

BATH COUNTY, VIRGINIA: PARADISE FOR FOODIES

Virginia's Bath County, four hours southwest of Washington, D.C., has no stoplights and no congestion, only sweeping mountain views. In a region half the size of Rhode Island, fewer than 20 people had COVID at any one time at the height of the pandemic.

What you find here is superb food. Folks in these green valleys

have been laying out their finest fare for guests since the famed Homestead opened in 1766.

With the renaissance of family farming, chefs at the area's smaller fine eateries are locally sourcing such delicacies as pasture-fed chickens, greens, and heirloom apple cider.

In Hot Springs, Les Cochons

d'Or — LCDO to locals — chef/owner Kyle Krieger may pop by your table to top the onion soup or seared duck with fragrant Umbrian truffles. His sommelier wife, Crystal, helps patrons ensure the harmony between entrees and beverages.

Delectable small plates include poached eggs and asparagus from a neighboring farm, as well as local cheeses. Krieger occasionally adds foraged morels and ramps — wild shallots — to the mix.

Breads are crafted from locally milled grains and the Krieger family's four-generation sourdough starter.

In Warm Springs, Bath County's iconic gristmill houses the award-winning Waterwheel Restaurant. patrons may drive for hours for specialties such as owner John Loeffler's roast chicken with foie gras cream sauce over homemade pappardelle and cornmeal-crusted trout.

The table flowers, herbs, and radishes are grown right across

the street.

Guests are invited to choose their evening libations from the well-stocked wine cellar tucked among the gears of the old mill foundation.

Or enjoy a classic cocktail in the coziness of the Commonwealth's smallest bar — on perhaps one of the best four seats in Virginia.

Housed in Bath County's first courthouse, the Inn at Warm Springs offers lodging and a tavern. Its eclectic cuisines include spaghetti carbonara, chicken schnitzel, bouillabaisse, and a traditional burger capped with caramelized onions. Cauliflower steak and goat cheese salad highlight the vegetarian selections.

The Troddenvale Cidery at Oakley Farms hosts summer Foodlore Fridays with cider tastings, farm market, and guest chefs cooking up fresh-from-the-farm dinners. Tours and tastings at the cidery are also available by appointment, as they are at Rock Roadhouse Winery in a historic stone schoolhouse down the road.

Bacova Beer Co.'s five-barrel brewhouse in Hot Springs turns out a variety of small-batch craft beers, including Furious George, a smooth ale crossing an English Bitter with an American IPA.

Hot Springs' long-standing Sam Snead Tavern reopens May 15, returning to its original tavern-style atmosphere with nightly happy hour specials and a signature local beef burger.

"We've just hired Chef James Montoya, who has worked with celebrity chefs Wolfgang Puck and Emeril Lagasse during his 32 years of culinary experience," said Snead's general manager, CC Colo.

Other foodie options include Country Café with its 12 kinds of pie and Milk House Market, the place to stock up on gourmet sandwiches, cheeses, and beverages for your picnic.

When you're ready for bed, Bath County has oodles of options. You can't go wrong with the rustic elegance of the Inn at Gristmill Square.

The 18 rooms and suites are clustered around a main square with access to an outdoor pool. Breakfast is delivered to your door.



Su Clauson-Wicker

After you've tasted the delicacies of Bath County, Virginia, stay the night at the historic Inn at Gristmill Square.



Su Clauson-Wicker

The award-winning Waterwheel Restaurant in Warm Springs, Virginia, offers mouth-watering courses such as this beet salad.

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