

FISHERMEN'S VOICE

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News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine

FREE

Deep Woods Gourmet

Jackman, Maine. One of Maine's gateway frontier towns. Hasn't changed a heartbeat, at least not noticeable, since 'Dad the Doctor' and I used to ride through in the 50's headed for trout fishing out of La Frontiere on the headwaters of the St. John River. AJ and I travel through now to see the grandbabies in Ontario or to ski Massif and Mt. St. Anne in Quebec. Usually stop for a final gas-up at the Chevron station (gas is now \$4 a gallon in Canada) and walk across the street for a lumberjack breakfast. Since the beautiful Sky Lodge changed direction Jackman has not been a destination. This will change.

On our way back from Ontario recently we called good friends and now full time Greenviller's Dick and Mary Fortune to hook up for dinner. Dick suggested we meet in Jackman at Moose Point Tavern, a place he described as deep woods gourmet. We quickly agreed and after a stop at the Loblaw's "Super" Supermarket in St. George we pulled into customs at the border. Officer took one look at the 'filled to the ceiling' suburban and we could see on this blistering hot day he had little juice to go through an unload and sent us on our way. We slipped through the 12 miles of moose runs as fast as I dared and pulled into the parking lot around five.

With hugs all around, Mary led us through the tavern to the large southern facing deck. Stunning with exclamation points. Rimmed by hills, dotted with large shoreside boulders with mixed forest coming to waters edge and undeveloped, one could easily imagine sharing the same view with turn of the century settlers and wood cutters. A Maine setting at it's finest.

We quickly arranged chairs to take it all in, ordered libation from the full service bar and sat back to look over the ambitious menu. No hamburger and French fry place this. Commutable serious dining could be had.

Just out of Cornell University in 1986 with a degree in hotel management, Carolann Ouellette moved to Jackman to get involved with the whitewater rafting scene as a guide and later as manager of the Whitewater Rafting Center. After knocking about Northern Maine, in and out of the hospitality business she was able to lease in 1996 the present refurbished restaurant which had been the main building for Henderson's Sporting Camps, an operation in Jackman from 1917 to 1971. With help from her mother Barbara, who now hostesses and handles various aspects of the business, she set out against steep odds to build Moose Point Tavern into a first class dining and watering place. Bingo!!

Mary suggested a great all Maine cheeseplate for an appetizer as we debated the main course. Dick settled in on one of the specials, halibut encrusted in a flour and herb dredge with mango avocado salsa. Mary

couldn't get past the lobster ravioli, an early on favorite of hers. I stayed light with a poached salmon over green salad as did AJ with roast duck over greens. It was excellent without fault. The bread basket was filled with fresh crusty bread. Service was good, competent and friendly and the wine list was certainly adequate. Hard to imagine in this wilderness setting long miles from any population of note a restaurant this good. Our only lament, the demise of open butter in many good restaurants. The replacement by the hard to open plastic thimbleful borders on the inhumane.

For dessert we again let Mary take the lead as she ordered a deep fried cinnamon egg roll stuffed with cheese in a raspberry sauce. Perfect ending to a perfect meal as we enjoyed another memorable sunset in this great state.

Moose Point Tavern is open pretty much June through Columbus Day, seven days a week in summer and New Years to March on various schedules. Their website is www.moosepointtavern.com and phone is 207-668-4012. Their menu contains such popular items as lobster ravioli, roast lamb curry, maple glazed pork medallions with roast duck and various seafoods and on weekends as a special, huge slabs of prime rib reminiscent of Fanuel Hall market in Boston.

This recipe for venison is Carolann's signature version.

Venison with Cranberry Chipolte Sauce

Serves 4

1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries	salt
3/4 cup honey	ground pepper
1/8 cup water	1 tablespoon oil
2 tablespoons butter	1/4 cup red wine
3 tablespoons medium garlic cloves, minced	1/2 cup walnut pieces
1 each small canned chipotle Chile, seeded and minced	4 each 7 oz. venison steaks

In a medium saucepan, combine the cranberries with the honey and water. Simmer over moderate heat until the cranberries burst, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat. Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a small skillet. Add the garlic and cook over low heat until softened, about 3 minutes. Stir the garlic, butter and the chipolte into the cranberries and season with salt and pepper. In a large skillet, melt the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter in the oil. When the fat is hot but not smoking, add the venison and cook over moderately high heat until browned on the bottom, about 3 minutes. Turn and cook until just rare, about 2 minutes longer. Transfer to a sizzle platter and place in oven to finish, about 4 minutes. Add the wine to the skillet and boil for 30 seconds, scraping up the browned bits on the bottom of the skillet. Stir in the cranberry sauce, reheat and reduce. Spoon the sauce over the venison and sprinkle with nuts.

Original recipe from Food & Wine, April 2000

Lee S. Wilbur