

Boston Sunday Globe

NOVEMBER 5, 2017

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The first thing we do after deciding on a ski destination is figure out where we want to eat. And then we make reservations. What's better than gathering for a great meal after a day on the slopes? We've sleuthed out some of the best haute cuisine in high altitudes. Here's where to ski and savor.

Attitash Mountain Resort, Wildcat Mountain Ski Area, Cranmore Mountain Resort, Black Mountain or King Pine Ski Area, New Hampshire

There's no shortage of dining spots in New Hampshire's Mount Washington Valley, with more than 75 restaurants, pubs, and pizza parlors. **Cresh's Italian Country Kitchen** in North Conway (603-730-5650, www.creshs.com) is one of the standouts, especially if you're craving soul-nourishing, authentic Italian cuisine. It's cozy and comfortable; photos of Italy streaming on TVs set the ambiance. Pasta and sauces are all homemade, including a killer carbonara. You'll find new riffs on classics at the upscale **Inn at Thorn Hill** in Jackson (603-383-4242, www.innatthornhill.com), with white-linen-topped tables, mountain views, and a roaring log fireplace. Start with lamb lollipops or a hot bowl of creamy clam chowder, followed by dishes like the jaeger schnitzel with homemade spätzle, or lobster ravioli.

Loon Mountain or Cannon Mountain, New Hampshire

There's no better way to finish a day on the slopes than a meal with family and friends at the colorful and funky **Gypsy Café** in Lincoln (603-745-4395, www.gypsycaferestaurant.com). The vibe is energetic, the globe-trotting food is packed with flavor and fresh, fine-dining ingredients: Peruvian orange peanut stir fry, Tunisian lamb chops with saffron mint herb sauce, Ethiopian peppercorn sirloin, Thai red curry duck, Moroccan shrimp on apricot cranberry couscous. For a more intimate, romantic experience, head to the **Franconia Inn** in Franconia (603-823-5542, www.franconiainn.com), with fresh flowers, candlelight, and gourmet takes on the classics, like Maine lobster bisque,



PHOTOS /THE INN AT WEATHERSFIELD

Haute cuisine after chilling on the slopes

crispy duck in black bean sauce, and sweet ginger salmon.

Sugarbush Resort, Vermont

The award-winning, fancy-schmancy **275 Main** restaurant at the Pitcher Inn in Warren (802-496-6350, www.pitcherinn.com) is worth a splurge. The seasonally driven menu might include dishes like pan roasted halibut with squash and eggplant, house-made cavatelli, and seared scallops with parsnips, and a knowledgeable and approachable sommelier is happy to recommend something from the nearly 500-bottle wine cellar. The warm and wonderful **Chez Henri** in Sugarbush Village (802-583-2600, www.chezhenrisugarbush.com) is the perfect snug spot on a chilly Vermont evening. Snuggle into one of the worn booths for Vermont cheese fondue, Parisian onion soup, steak frites, bouillabaisse, and rack of lamb. The **Hen of the Wood** in Waterbury

(802-244-7300, www.henofthewood.com) is worth the drive (about 30 minutes from Sugarbush, about 20 minutes from Stowe). Housed in a former grist mill, with stone walls and wooden beams, the buzzing, award-winning restaurant is considered one of the finest in the state. Anchored by a strong farm-to-table ethos, the menu changes often, but expect dishes like crunchy winter squash fritters with sweet honey, grilled octopus with sunchokes, beef tartare in oyster sauce, and ham-wrapped rabbit loin with crispy apples and kohlrabi.

Stowe Mountain Resort, Vermont

Among Stowe's many fine restaurants, the **Bistro** at Ten Acres (802-253-6838, www.tenacreslodge.com/bistro.php) gets our must-go nod. Its casual, rustic farmhouse setting, friendly vibe, and creative cuisine get deservedly rave re-



The Inn at Weathersfield is about 30 minutes from Okemo. Enjoy dishes like fettuccini with mushrooms and locally raised veal.

views. After a day on the slopes, the signature braised pork shank in a deeply flavored sauce, comforting cheddar cheese chicken with house-smoked ham and caramelized onions, and the slow-roasted duck on a bed of well-seasoned braised cabbage are guaranteed to satisfy your cold-weather cravings. It's snowing and the temps are dropping; it's the perfect time to dine at cozy, buzzing **Plate** (802-253-2691, www.platestowe.com). Sit at the tiny chef's bar to watch the action in the kitchen, and enjoy a comforting Vermont blue cheese soufflé, curry roasted vegetables, a bowl of squash and apple bisque, a perfectly ex-

ecuted hamburger, or a charred harissa seasoned grilled hangar steak. In nearby Waterbury Center, **Michael's on the Hill** (802-244-7476, www.michaelsonthehill.com), housed in an 1820 farmhouse and barn, serves stellar dishes like the root veggie frites with cured duck egg yolk, truffle potato leek soup, pan-seared branzino with hazelnuts and blood orange, and bison loin with baked bean cassoulet.

Okemo Mountain Resort, Vermont

If we're skiing Okemo, we never, ever miss having dinner at **The Downtown Grocery** in Rutland (802-228-7566, www.thedowntowngrocery.com), an infectiously energetic spot with creative, covetable cuisine. There's real talent happening in the kitchen here, with a strong connection to local purveyors. The daily chalkboard specials sell out fast. But, no worries: the frequently changing main menu will have winners, like the house-made Maine crab gnudi with local lovage pesto, blackened Massachusetts bluefish with fava beans and fennel, and an amazing grilled ribeye with melted Plymouth Artisan red, white, and blue cheese that we thought about long after it was devoured. In the area and worth the 30-minute drive is the **Inn at Weathersfield** (802-263-9217, www.weathersfieldinn.com). The dining room is both rustic and chic, housed in a 1792 farmhouse with original wood paneling and beamed ceiling, historic beehive fireplace, and linen-topped tables. Settle in to enjoy ultra-fresh local dishes (75 percent of what they serve comes from within 20 miles), like Vermont artisan cheeses, house-made fettuccini, and locally raised veal, and wild salmon with newly dug potatoes.

Killington Ski Resort, Vermont

Expect creative takes on fresh, locally sourced food at **Roots** (802-747-7414, www.rootsrutland.com) in Rutland. The setting is spare but stylish, with exposed brick walls, wood floors, and high ceilings; the food straightforward with flourishes. Crowd-pleasers include sandwiches like the roasted turkey with apples and cranberry sage aioli, maple and molasses braised

pork, and house-made pasta dishes. We also like the casual **Table 24** in Rutland (802-775-2424, www.table24.net), a hit with local families and visitors alike, who come for its gourmet comfort dishes like the lobster mac 'n cheese, chicken shepherd's pie, and wood-fired rotisserie chicken and prime rib.

Sugarloaf, Maine

Leave the slopes early so you can take in the gorgeous mountain scenery on your 15-minute drive to the **Coplin Dinner House** (207-246-0016, www.coplindinnerhouse.com), set in a restored farmhouse in rural Stratton. This welcoming, feel-good restaurant is a delightful surprise, serving finely executed, sophisticated dishes like harissa seasoned beef wontons, porcini mushroom sacchetti, roast duckling with rhubarb and raspberry sauce, and grass-fed, aged hanger steak with chimichurri sauce and mashed root vegetables. The name says it all: tiny, warm **Hug's** in Carra-basset Valley (207-237-2392, www.hugsitalian.com) is like getting an embrace from your favorite Grandma. It's ultra-cozy, serving carb-loading Northern Italian comfort dishes. Enjoy the homemade pesto bread while deciding on dinner: perhaps, the signature fettuccini with pink alfredo sauce or the sundried tomato pesto alfredo and mushrooms tossed with shells and penne.

Sunday River, Maine

The sophisticated **22 Broad Street** in Bethel (207-824-3496, www.22broadstreet.com), housed in a historic 1848 Greek Revival house, brings a splash of panache to town, along with its thoughtful Italian cooking. A large menu offers favorites like beef braciola, crispy eggplant lasagna, and an impressive Tuscan porterhouse steak for two. A smart wine list and creative martini bar adds to its appeal. Have a group with varied tastes, looking for fine dining? Head to the **Sudbury Inn** in Bethel (207-824-2174, www.thesudburyinn.com), a longtime favorite. Enjoy updated American classics like roast duck with Maine maple syrup and wild blueberry sauce, stuffed haddock, salmon Florentine, and surf and turf.

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