

Maine HOME + DESIGN

November/December 2007

The Resource Guide

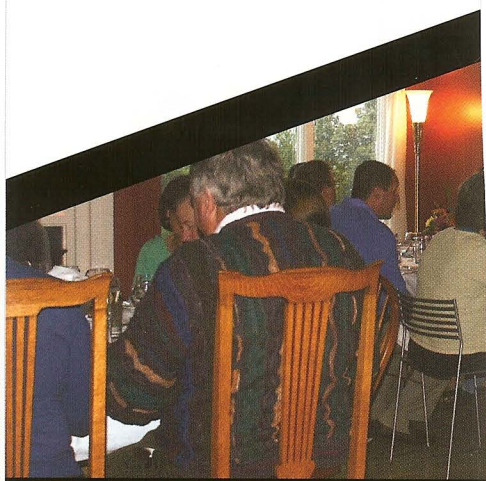
+ Portland Symphony Orchestra
Designers' ShowHouse

Nov/Dec 2007 \$5.95



When we invite guests to our homes for a meal, we strive to make the experience feel like that of a fine restaurant. For the past four autumns, the trio behind the Portland eateries Cinque Terre and Vignola—Dan Kary, Michelle Mazur-Kary, and Chef Lee Skawinski—create a dining experience that is somewhere between an evening out and evening in when the Karys open their renovated 1850s farmhouse in Greene for a one-night culinary expedition for the curious, adventuresome, and budding horticulturist in us all.

This year, the harvest dinner began in the early afternoon of a rainy Sunday in September. After meeting at Vignola for a few sips of coffee or wine, a chartered bus swept away the more than 60 guests who'd gathered from all over Maine. In less than an hour, the bus arrived at the beautifully landscaped and stonewalled vista of the 40-acre Grand View Farm.



Harvest Dinner at Grand View Farm

Lolling through lush crabapple blossoms and a brightly blooming flower garden, guests were met at the home's threshold with a choice of champagne, wine, or Belgium beer. An array of appetizers arrived, full of flavors that hinted at the meal Chef Skawinski would soon deliver in six elegant movements. Once each guest had chosen a seat at the many tables scattered throughout the house, dinner began. The experience of dining with strangers is almost lost here in the New World. We rarely sit with strangers and converse, yet when given the opportunity on this rainy night, Old World instincts took over. And then the food began to arrive.



The sensation of sharing fine food, wine, and conversation with strangers in someone else's home was so relaxing that it seems utterly remarkable how seldom we dine this way. Too often we find ourselves holed up and far away from our common man. Yet, experiences like Grand View's harvest dinner remind us that we need not be wistful of all Old World traditions—for some aren't as far away as we might imagine.

Part of America's infinite fascination with Italy is how Italians can make simple food taste complex and rich. Chef Skawinski's touch in the kitchen was inspired—from the 'zuppa di pesce' with tomato and shell fish broth, baby fennel, and basil aioli; to the grilled lamb from neighboring Stone Heart Farm; and on to the assorted raw milk cheeses and finale of a warm peach and blueberry crostata with cherry vermouth gelato.