

Will Travel For Food

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New England Trip #3

I need to get a cardboard sign made up that announces “Will travel for food.” In fact, distance doesn’t seem to matter if the food waiting at the destination is unique or simply very good. On Memorial Day (May 25), all it took were rumors of brilliant food at The Hermitage to inspire a trip north through three states in New England for a tour of a restored country inn and lunch.

I believe the destination was Michael Hyman’s idea. He had been on-site last fall as the inn was about to reopen and had helped in the process of hiring the innkeeper Steven O’Hern.

This connection led to a full tour of much of the inn before we sat down to eat, including access to the expansive wine cellars in the bowels of the old inn. The relationship between Michael and Steven also triggered a visit from Executive Chef Josh Tomson to the table and a couple of off-menu surprises complements of the kitchen. I heard no complaints at the table.

Surprise # 1 turned out to be tiny skewers of tomato and mozzarella with puddles of a thick balsamic reduction on the plate and herbal hints along the lines of a caprese salad.



On the heels of the skewers came the kitchen’s rendition of calamari in a light, almost tempura, batter.

Following the calamari were a 1/2 pound Boyden Farms Angus Beef burger with Vermont Goat Cheese, a Smoked Chicken Quesadilla with Chipotle Cream, and a blistered crust artisan pizza topped with local goat cheese and fresh herbs. Of the three, I would have skipped the Quesadilla if not for Tomson’s recommendation, but it was brilliant and the burger and pizza were not far behind. The lunch menu at the Hermitage isn’t complicated with French culinary terms or obscure ingredients. Instead what is listed is simple, almost pub food, but the quality is striking.

This made the second surprise from the kitchen that much more unexpected.

Fresh oysters on the half-shell with an icy fruit granita on top that set off the light brine of salt water perfectly. Thanks, Josh.

Of course, there was more to the day than food. There were the stunning green hills of Vermont, a series of colonial towns in eastern Massachusetts, and the surprisingly rural countryside of central Connecticut. But the most memorable part of Memorial Day this year was easily Steven, Josh, and the food at a restored country inn. I will travel for food and suspect I will travel back to the Hermitage for more from Tomson’s kitchen soon.

