

DESTINATION: *Culinary Inspiration*

Fall is a great time for a gastronomic getaway

*story by Anna Dubrovsky  
photography by Heather Mull*

IMAGE COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF TOURISM



**AT THE OMNI BEDFORD SPRINGS RESORT**, there's no stigma to drinking before noon. It's 11 a.m. on a Saturday, and I'm seated at a marble counter in the main kitchen. Self-described head dishwasher, Sam Lashley, Jr., slides flutes of bubbly toward me and three other guests enrolled in this morning's cooking class. Then he issues a warning: "Everything I show you is extremely hard."

Before I have time to get nervous, our instructor displays his comedic chops. "The first thing I'll show you is how to roast a pepper," Lashley says before plopping a whole red pepper on a gas burner.

I take a sip. This is going to be fun.

Loads of spa lovers, golfers, brides-to-be and travel writers have discovered Bedford Springs in recent years. But it's hardly new. The Bedford, Pennsylvania resort traces its history to 1796, when a doctor named John Anderson purchased the land on which it stands – and more than half a dozen mineral springs that came with it. Thanks to the springs and their supposedly curative properties, he enjoyed a growing stream of guests. At a time when western Pennsylvania was still the frontier and Pittsburgh had yet to be chartered as a city, so many people were driven to "take the waters" that Dr. Anderson built a hotel. Expanded several times in the 1800s and early 1900s, it welcomed some of the biggest names in U.S. politics and industry, including Andrew Jackson, Benjamin Franklin, Thaddeus Stevens and James Buchanan. But eventually it fell on hard times, and in 1986, after flooding severely damaged the sprawling building, it closed its doors.

For nearly 20 years, the dilapidated hotel stood empty, a reminder of better days. But after two years of painstaking restoration and construction, the National Historic Landmark reopened in 2007. It's bigger and grander than ever, and I've visited twice in less than two years to soak in the mineral pools in the new spa complex, sample the

restaurants, sit around the fire pit after sundown, and write about it. Both times, I made sure to sign up for an hour-long cooking class, held twice daily on Fridays and Saturdays.

Today, Lashley is assisted by executive sous chef, Scott Mole. As Mole scores and seasons a duck breast, Lashley plucks the blackened pepper from the fire and places it in a bowl that he covers with plastic wrap. Then he cuts a lamb rack into individual chops, salts and peppers them, and adds them to a bowl with finely chopped shallot, garlic and rosemary. Minutes later we're munching on roasted lamb "lollipops."

By 11:40, Lashley has also treated us to pan-roasted duck breast, roasted red pepper spaetzle topped with lump crab, and more Champagne. As pastry chef Jayne Shaulis takes Mole's place at his side, Lashley holds up an "applause" sign. We put down our forks long enough to oblige. Shaulis whips up a chocolate mousse, pipes it into cocktail glasses and serves it to us with dulce de leche truffles. I've given up taking notes, but I've learned one lesson well: Next time, come hungry.

My stay at Bedford Springs is sadly at an end, but I'm not ready to return to Pittsburgh just yet. I dawdle in downtown Bedford, which has transformed from drab to darling in recent years, in no small part because the nearby resort attracts the affluent.

At LiFeSTYLE (Living Italian Food e Style), an airy store filled with artisan products from Italy, I meet owner Stefano Ferrari. The Italian native moved to his wife's hometown of Bedford in 2006, and they opened LiFeSTYLE a year later. On Saturday evenings, the store transforms into a bring-your-own-bottle trattoria with one long table, and Ferrari cooks a five-course meal. With a fixed price of \$45 and a guest max of 22, the reservation-only dinner can sell out a month or two in advance. Once a month, the store hosts an Italian cooking class with Virginia-based chef, Matt Finarelli.

Next, my foodie instincts guide me to Bird's Nest Farm Café, where



NEMACOLIN WOODLANDS RESORT



GATEWAY LODGE

GATEWAY LODGE: COURTESY OF JUMPING ROCKS PHOTOGRAPHY



OMINI BEDFORD SPRINGS RESORT

I savor a chilled strawberry soup while chatting with owners Michael Stipanovic and Huston Godwin. Seven years ago, the couple bought an 1842 farmhouse about eight miles from town. They restored the neglected home, planted an herb garden and opened an antique shop in the heart of Bedford. Last fall, they added the café, where everything including the bread is made from scratch. Stipanovic's pumpkin blondies are reason enough to visit Bedford in the fall.

Fall is a great time for road trips. Temperatures are generally mild, trees are ablaze in color, and apples and pumpkins are ready for picking. Bedford isn't the only nearby destination ripe with culinary diversions. Here are five more tasty options.

### *Nemacolin Woodlands Resort* FARMINGTON, PA

Just an hour and a half south of Pittsburgh, Nemacolin hardly needs introduction. It's an amenity-rich playground for kids and adults alike, and its culinary credentials are unmatched in the region. Lautrec, its signature restaurant, is one of only 20 restaurants in North America with both a Forbes Five-Star and AAA Five-Diamond rating. Chef de cuisine Kristin Butterworth sometimes welcomes guests to her kitchen while she prepares a seasonal dish or two. Nemacolin is also renowned for its 21,000-bottle wine cellar, one of the most extensive in the country. The resort sommelier hosts a tasting at 4 p.m. most Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Some of the country's top winemakers show up at Nemacolin's occasional "Saturdays with the Winemaker" luncheons.

Food and wine lovers have even more reason to visit this fall. On the second weekend in September, Nemacolin will host its first-ever Wine & Food Stomp, featuring five- and seven-course wine dinners, a brunch showcasing more than 30 wines, and a grape stomp at nearby Christian W. Klay Winery.

### *Gateway Lodge* COOKSBURG, PA

Few chefs take the farm-to-table concept as far as Gateway's John Georgvich. Last winter, he partnered with a small organic farm just four miles from the inn to devise a foodie's dream growing plan. Over the last few months, Gateway guests have enjoyed the fruits of that collaboration, including micro-greens, heirloom tomatoes, mini purple green beans, rainbow chard and mini eggplants. Georgvich expects three varieties of cherry tomatoes to ripen just in time for Gateway's Bed and Brew Weekend, which features a five-course dinner complemented by Belgian-style ales from New York's Brewery Ommegang. Georgvich has also found local sources for beef (the family-run Clarion Farms), pork and even elk. "About 75 to 80 percent of what I'm using is local," he says. "Unfortunately, I can't get scallops in the Clarion River."

There's another reason why Gateway Lodge is a great destination for anyone interested in sustainable living: It's a short drive from Quiet Creek Herb Farm & School of Country Living. The nonprofit organization offers workshops on everything from cooking with basil to growing shiitake mushrooms to foraging for wild edibles.

THE BLENNERHASSETT HOTEL



STONEWALL RESORT



STONEWALL RESORT. COURTESY OF WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF TOURISM. THE BLENNERHASSETT HOTEL: COURTESY OF JIM OSBORN.

**Stonewall Resort**  
ROANOKE, WV

Opened in 2002, Stonewall has played a leading role in the development of "New Appalachian" cuisine, reinterpreting traditional Appalachian fare and injecting global dishes with regional ingredients. Executive Chef Paco Aceves and team don't have to go far for some ingredients; tomatoes, cucumbers, basil, thyme, and other vegetables and herbs are grown onsite. For a five-course journey into New Appalachian territory, call ahead and arrange for a seat at the Chef's Table.

Just three miles off Interstate 79, Stonewall gives the impression of being far from civilization. The Adirondack-style lodge sits on the banks of West Virginia's second largest lake, surrounded by state parkland and 18,000 acres of public fishing and hunting grounds. That makes it especially attractive to fishermen and hunters, and never more so than during the annual Wild Foods Culinary Weekend. In addition to culinary demonstrations focused on wild game, the event features a buffet stocked with wild boar, venison, rattlesnake, rabbit and more.

**The Blennerhassett Hotel**  
PARKERSBURG, WV

The century-old Blennerhassett is one of only two Historic Hotels of America members in West Virginia (The Greenbrier is the other), and it's the only property on our list that's located in a town center. If you want to roll out of bed and onto a championship golf course, it's not for you. But foodies can't ask for better. The Culinary School at The Blennerhassett offers courses on everything from stock making to party planning. Its fall calendar includes a weekend devoted to cheeses and another to pasta and sauces. The hotel holds wine dinners on the third Thursday of the month from January through October. Its Wine 101 class, offered every Tuesday evening, is a steal at \$25 per person.

The third weekend in September is a particularly good time to visit. That's when local restaurants, wine distributors, breweries and specialty food vendors strut their stuff in downtown Parkersburg. This year's Taste of Parkersburg kicks off with a wine seminar at The Blennerhassett hosted by award-winning wine educator, Robert Cavanaugh.

**The Greenbrier**  
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, WV

Like Bedford Springs, The Greenbrier traces its history to the late 1700s and owes its initial popularity to spring waters believed to cure a wide variety of ailments. Its current popularity stems from so much more, including four 18-hole championship golf courses, a 103,000-square-foot casino that opened last summer and a mile-long list of family-friendly activities (falconry, anyone?). The Greenbrier is also the proud owner of a 44-acre farm, which makes dining at the resort a true farm-to-table experience. In season, the farm provides more than 75 percent of the resort's produce.

Twice-daily culinary demonstrations and occasional wine weekends also make The Greenbrier a top pick for foodies. In September the resort will host a wine weekend featuring Janet Trefethen of Trefethen Family Vineyards, one of Napa's classic wine estates.

If liquor is more to your liking, be sure to visit Smooth Ambler Spirits, a new distillery just 15 minutes from The Greenbrier. You can sample its small-batch vodka, gin and white whiskey in a tasting room with a view of the production process. Tours are offered Thursday through Saturday and by appointment.

Farther from the resort but worth every minute behind the wheel is Tamarack, a showcase for West Virginia fine arts, handcrafts and cuisine. Enjoy breakfast, lunch or dinner in the Greenbrier-managed food court (don't miss the fried green tomatoes) before stocking up on made-in-WV food products and wines.

**Stay:**

**Omni Bedford Springs Resort**  
2138 Business 220  
Bedford, PA 15522  
814.623.8100  
omnihotels.com  
*One-hour cooking class \$30; Chef's Table dinner with wine pairings (available by appointment) \$175*

**Stop by:**

**LIFeSTYLE**  
108 E. Pitt St.  
Bedford, PA 15522  
814.623.2703  
italianfoodandstyle.com  
*10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday-Monday*  
**Bird's Nest Farm Café**

113A S. Richard St.  
Bedford, PA 15522  
814.623.6378  
birdsnestfarm.com  
*Breakfast and lunch served 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. daily except Wednesday; dinner served 5-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday*

**Briar Valley Winery**

107 E. Pitt St.  
Bedford, PA 15522  
814.623.0900  
briarvalleywinery.com  
*Noon-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, noon-5 p.m. Saturday-Monday*

**Swell time:**

**Bedford's 47th annual Fall Foliage Festival**  
October 1-2 and 8-9  
bedfordfallfestival.com

**Stay:**

**Nemacolin Woodlands Resort**  
1001 Lafayette Dr.  
Farmington, PA 15437  
724.329.8555  
nemacolin.com  
*One-hour cooking class at Lautrec \$25; afternoon wine tasting \$25*

**Stop by:**

**Christian W. Klay Winery**  
412 Fayette Springs Road  
Chalk Hill, PA 15421  
724.439.3424  
cwklaywinery.com  
*Noon-6 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday-Saturday*

**Swell time:**

**19th Annual Wine & Food Festival at Seven Springs Mountain Resort**  
August 27  
7springs.com

**Nemacolin's Wine & Food Stomp**

September 9-11  
**Highlands Harvest Festival at Christian W. Klay Winery**  
September 17-18

**Stay:**

**Gateway Lodge**  
14870 Route 36  
Cooksburg, PA 16217  
814.744.8017  
gatewaylodge.com

**Stop by:**

**Clarion Farms Beef Barn and Farm Market**  
82 Port Farm Lane  
Clarion, PA 16214  
814.764.5811  
clarionfarms.com  
*10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday*

**Quiet Creek Herb Farm & School of Country Living**

93 Quiet Creek Lane  
Brookville, PA 15825  
814.849.9662  
quietcreekherbfarm.com  
**Deer Creek Winery**  
3333 Soap Fat Road  
Shippensburg, PA 16254  
814.354.7392  
deercreekwine.com  
*Noon-6 p.m. daily and until 8 p.m. Fridays*

**Paul's Pumpkin Patch**

175 Marks Lane  
Fairmont City, PA 16224  
814.365.5161  
paulspumpkinpatch.com  
Opens September 18  
*1-5 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 1-5 p.m. Sunday*

**Swell time:**

**Gateway's Bed and Brew Weekend**  
September 2-4  
**Gateway's Wine and Dine Weekend**  
October 21-23

**Stay:**

**Stonewall Resort**  
940 Resort Dr.  
Roanoke, WV 26447  
304.269.7400  
stonewallresort.com

**Swell time:**

**Jackson's Mill Jubilee on the grounds of WVU**  
**Jackson's Mill**  
September 2-4  
jacksonsmilljubilee.com  
**Stonewall's Wild Foods Culinary Weekend**  
October 21-22

**Stay:**

**The Blennerhassett Hotel**  
320 Market St.  
Parkersburg, WV 26101  
304.422.3131  
theblennerhassett.com

**Stop by:**

**Holl's Swiss Chocolatier**  
2001 Grand Central Ave.  
Vienna, WV 26105  
800.842.4512  
holls.com  
*10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Saturday*

**Swell time:**

**The Blennerhassett's**

**World of Cheese Culinary Weekend**

September 10-11  
**Taste of Parkersburg**  
September 16-17  
tasteofparkersburg.com

**The Blennerhassett's Pasta & Sauces Culinary Weekend**

October 22-23  
**The Blennerhassett's Artisan French Bread Weekend**  
November 5-6

**Stay:**

**The Greenbrier**  
300 W. Main St.  
White Sulphur Springs, WV 24986  
304.536.1110  
greenbrier.com

**Stop by:**

**Smooth Ambler Spirits**  
745 Industrial Park Road  
Maxwelton, WV 24957  
304.497.3123  
smoothambler.com  
*Tasting room open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday. Tours at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Thursday-Friday, noon and 2 p.m. Saturday*

**Tamarack Culinary Weekend**

One Tamarack Park  
Beckley, WV 25801  
304.256.6843  
tamarackwv.com  
*8 a.m.-8 p.m. daily*

**Swell time:**

**The Greenbrier's Trefethen Wine Weekend**  
September 9-11

**The Greenbrier's Talley Wine Weekend**

October 7-8  
**Taste of Our Towns in downtown Lewisburg**  
October 8  
carnegiehallwv.org

**The Greenbrier's Qupé Wine Weekend**

October 28