

The Osthoff

GENERATIONS OF CHICAGOANS AND MILWAUKEANS have made Elkhart Lake a favourite weekend getaway thanks to clean beaches, lush Ice-Age-carved hiking trails and a tree-lined Victorian-era village setting. For racing enthusiasts from around the world, however, it is best known for Road America,



Elkhart Lake

WISCONSIN

a complex containing a globally televised speedway, driving school, go-carts and activities. Within the village of Elkhart Lake, historic markers trace the route of the Elkhart Lake Road Races, staged between 1950 and 1952, which drew the greatest racers of the era, making way for the construction and 1955 opening of Road America.



by **EARL BERNARD**

IT IS NO SURPRISE auto race fans will be driven to stop in at many of the town's restaurants, bedecked with fascinating auto-related memorabilia from the 60s and 70s. Beer lovers, meanwhile, will take note of old advertising tins and posters revealing how Wisconsin's brews shaped American beer bar and pub culture during the 20th century. Even with a bit of kitsch here and there, the tie that binds hotels and eateries in town is the food, which is uniformly excellent and built upon traditions brought to the Midwest by German



Wisconsin

WHERE ON EARTH

PHOTOS THIS
SPREAD FROM TOP

Lakeside
gardens at
The Osthoff
Resort; French
onion soup
with Wisconsin
cheese; Easter
Egg radishes.



immigrants who introduced many of America's favourite comfort foods, from cheese, rye bread and bratwurst to beer and ale.

Three large and still independently owned resorts, Victorian Village, Seibkens Resort and The Osthoff Resort, are collectively the de-facto living room and patio for car connoisseurs coming to town for major races as well as expansive gatherings of Porsche and Ferrari owners. The Osthoff Resort, however, started expanding the resort experience about a decade ago in a solid effort to make the hearts of gourmands, luxury travellers and beauty enthusiasts race. This includes the Aspira Spa, several on-property restaurants, and cooking school L'Ecole de la Maison, spotlighting the bounty of the resort's gardens and indigenous ingredients that reflect the Wisconsin-bred general manager Lola Roeh and executive chef Benjamin Sommerfeldt's undying love for their native "Badger State."»



JUN SEITA

Cook
it

SERVES 4-6

Roast of Tenderloin with Natural Jus

Beef Tenderloin 1, cleaned and tied	Carrot 1, cut into large dice	Fresh Thyme chopped, 6 Tbs
Sea Salt to taste	Celery 1 rib, cut into large dice	Red Wine 2 cups
Freshly Ground Black Pepper to taste	Tomato Paste 6 Tbs	Beef Stock 6 cups
Extra Virgin Olive Oil 3 Tbs	Garlic minced, 8 Tbs	Salt and Pepper to taste
Large Onion 1, cut into large dice	Fresh Rosemary chopped, 4 Tbs	Worcestershire Sauce to taste

- 1 PREHEAT** the oven to 120°C.
- 2 SEASON** the tenderloin with salt and pepper.
- 3 HEAT** a roasting rack pan on the stove until the pan is very hot. Add the tenderloin with the olive oil and sear all sides.
- 4 REMOVE** tenderloin from the pan and add all the vegetables. Roast the vegetables until golden brown, add the tomato paste, and cook until the tomato paste turns brown. Add the garlic, rosemary and thyme to the pan and cook for 2 minutes.
- 5 RETURN** the tenderloin to the pan and cook in the oven until the internal temperature in the thickest part of the beef reaches 52°C.
- 6 REMOVE** the tenderloin from the pan and place in a warm spot in the kitchen, tented with foil.
- 7 PLACE** the roasting pan back on the stove and over medium heat deglaze the pan with red wine. Cook on the stove until the pan is almost dry then add the beef stock and reduce by half.
- 8 STRAIN** the jus through a Chinoise. Season to taste with salt, pepper and Worcestershire sauce.
- 9 PLATE** by slicing the tenderloin and drizzling the sauce over the top.

*...What makes us unique
is our 'garden to guest'
approach to fresh, local food...*



«Otto's Restaurant (which doubles as a cozy sports bar) serves up an unquestionably Midwestern breakfast, with egg dishes that incorporate copious dollops of melted Wisconsin cheddar and parmesan and Johnsonville sausages. Healthy fare prepared with a more delicate hand can be found in the Aspira Spa's café, while several of its treatments are prepared with chamomile, lavender and other herbs from

nearby garden plots and planters. Lola's on the Lake, the resort's fine dining hub named for Lola Roeh, features a view of Elkhart Lake from its patio and simple dishes made more special with items grown in the resort's own garden. It's the ultimate expression of Midwestern pragmatism, with elegant results.

"We started this garden project around 2009 with the intention to raise crops to offset the economic downturn," says Roeh as she surveys a small herb-focused plot near the entrance for traces of four-legged intruders such as deer and rabbits.

"It grew into a two-acre labour of love now overseen in collaboration between the grounds department and the culinary team. We now have two acres of gardens, which feed directly to our restaurants, cooking school and even to Aspira Spa for some of the treatments. At our Lake Deck restaurant, which serves mojitos, we grow rows of spearmint. Just outside of Lola's, rosemary, basil and other fragrant things are readily available for the chefs. Outside of the cooking school, we have a garden with chives and other things used in the cooking school. There's



no question that what makes us unique is our 'garden to guest' approach to fresh, local food."

The main vegetable garden, a minute's drive from the entrance, could be accurately described as a "victory garden," as various plants have ultimately thrived despite the challenges of woodland critters, insects and Wisconsin's famously mercurial climate. It is here where the gardening team, led by grounds manager Mark Roehrig, cultivate several varieties of squash, tomatoes, potatoes, onions and shallots. Each year, the team plants new stock, such as eggplant, on a trial basis until crops can hold their own against the elements. Roehrig takes copious notes throughout the growing season, using them to make calls as to when to harvest or protect various crops that will hopefully make it to the restaurants, banquet kitchen (which prepares feasts for up to 400 guests) and the cooking school.

"Peppers and tomatoes started the garden, but now our massive garden is seeded every year with hundreds of thousands of plants," says Roehrig. "It's an ongoing challenge to harvest it at the right time, weigh it, clean it off, and bring it to our chefs and culinary staff. In mid-



winter, we round up the chefs and staff to discuss what went well, what did not work so well, and new things we want to try planting to supplement the dishes the chefs are developing. As some plants thrive, others don't, and things happen with the climate, we will try to adjust the way we approach planting, cultivating and harvesting during the next season."

2016 was a banner year for the garden, with a 3,000-pound crop of squash that lasted into January. Although an unexpected frost singed some of the plants, and larger-than-normal rainfall nearly drowned a few others, the team was proud of a test-crop of eggplant, as well as some lines of plucky asparagus, cucumbers and watermelon. And to show off the payoff of persistence, chef Patrick O'Toole had a table set up with an heirloom tomato and basil tart and sparkling rosemary lemonade ready to hand out. Roeh, meanwhile, announced that the most recently harvested crops would find their way into the first-ever Lola's Garden Dinner.

Chef Sommerfeldt's cooking classes (including the 'Wisconsin Roots' course I participated in) balance his refined culinary education in France with the various Wisconsin products he grew up with. His educational delivery perfectly hybridizes the easy-going Elkhart Lake disposition with solid reasoning for why prep techniques need to be executed in a specific way.


As my team prepped a potato-crust walleye, our butter sauce "broke" twice and the process needed to be repeated. However, my

experience prepping Hanukkah latkes served me well in what would be the potato crust. Even with a tornado of dishes coming together at different paces, Sommerfeldt got participants through the lesson with a broad smile and several folksy puns. And our trial-and-error results with the meal we enjoyed after the crash course — like the garden — richly paid off.

The class was also a history lesson. In addition to sampling internationally acclaimed cheddars from local dairies, we



also learned about the time-honoured fishing culture of the state as well as the legacy of Wisconsin supper clubs through the preparation of a roasted beef tenderloin and hearty sides, French onion soup (localized with Wisconsin cheese) and a Black Forest cake made with cherries sourced from nearby Door County.

While Midwestern cities like Chicago have caught up to America's coastal cities in modern and ethnic dining, one visit to the Osthoff makes it easy to understand what drives even the most worldly city dwellers to escape to a simpler way of life. 

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Chef Benjamin Sommerfeldt; The Osthoff Resort; Lola's Farm Dinner; Cocktails kick off Lola's Farm Dinner; Aspira Spa.



SERVES 6

Bacon and Aged Cheddar Twice Baked Potatoes

Large Idaho Potatoes 6,
washed well

Ghee or Clarified Butter
as needed to coat potatoes

Sea Salt as
needed to coat potatoes

Thick Cut Bacon
8 oz, chopped

Chives chopped,
4 Tbs

European Butter
2 Tbs, softened

Garlic Powder
1 tsp

Aged Cheddar
shredded, 2 ½
cups, divided

Sea Salt to taste

Ground White Pepper to taste

Ground Nutmeg
to taste

Egg Yolks 3

- 1 TOSS** the potatoes with ghee and sea salt. Roast in the oven at 175°C until soft when poked with a short knife.
- 2 CHILL** the potatoes.
- 3 CUT** each potato in half, scoop out the flesh, leaving some outer potato to serve as a "shell."
- 4 PASS** the scooped out potato flesh through a ricer. Add the bacon, chives, butter, garlic powder and 2 cups pf grated cheddar. Season to taste with salt, pepper and nutmeg, then mix in the egg yolks.
- 5 FILL** the potato halves with the mixture and top with the remaining grated cheese. Place the potatoes onto a sheet tray and bake at 175°C for 15–18 minutes or until heated through.

USA

When not travelling, **EARL BERNARD** lives, eats and drinks in Chicago.



The Osthoff Resort
www.osthoff.com