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North Fork Dining Catches Up



Emily Berl for The New York Times

Planting herbs at the Jedediah Hawkins Inn, home to Luce & Hawkins Restaurant, in Jamesport, N.Y.

By SYLVIE BIGAR Published: July 29, 2011

THE North Fork of Long Island has developed a reputation for its wineries. Just as the vineyards of Napa and Sonoma led to the emergence of a vibrant dining scene, a growing number of chefs with impressive pedigrees — including some with Long Island roots — are opening their own restaurants on the North Fork to feed the winery-hopping crowds.

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Amid more than 18,000 acres of farmland and never far from the water, the new breed of North Fork restaurants don't just brandish the farm- and sea-to-table credo, they're immersed in it.

"I grew up here, surrounded by agriculture and aquaculture, but now there are ma more small farms and specialty purveyors," said Noah Schwartz, who opened Noal restaurant in Greenport, in 2010. "I created a seafood gumbo using seven different of okra an independent farmer cultivates." On a recent day at Luce & Hawkins at the Jedediah Hawkins Inn in Jamesport (400 South Jamesport Avenue; 631-722-2900; jedediahhawkinsinn.com), a young man in chef's whites bent over the restaurant's herb garden, picking sage in full view of the glass-enclosed, high-ceiling dining room. Since

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2010, Keith Luce, the chef and an owner, has been at the helm of the inn and restaurant, set in an 1863 mansion. Though Mr. Luce has worked at revered spots like Herbfarm, outside Seattle, he grew up nearby on a Long Island farm. "I came back because no matter where I went in the world, I remembered that everything I love, except perhaps citrus and olive oil, is available here," he said.

The chef and his crew offer a gentle formality and plenty of ingredients from that garden. Dishes from an early summer menu included local roasted monkfish served with bubbly bone marrow and peppered with young sage tips and mustard blossoms.

Close by in Southold, Gerry Hayden, an alumnus of Aureole in New York City, and his wife, the pastry virtuoso Claudia Fleming, work to toque at the North Fork Table and Inn (57225 Main Road; 631-765-0177; northforktableandinn.com). With "American cuisine and comfort" as their slogan, they use primarily organic and biodynamic ingredients in dishes like asparagus served with whipped lemon labne, a Middle Eastern-style yogurt. Leave space for Ms. Fleming's creations, including an ethereal coconut tapioca. Out back, a new stationary lunch truck cranks out artisanal hot dogs and tangy pulled pork sandwiches.

In downtown Greenport, the inviting sidewalk patio at Noah's (136 Front Street; 631-477-6720; chefnoahschwartz.com) leads to a lofty bar room adorned with industrial touches. Mr. Schwartz prepares seafood-centric comfort food, available in small portions. Drops of yuzu jazzed up sea scallop ceviche, while Pipes Cove oysters tasted both saline and steely. North Fork wines, available in three- and six-ounce pours, are well represented.

A few steps away at the Frisky Oyster (27 Front Street; 631-477-4265; thefriskyoyster.com), a cozy dining area serves as the perfect backdrop for American cuisine brought out by the chef, and now owner, Robert Beaver, fresh from a stint at the acclaimed Inn at Little Washington. The sea is celebrated in dishes like oysters "Friskafella," Mr. Beaver's version of the Rockefeller classic.

Perhaps no upscale North Fork restaurant is closer to the sea than Scrimshaw (Preston's Wharf; 631-477-8882; scrimshawrestaurant.com), housed in a historic building on a Greenport wharf. Rosa Ross, the chef and owner, has authored several cookbooks and worked with big-name gastronomes like Marcella Hazan and James Beard, so you can trust her skills with staples from land and sea; watch the marine traffic as you feast on frothy mussels or a butter-poached lobster.

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