wear "smart casual" attire, no sneakers.

One problem with our evening: The way from the street to the clubhouse is not lighted properly, and very confusing in the dark, especially since we didn't think the signs were as helpful as they should have been. We took several wrong turns. Better improve illumination before the snow season sets in.

Latour is not for everyone. The atmosphere is 4 stars, and the food preparation gets the same rating. But after reading this far in the review, you should have an idea whether it would appeal to you. If carefully crafted meals with a unique slant are your passion and you can pay the fare, it will.

Cody Kendall:
CodyDine@aim.com.

CITY NEWS



UNCORKING THE CITY | By Lettie Teague

World-Class Wines in a N.J. Hamlet

Most New Yorkers likely have never heard of, let alone visited, the hamlet of Hamburg, N.J. And yet this small place with a population of just more than 3,000 about 50 miles northwest of Midtown Manhattan is home to seven golf courses, three hotels and more than 130,000 bottles of wine.

The latter are situated in the seven cellars of Restaurant Latour, which may be the most notable amenity of the Crystal Springs Hotel, one of several Alpine-style buildings (think Aspen meets Garden State) that comprise the sprawling Crystal Springs Resort. The restaurant's wine cellar is one of the best in greater New York, and quite possibly in the world.

The cellar was the creation of the resort's late founder, Gene Mulvihill, who was both a passionate golfer and a devoted oenophile. Mr. Mulvihill, who passed away in 2012, began collecting wine in the 1960s and eventually amassed more than 15,000 bottles. It was his personal cellar that provided the restaurant with its opening inventory in 2004.

"Mr. Mulvihill decided to bring his wine collection to the hotel," the restaurant's sommelier, Susanne Lerescu, told me during a recent cellar tour. (All restaurant guests are treated to tours of the cellar, as well as a complimentary glass of Champagne.

'We built this cellar out of passion—not to make money.'

Nonrestaurant guests may sign up for the daily public tour—sans Champagne, alas.) The Latour cellar, which is actually made up of seven individual cellars—each devoted to different types of wine—was in the works years before the restaurant was built. The restaurant, Ms. Lerescu said, was almost an afterthought.

Restaurant Latour is a small space, tucked away on the third floor of the hotel. It seats only 50 or so guests and is open only four



Left, Susanne Lerescu in Restaurant Latour's wine cellar. Right, Château Latour Bordeaux. Below, a selection of bottles from the collection.

nights a week (Thursday through Sunday). Some nights are much busier than others. On the Thursday night I visited, the restaurant was less than half-though my dining companion and I were probably the only ones who would be driving home afterward. According to Robby Younes, the hotel's vice president for hospitality, about 75% of restaurant diners stay at the hotel overnight or they "hire a car service or a helicopter so they can drink wine." (I traveled with a designated driver instead.)

When Mr. Younes joined Crystal Springs in 2008, the restaurant's cellar was "Bordeaux, Bordeaux, Bordeaux," he said. Mr. Younes, who oversees the entire property and is also in charge of the wine buying, was recruited by Mr. Mulvihill from the Copeland restaurant in Morristown, where he was both manager and wine buyer.

Mr. Younes promptly began adding wines from other parts of the world—from the Rhone, Burgundy, California, Argentina and well beyond. "We were like two



kids in Toys 'R Us," he said of his partnership with Mr. Mulvihill—and their buying binge. And he insisted the wine was the only goal: "We built this cellar out of passion—not to make money."

This would certainly seem to be the case, based on some of the wine prices on the Restaurant Latour list. Many of the older and most collectible wines are still priced the same as they were 10 years ago. "Our prices are lower than auction houses and some retail stores," asserted Mr. Younes.

In fact, the prices (particularly those of Champagne, Burgundy and Bordeaux) are so reasonable that some Crystal Springs guests have tried to buy in bulk. Mr. Younes recounted a story of hotel guests who requested that a case of wine from the restaurant be delivered to their room. Mr. Younes refused that request—as well as that from another group that wanted to buy a 3-liter bottle of 2007 DRC La Tâche "to go" after ordering about \$12,000 worth of wine. (The wine cost \$14,000 at

the time.) "The wine is meant to be enjoyed in the restaurant," said Mr. Younes.

Some customers take Mr. Younes's dictum well to heart. Take, for example, the man from Lyndhurst, N.J., who ordered four great bottles of Bordeaux (1982 Petrus, 1982 Lafite, 1982 Latour and 1945 Mouton) with his dinner. The bottles cost \$6,400, \$6,900, \$5,800 and \$13,900. The man drank a couple glasses of each wine (and offered Mr. Younes some as well), while his wife

contented herself with two glasses of Sauvignon Blanc.

And then there are the customers who take calculated risks while ordering some of the restaurant's truly old bottles—like the 1912 Château Latour that was "on its deathbed," according to Ms. Lerescu. But in cases like this, it's "buyer beware." If the wine isn't flawed but merely enfeebled, the diner still has to pay the full price.

Fortunately, my ambition was much smaller; I was just looking for a good wine to drink with dinner that night. But with the Latour wine list, that's not easily achieved—there's so much to choose from. A great Chablis? An underpriced Châteauneuf-du-Pape? My choice wasn't made easier by my companion, who ordered fish when I ordered pork. Now we had an additional problem: We needed to drink both white and red.

But the half-bottle list was quite short and not nearly as inspiring as the list of full bottles. Ms. Lerescu, brilliant and accommodating, furnished the answer. Why not order both a Chablis and a Châteauneuf-du-Pape—and drink half of each bottle? (Or less than half, in the case of my driver.)

And so we shared half of a brilliant 2002 Christian Moreau Chablis Vaudeuir (\$90, or \$45 for half) and a lush, super-ripe 2009 Domaine de Marcoux Vieilles Vignes Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$125). (She actually opened two bottles of the Chablis—the first bottle was a bit oxidized, and so she promptly popped a second.)

It had been the late Mr. Mulvihill's ambition to have "the biggest and the best" wine cellar in the world, according to Mr. Younes. It certainly looked like they had come pretty close. Does Mr. Younes believe they had achieved it, that his work is done? He did not. In fact, he is searching for yet more wine right now. He wants to build the number of bottles to 200,000. But it has to be the right sort of wine. "I want to have wine that nobody else in the world owns," he declared.

That's 70,000 more reasons to drive to Hamburg sometime.

Natalie Kopyar for The Wall Street Journal

Inside Jersey



Restaurant Latour

MARTYNA KROWICKA, chef de Latour, spends hours in the woods, scrounging for wild strawberries, wild grape leaves, cattails. "The amount of stuff that's out there is incredible. You could actually survive in the wild in New Jersey!" Krowicka oversees Restaurant Latour, the tiny dining room at Crystal Springs Resort, the room with a stunning view of the Kittatinny Mountains, the restaurant where jackets are recommended and jeans forbidden. The menu is designed to impress, innovative and ever-changing, with wine pairings designed to be equally stimulating — 75,000 bottles from which to choose. Krowicka often reaches to her past for inspiration, those humble, rustic dishes from her childhood in Poland (where she also foraged, with her grandmother), that braised cabbage that is her father's specialty, those homemade doughnuts. At Restaurant Latour, the menu is deliberately vague, the goal is to prompt you to ask. The story of a dish might be this: Foragers see a bear, the animal's sudden movement releases a golden cloud, a dusting of cattail pollen. When the bear is gone, they collect the cattails, harvesting nearly 2 ounces of pollen. Krowicka adds the pollen to pasta dough, turning it gloriously yellow. She creates tiny agnolotti, which she fills with wapato, which are edible tubers, also foraged, and ricotta. The dish may seem ornate and abstract, but in reality, it's a dressed-up pierogi and it will please Krowicka if you get it. She describes her food as contemporary American, with an Eastern European influence, but her true goal is that you experience her food in the same intimate, personal way that she does.

RESTAURANT LATOUR | 3 Wild Turkey Way, Hardyston Township; (855) 977-6473; crystalgolfresort.com

without being seen; des years of experience and Georges, he was just 25 closing day, the Small B was reluctant. "Is your f Nine hours later, the loa high-fived the SBA team in their luxury cars. He v Ford Probe. The driver's (Harary had to crawl in t side) and one pop-up h (the car appeared to be somehow like a swindle enough and Harary play before opening day. He credit card applications within 36 hours, had ma another \$250,000 in de a primary responsibility was to transfer money f another, taking advanta offers. The Hararys rema the restaurant earned ac composed food and its and as it served prestigi a vice president — the c that Ford Probe and slej the unfinished basemen (the paying roommates The restaurant is in its 1 as from the beginning, a Jersey best. Longtime favorites on the menu include the bourbon-braised suckling pig, the Parmesan gnocchi and the Long Island duck. Service remains a priority, and guests leave with a special thank-you, a homemade pastry for tomorrow's breakfast.

10 Best Ne

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Fresh for the Season: NJ Chefs' Favorite Spring Veggies

01 May 2017 / JerseyBites

■ Recipes



While we're solidly into the season, it finally feels like spring has (really, truly, definitely) sprung in the Garden State. Here are the fresh veggies (and an herb) chefs across the state look forward to serving up! *Spoiler alert: It's good to be asparagus this season.*

Anthony Bucco, Executive Chef at Restaurant Latour

1 Wild Turkey Way, Hamburg

"My favorite spring ingredients have to be asparagus and rhubarb. With asparagus, I'll shave it and make a salad with pecorino, toasted almonds, lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil. I like to simply pickle rhubarb and add it to either a sweet or savory dish."



Anthony Bucco

WINE ENTHUSIAST

AUGUST 2016

AMERICA'S 100 BEST WINE RESTAURANTS 2016

THE DEFINITIVE
LIST OF WHERE TO
DRINK AND DINE
RIGHT NOW

PAGE
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Restaurant Latour

Hardyston Township, NJ

crystalgolfresort.com/dine/latour

WINE ENTHUSIAST
Classic

We're all for small, focused lists—until we come to Latour. Its wine collection is 50 years in the making and 6,000-plus labels strong. The depth in Bordeaux is stunning, with bottles of Latour dating back to the 19th Century a particular highlight. New Chef de Cuisine Martyna Krowicka brings a relaxed, rustic approach to the refined cuisine.



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16 Hole-in-One Wine Restaurants

Tea up a top dining experience at these golf destinations



Photo by: The Lodge At Pebble Beach

Enjoy fairway views and an extensive wine program at Stillwater Bar & Grill.

Posted: May 11, 2017



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As summer approaches, recreational golf season is in full swing. The perfect excuse to take a vacation or just unwind on the weekend, a day spent on the course is tough to improve—except with the promise of great food and wine afterward. These 16 restaurants are in close proximity to world-class golfing, and their first-rate menus and award-winning wine programs will ensure you finish the day a winner. To check out more wine and food destinations, see *Wine Spectator's* [more than 3,500 Restaurant Award-winning picks](#), including the [85 Grand Award recipients](#) worldwide that hold our highest honor.

Do you have a favorite you'd like to see on this list? Send your recommendations to restaurantawards@mshanken.com. We want to hear from you!

Restaurant Latour

Crystal Springs Resort, 1 Wild Turkey Way, Hardyston, N.J.

Telephone (844) 414-9893

Website www.crystalgolfresort.com

Open Dinner, Thursday to Sunday

Grand Award



Crystal Springs Resort

Robby Younes oversees Restaurant Latour's renowned, 7,200-selection list..

For an East Coast golf retreat that aces wine and dining, head to Crystal Springs Resort in northwestern New Jersey. The resort is home to six golf courses for all skill levels, as well as a Grand Award-winning wine cellar at its **Restaurant Latour**. Chef Anthony Becco's contemporary American fare can be enjoyed in the form of the five-course "Anthology" menu, where guests choose dishes from five different categories, or the seven-course chef's tasting menu. The 7,200-selection wine list has earned a Grand Award since 2006; highlighting bottles from Bordeaux, California, Burgundy, Italy, the Rhône, Champagne and Oregon, the program is managed by wine director Robby Younes.