



Wine & Fine Dining in NASHVILLE

By Doc Lawrence

This great city embodies the culture of the Deep South while embracing tomorrow's Dixie. Country Music draws visitors from the four corners, but Nashville has blossomed impressively well beyond all stereotypes. With outstanding restaurants, luxury hotels, riveting nightlife and a pedestrian friendly downtown, fun is at

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your fingertips. Nashville today is major league America where classical music is juxtaposed with country and rock music, with attractions like fine art galleries, heralded

museums, music festivals and the NFL. The city is home to Vanderbilt University, a monumental cultural advantage.

The Hermitage Hotel, celebrating 100 years now, remains the cornerstone of social activity in Nashville. Walk through the lobby and you can almost hear a young Dinah Shore singing “Near You,” which she did on the NBC shows broadcast nationally before Hermitage diners and dancers. The Hermitage, which has the luxury of storybook fine hotels, is uncompromisingly Southern with good coffee, handcrafted cocktails and smiles galore. The lobby is strikingly beautiful, a masterpiece of design and elevated taste.

The hotel guest book reads like a Who's Who in American history: Six presidents including Woodrow Wilson, FDR, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon along with countless celebrities like Bette Davis and Greta Garbo, plus gangster Al Capone. An autographed photo of Gene Autry hangs proudly on a wall, and for eight years the hotel was home to pool legend Minnesota Fats.



The Capitol Grille in the luxurious Hermitage Hotel. Pictured below is the Veranda at the Hermitage Hotel.





COURTESY OF
THE HERMITAGE HOTEL

GOURMET HEADQUARTERS

The Hermitage is uncompromisingly Southern where dinner guests are pampered. The hotel's heralded gourmet restaurant, Capitol Grille, stands among the top tier in the country.

Executive Chef Tyler Brown, who has garnered prestigious recognition from Gourmet and Esquire magazines with appearances on The Food Network, heads this AAA Four-Diamond and Mobile Four-Star epicurean gem. His knowledge of wines and the critical importance of wine selection in creating an elevated dining experience manifested early during a recent evening.



The Oak Room The Hermitage Hotel.

Our wine dinner began with fresh local greens, then an array of items from the first course menu highlighted by Carolina BBQ shrimp with dirty rice plus a signature dish, Oysters Hermitage served with a near-perfect bottle of chilled 2006 Puligny-Montrachet. We also included for pairing three other white wines, a 2009 Grüner Veltliner, one of the most overlooked great white wines, a 2007 white Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape and the always welcome and very food friendly Sancerre, a 2008 vintage, from the Loire Valley of France.



Hermitage vegetable garden ready for planting at Glen Leven.

The entrees shared among our foursome featured the beef short ribs, a Nashville staple, and the chef's selection of local farm favorite vegetables including fried green tomatoes. The vegetables have a fascinating story. The Hermitage and Chef Tyler Brown produce by hand their vegetable crops at historic Glen Leven, a working farm in Nashville. The farm, owned by the Land Trust for Tennessee and partnered with the Hermitage, serves as both a supplier for the restaurant and an outdoor laboratory for local school children. Brown describes it as "our exercise in sustainability." It is Tennessee's version of Eden.

The selected red wines included a spectacular Pinot Noir by Oregon's Erath, bringing back recent memories of a day of dining and pairing wines with Southern cuisine with Erath winemaker Gary Horner, the original winery in Oregon's Dundee Hills. A wide range

of Willamette Valley Pinot Noirs, plus reds from Burgundy and Bordeaux were available from the well-stocked cellar. We somehow found room for a glass of the subtle 2005 Duckhorn Three Palms Merlot.

The next day, I joined Chef Brown and the Hermitage marketing director Janet Kurtz at Glen Leven. During our stroll around the heirloom tomatoes, we discussed Brunswick Stew, another classic Deep South original, and at their urging, I scurried back to the hotel for lunch where this creation, loaded with Glen Leven vegetables was being served. Brown recommended Albarino, a white wine from Spain, and the combination provided what can only be described as really powerful MoJo. A lunch for the ages.

Each of the wines with the dishes created that special satisfaction. Wine with food should be a seductive and memorable experience. Like a Reba McEntire love song.



Home at Glen Leven.