Guest Chef Recap: An Authentic, Rustic Worldly Food Experience at the Lodge

written by Lucas Calhoun | October 3, 2021

Enjoying the concept of rustic-wordly food took on a French motif this past week with Guest Chef Gary Marquardt in-residence as part of the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge's Guest Chef Program. This unique program brings in a guest chef to share their speciality with Lodge patrons as well as expand the skill set of our own KML team.



Chef Gary is an award winning, certified executive chef with over 40 years of experience. Even with his long tenure in the food business, he continues to focus on learning new aspects of the profession. This mirrors one of our Core Values – to persistently learn. This was evident as he and KML's resident chef, Widad Mueller, collaborated for weeks in advance of the event creating a delectable and innovative five-course meal centered around the French style of charcuterie.

The concept of charcuterie dates back to the Roman empire, but since the 15th century, it has been closely connected to France and French cuisine. Practitioners spend hours preparing various meats, in particular pork, in an effort to present them in the most diverse ways. Most commonly, the meats used are pork, fish, poultry, and game meats (ex. venison).

The focus of Chef Gary's program revolved around a dinner on Wednesday, September 29th. Our guests reserved their seats for

either a 6pm or 7:30pm sitting and were treated not to a menu, but a culinary journey that included specific wine and Michigan craft-beer pairings. Each sitting began with introductions of the KML chef and servers before an introduction to the evening's courses by Chef Gary.



First up was a terrine, a wonderfully executed venison with cognac-infused pheasant sausage, cranberry, and wrapped in bacon.



Following this delicious appetizer, our servers delivered salade nicoise. This serving of mixed greens, tomato, boiled egg, haricot vert, pickled onion, smoked fish, and tarragon vinaigrette was paired with either the KM Ale or a Mondavi Pinot Grigio. These two starters were portioned well to set the stage for the three entree options to come.



Entree options included Ratatouille, Pan Seared Salmon-Beurre Blanc, and the marquee Choucroute Garnie. The Choucroute Garnie included special house made garlic sausage from start to finish by Chef Gary. The wine pairings options for these amazing entrees included Mondavi Pinot Noir or Sauvignon Blanc and beer pairings included selections from Keweenaw Brewing Company's Red Jacket Ale and Ore Dock's Queen City – both craft-beers from Upper Peninsula breweries.



To close out this culinary journey, the final course was an apple tart topped with a calvados caramel sauce and a scoop of ice cream.



The two dining sessions allowed guests authentic opportunities to enjoy each course with their drink pairings and share in genuine conversations at their leisure in the Lodge’s historic Dining Room. Chefs Gary and Widad made their way around to each table getting to know them as well as inquiring about their interest in charcuterie. These interpersonal and culinary connections link directly to our rustic worldly food concept

that we practice here at the Lodge.



As each sitting came to a close, many guests commented with excitement about the amazing taste of the food, the ability to try something new, and the time to be together. Many of our guests left saying they would be ready to sign up for the next one.



Behind the scenes

Part of the purpose of the Guest Chef Program @ the Lodge revolves around learning new things. As such, The kitchen team at the Lodge was able to work with Chef Gary during his residency in preparing the menu that he and Chef Widad worked on. This keeps the kitchen team energized and generates new ideas for our rustic worldly food.


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[Lucas Calhoun]

Lucas is honored to serve as the Operations Lead at the Lodge, ensuring the departments are working together, organizational values are consistently shared and practiced, and working to guide the organization’s long-term viability. Combining over 20 years of K-12, higher education, and, food services experiences in Indiana, Maine, Maryland, and Alaska, Lucas is committed to

living out and sharing the Lodge’s team values that lead to the main team values of ***fun, joyous, adventuresome.*** Additionally, he is always up for a conversation about the wonderful history and evolution of the Lodge!