

Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 2

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

THE GARDEN ISSUE

5 LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS
CREATE SYMPHONIES OF PLANT

& STONE

NEW YORK
Interior Designer
COMES HOME
to Renew Parents'
Cumberland Cape

Plus!

A SWEET-SMELLING
JOURNEY OF
MAINE'S
FLOWER FARMS

Chef Jesse Souza in his element. **RIGHT:** A dozen icy, raw Norumbega oysters from the Dam-ariscotta River with mignonette.



The grass-fed burger topped with aged white cheddar.

RIGHT: Creative craft cocktails are served fireside at the bar.

photos: Courtesy of Lockwood Hotel

THE NEXT COURSE

Waterville's Front & Main is both a culmination and reflection of the transformation happening to the town around it

BY **ALEXANDRA HALL**

The gleaming floor-to-ceiling windows of Front & Main's dining room, as impressive as any contemporary art museum's, peer out to a dramatically made-over slice of downtown Waterville.

While just a year ago there were crumbling sidewalks and empty storefronts, now there's expanded sidewalks, gallery spaces, and a stunning new arts center and opera house. And the view of all of that, enjoyed by every table in this upscale eatery, is as good an analogy as any for what Front & Main really

is: A window onto the evolution of its community.

That's certainly true in the restaurant's architecture; like Lockwood Hotel that it anchors, the restaurant's epic windows—designed by Baskerville—embrace the streets around it. Ditto the restaurant's cultural nods to the area: The pieces by Maine artist Bernard Langlais curated by nearby Colby College Museum of Art. The Wabanaki basketry. Reclaimed woods from the Penobscot River. They're all treasures from Waterville's past, present, and future.

Front & Main anchors Lockwood Hotel, designed by internationally renowned firm Baskervill, with floor-to-ceiling windows.

“Waterville is becoming a cultural center for all of Maine. And the restaurant is at the heart of tying it all together.”



And one of those treasures is the menu created by chef Jesse Souza. In it he brings together the foods and farms of Central and Northern Maine—all of it met with flavors and techniques he picked up while living elsewhere.

“A big part of our story here is Waterville itself,” he explains, and its people. “Like John [Phillips-Sandy, director of food and beverage], who grew up here and returned. And me, who grew up in Maine, moved away, and came back bringing a supporting cast of flavors from away.”

That juxtaposition enfolds as many local ingredients as Jesse can get his hands on. Brunch, for example, sees plates of ployes, the traditional Acadian pancake he makes

with buckwheat from Maine Grains in Skowhegan. He gussies them up with sweet whipped ricotta, caramelized apples, and local maple syrup ever-so-addictively laced with homemade brown butter.

Dinnertime includes deceptively complex dishes like lettuce wraps—a dovetailing of Jesse’s obsession with deep-flavored pork from Bristol and the time he’s spent cooking in cities like San Francisco and Seattle, with their robust Asian food scenes. “Broad Arrow Farm’s gorgeous pork is perfect in our Asian char siu marinade,” he says. “But we make a Maine version that’s darker and sweeter, with local maple syrup, molasses, and ginger.” His inventive way with pork shows up again in

candied bacon, which gets nestled into a simple-yet-memorable salad of soft lettuce, sliced pears, goat cheese, and herbed ranch dressing—all swirled into a mosaic that, if you look at it in just the right way, mimics the abstract patterned rugs by Maine artist Angela Adams in the soothing bar area.

Which brings us back to the space’s non-culinary treasures. “Those decor elements, as well the food and beverage,” explains John, “are all meant to be talking points.” And a proud showcase, for that matter. “Waterville is becoming a cultural center for all of Maine. And the restaurant is at the heart of tying it all together.” ■