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Cambridge, Boston, and beyond



12F Reflections on a River
Paddling the Merrimack in Lowell and Lawrence



12B Extracurriculars
Events on and off campus through July and August



12D New England
Contemporary takes at the Boston Athenaeum



12L A Day in Lincoln
A stylish, rural retreat from urban hubbub



12O The Eating Is Easy
Restaurants nestled in the Massachusetts countryside

HARVARD MAGAZINE/ NELL PORTER BROWN



Extracurriculars

Events on and off campus during July and August

SEASONAL

The Farmers' Market at Harvard

www.dining.harvard.edu/food-literacy-project/farmers-market-harvard

Established in 2005, the market offers fish,

meats, produce, breads and pastries, herbs, pasta, chocolates, and cheeses—along with guest chefs and cooking demonstrations. Science Center Plaza.

(Tuesdays, through November 21)

From left: Frank Stella's *Star of Persia II* (1967), at the Addison Gallery of American Art; from *"(It's) All About the Atmosphere Invitational Exhibition,"* Harvard Ceramics Program; a Japanese *No* theater costume (1800-1850), at RISD

Ceramics Program

www.ofa.fas.harvard.edu

The *"(It's) All About the Atmosphere Invitational Exhibition,"* curated by instructor Crystal Ribich, features a range of objects and celebrates a long tradition of ceramicists gathering to fire their works together. (June 17-August 19)

Swingin' on the Charles

www.swinginonthecharles.blogspot.com

Celebrate the tenth anniversary of this lively evening event. Lessons for newbies start at 7 P.M.; dancers of any age and abil-

FROM LEFT: © 2017 FRANK STELLA / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK/COURTESY OF THE ADDISON GALLERY OF AMERICAN ART; COURTESY OF THE HARVARD CERAMICS PROGRAM/HARVARD OFFICE OF THE ARTS; COURTESY OF RISD

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MUSIC

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www.boxoffice.harvard.edu

The ensemble performs Mozart's *Requiem*. Sanders Theatre. (July 28)

FILM

Harvard Film Archive

www.hcl.harvard.edu/hfa

In response to uncertain political times, **Summer Cinema of Resistance** aims to spark discussion with guest speakers and screenings that include Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit*, Jean Renoir's *Life Is Ours*, and Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*. (Through August 6)

Saturday Matinee offers a wonderful set of family-friendly films, like Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle*, the environmental tragicomedy *WALL-E*, and *The Little Fugitive*—the classic 1953 American tale of a seven-year-old Brooklyn boy who reacts to a prank played by his brother by fleeing to Coney Island. (Through August 19)

NATURE AND SCIENCE

Tower Hill Botanic Garden

www.towerhillbg.org

Live music and tattoo demonstrations, food trucks, artisans, drawing activities, and garden tours abound at the inaugural **Botanical Tattoo Weekend**. (July 8-9)

Arnold Arboretum

www.arboretum.harvard.edu

Weekend walking tours with, or without, themes, like **From Seed to Tree** (August 5), along with family-focused events, such as **Let's Get Buggy! Exploration of Insect Pollinators**. (July 8).

EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

Cooper Gallery of African and African American Art

www.coopergalleryhc.org

Anchored by photographer Dawoud Bey's series "Harlem, USA" (1975-1979) and "Harlem, Redux" (2015-2016), **Harlem: Found Ways** also includes mixed media and installation art that explore one of New York City's most dynamic and historically influential neighborhoods. (Through July 15)

Harvard Museum of Natural History

www.hmn.harvard.edu

World in a Drop: Photographic Explorations of Microbial Life features granular and instructive images by photographer, writer, and biologist Scott Chimileski, a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Medical School. (Opens August 26)

Harvard Art Museums

www.harvardartmuseums.org

The Philosophy Chamber: Art and Science in the Teaching Cabinet, 1766-1820. Artifacts, artworks, and specimens that have played a crucial role in research and teaching at Harvard, and beyond. (See "The Lost Museum," May-June 2016, page 42.)

Addison Gallery of American Art

www.andover.edu

Frank Stella Prints: From the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation. The retrospective offers more than a hundred works by the meticulous abstract artist. (Through July 30)

RISD Museum

www.risdmuseum.org

Designing Traditions Biennial V: Student Explorations in the Asian Textile Collection reflects both new pieces by emerging artists and traditional woven, knitted, printed, and other handmade objects. (Opens August 11)

New Britain Museum of American Art

www.nbmaa.org

Cubism and abstract expressionism collide with "sun-drenched, laid back, fetishistic Southern California" car, surfer, and drug cultures in the alluring exhibit **California Dreaming: Ed Moses, Billy Al Bengston, & Ed Ruscha**. (June 23-October 15)

Peabody Essex Museum

www.pem.org

Nearly 200 works, from paintings and models to furniture and textiles, explore **Ocean Liners: Glamour, Speed, Style**. Co-curated with London's Victoria and Albert Museum. (Through October 9)

Events listings are also accessible at www.harvardmagazine.com.

STAFF PICK: Capturing New England

From skyscrapers to stormy seas, "New England on Paper," at the Boston Athenaeum, offers 56 contemporary works. They reflect "responses to the region's built, natural, and cultural environment," says Catharina Slautterback, curator of the library's 100,000 prints and photographs. Using the Japanese *hanga* technique, New Hampshire wood-block artist Matt Brown '81 created *Moon Over Mt. Desert Island* (2010, at right). Three impressions of the image hang as a triptych because Slautterback loves how, in "relating to one another, they show the passage of time." All of the works were bought with help from a print fund for regional artists that honors Francis Hovey

Boston Athenaeum
www.bostonathenaeum.org
Through September 3

Howe '52, Ed.M. '73. (The art collector and Athenaeum member was also an early-childhood educator instrumental in

forming Harvard's first daycare centers.) Slautterback clearly seeks a diversity of styles. Eric Goldberg's poignant etching *Deep in the Valley* (2006), pairs expansive Connecticut River valley farmlands with an intimate view of a woman reading a letter. Realist painter Kate Sullivan used pastel and watercolor in *End of the Line, Cleveland Circle* (2012, at left). "It all results in a loud cheerfulness," the artist wrote in the wall label, "and a distinctive sense of place." ~N.P.B.



COURTESY OF THE BOSTON ATHENAEUM (2)



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Reflections on a River

Paddling the Merrimack in Lowell and Lawrence

by NELL PORTER BROWN



From left: Lone paddlers take in the sunset; the UMass Lowell Kayak Center (above) rents boats and runs classes and trips; kayakers explore Stony Brook and a historic canal; a bird's-eye view of an urban stretch of the Merrimack Valley

COURTESY UMass LOWELL KAYAK CENTER

HARVARD MAGAZINE/NPB

IN MAY, 15 UMass Lowell seniors, graduation day in sight, push off from the city's Bellegarde Boathouse for an afternoon of kayaking on the Merrimack River. Here the waterway, first harnessed to power textile mills in the 1800s, is about a thousand feet wide and smooth, thanks to the Pawtucket Dam. Paddling upstream, toward New Hampshire, the group soon turns off to duck, single-file, under the granite arches of the historic Stony Brook Railroad Bridge, in North Chelmsford.

They enter a calm section at the confluence of river and brook, surrounded by reedy banks and sun-dappled trees. A great

blue heron perches on telephone wires. Bird songs fill the air. Everyone stops to listen. "This is a great time to be here," says trip leader Kevin Soleil, assistant director of outdoor and bicycle programs at the university's recreation department. "The water is really high because of all the rain, and the birds are migrating through. It's also a great time to find a piece of trash and pick it up—like those cans and plastic bottles floating over there."

There are wilder sections of the Merrimack. At 125 miles, it snakes through 30 cities and towns: from rural Franklin, New Hampshire, down into the former industrial

hubs of Manchester and Nashua, then swings east into Massachusetts through Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill to Newburyport and the Atlantic Ocean. (To the north, the Contoocook River Canoe Company offers scenic river outings from the town of Boscawen, New Hampshire.)

Two urban stretches in Massachusetts hold a different sort of fascination: in Lowell, it's the six miles from the boathouse to Tyngsborough; in Lawrence, it's a paddle that begins near the Great Stone Dam. There the Merrimack is "beautiful river meets urban development." A real mixed bag," says Soleil, who grew up in Nashua, another former mill city. His Irish and French-Canadian ancestors were among the thousands of immigrants who flocked to the Merrimack



JAMIE BOUDREAU AIRGOZ AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY



COURTESY UMASS LOWELL KAYAK CENTER

Valley for work, first in the water-powered factories, then in those fueled by steam. “My grandmother grew up in Lowell and worked as a teen in the mills of Manchester,” he says. “And yet you go up hiking in the White Mountains in the Pemigewasset Wilderness, and you drink from Pemigewasset River headwaters—and that’s this water,” he says, gesturing out over the Merrimack. “It’s an urban waterway, but it’s connected to these places we think of as pure wilderness. And then you’ve got the history. This was the birthplace or cradle of the American industrial revolution.”

In Lowell and Lawrence that legacy still dominates the downtown landscapes. For paddlers on the river, architectural artifacts—smokestacks, railroad crossings, and dams—can loom large. At the same time, roving the river’s creeks and crannies reveals a “vibrant ecosystem,” Soleil reports. Hawks and eagles, beavers, turtles, woodchucks, deer, and foxes live here, too, despite the array of pollutants—industrial and household waste, raw sewage, cars, tires, TVs, and furniture—that have continuously endangered the river for more than two centuries.

from the UMass Lowell Kayak Center at the Bellegarde Boathouse, which rents kayaks, canoes, and stand-up paddleboards through September 5. Soleil and his staff also give boating lessons and run guided paddling tours for families, along with outings at sunset or by moonlight. A Saturday 11 A.M. shuttle carries paddlers and their gear from the Lowell boathouse to a launch in Tyngsborough: the trip back downstream takes between two and four hours. “People are often surprised when they get out on the water that the river’s as beautiful as it is,” says Soleil. “They’re expecting all the bad things an urban waterway can have, but it can be very peaceful, serene.”

On their spring outing, the UMass Lowell students paddle farther up Stony Brook, then squeal and holler as they pass through a nearly pitch-black tunnel that runs under congested Middlesex Road and below a red-brick building. Built in 1897, it was once the storehouse for a mill complex that produced thousands of pounds of worsted yarn per week (for which the brook produced power via a canal). Turning around and traveling back to the pond-like section, everyone looks up and watches a Pan Am Railways

Nevertheless, many people increasingly seem to view the river as an asset, as something to be enjoyed—and protected. The few urban parks are well used. More public access points and trails are planned, and houses and condominiums along the river are coveted, many marketed as “riverside.” A rising number of visitors (last year more than 2,000) are taking trips on boats



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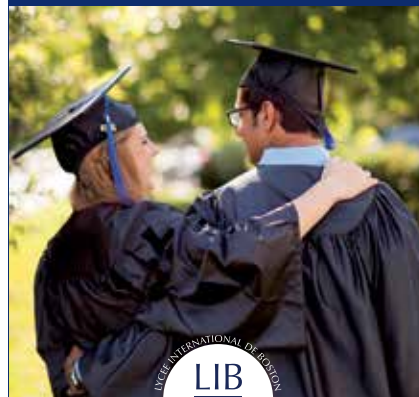


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The Ayer Mill clock tower, restored in 1991, still presides over Lawrence. Each summer, thousands of Merrimack Valley children participate in the Greater Lawrence Community Boating program.

freight train rumble by on the old tracks. At such close range, the rush of locomotive power is exhilarating. It also sounds as if the world is ending.

"Do you swim in the Merrimack?" one young man asks Soleil. The answer is yes—and no. "Much of the time it's okay," Soleil answers. "But in the summer, *E.coli* can form." Tangible trash is still routinely dumped in the water, although the nonprofit Clean River Project has hauled out more than 100,000 tons of garbage, including 73 cars and more than 8,000 tires, in the last

13 years. But there's more insidious pollution as well, which is likely the main source of the bacteria that threaten public health. Parts of the sewer systems in the older, most populated cities along the river are "combined," meaning rainwater runoff, sewage, and industrial waste are funneled through a single pipe, according to Robert "Rusty" Russell, J.D. '82, the new executive director of the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC).

Established in the wake of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amend-

ments of 1972 (later dubbed the Clean Water Act), MRWC's mission is to "protect, improve, and conserve" a watershed—the fourth-largest in New England—encompassing 214 communities with 2.5 million residents. "When it rains a lot or you have a big snowmelt, the [combined sewer] system gets overloaded; the treatment plants



WHY I JOINED THE HARVARD CLUB OF BOSTON

There are many different reasons to join the Harvard Club of Boston. Kay Foley, 28, is a Harvard alum and former co-captain of the Harvard varsity women's swimming and diving team. Here's why she joined:

"My time spent at Harvard was the best 4 years of my life so far. When I graduated, I wanted to maintain a connection to the tremendous people I had met and a connection to the College. I joined the Harvard Club of Boston to do just that. The Harvard Club has become my go-to spot in Boston. I go to the club for social events, to meet with people, and now to work out as well. It's a great feeling to have a place in the heart of the city to connect with existing friends and to make new ones along the way." - **Kay Foley '10**

For more information visit harvardclub.com





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Dennis Houlihan's narrated river tours benefit the Clean River Project.

that the Merrimack is the second-largest surface-based source of drinking water in New England after the Quabbin Reservoir. Both are subject to the same laws that theoretically safeguard the water quality, "but

COURTESY OF THE CLEAN RIVER PROJECT

can't handle [the volume]," he says. To avoid flooding the treatment plant or nearby pipes, safety valves exist that divert overflow—essentially raw sewage and whatever else gets washed into street drains—directly into the river.

More than 600,000 valley residents drink Merrimack River water. That number is rising with housing and commercial development, especially in southern New Hampshire, Russell notes. Many people don't realize, he adds,

with different expectations," says Russell. "Quabbin must remain pristine; not so the Merrimack. And therein lies the problem": every developed surface—paved roads and driveways, building foundations, even lawns with packed soil—prevents natural filtration of precipitation. The Environmental Protection Agency cites polluted storm-water runoff as the primary threat facing the Merrimack over the long term.

As it pushes for increased land protection

and consistent, coordinated water testing, the MRWC also reaches out to valley residents and visitors, offering more than 15 paddling adventures this year throughout the watershed. A "Trash Patrol" gathers in Nashua on September 2, and there's an easy-to-moderate river trip in and around Lawrence on September 16 (see the website for other trips, details, and registration.) Also of interest: the National Park Service runs a 90-minute "Working the Water" boat tour of the Pawtucket Canal that formed part of the mill complex in Lowell.

Other small groups are also working to improve the river and protect dozens of endangered fish, birds, and other wildlife species across the watershed. New Hampshire contractor Rocky Morrison founded the all-volunteer Clean River Project because he was fed up with seeing the Merrimack trashed. "People just pull over by the side of the river and throw out their TVs and tires because they don't want to pay the recycling fee," he says. "In Haverhill, we have a place we call Tire Cove because we found more than 4,000 there alone."

So far, Morrison's effort has relied on

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grants and donations, and people like Dennis Houlihan. He lives on the river in Methuen and runs pontoon-boat tours: each passenger's \$20 goes directly to the project. He takes passengers toward Lawrence, and explains the valley's industrial history this way: Francis Cabot Lowell, A.B. 1793, "learned about the mills from England, came back to America, and built and opened one in Waltham." Other entrepreneurial businessmen followed suit, building a mill complex in Lowell, and then more in New Hampshire. Lawrence developed later, in the 1840s, as a more comprehensive planned metropolis, with canals running along both sides of the river to maximize the water power.

The Clean River Project covers only the 15 Massachusetts river communities—about 44 river miles—and has requested municipal funding to hire staff and expand operations. Out on a spring boat tour, Jed Koehler, executive director of the Greater Lawrence Community Boating Program, points out Clean River's yellow booms bobbing near the shore after his boat clears the foundations and steel girders of the Interstate 93 bridge. "Trash floats down the river like tumbleweeds in the old frontier towns," he says, applauding the group's efforts.

A cleaner river is important to his program's success. It's the largest public boating program in the Merrimack River Valley, and serves about 2,200 kids a week in the summer. They learn about water safety and how to row, sail, and paddle, and do other day-camp activities; the majority of them are on full scholarships, and 42 percent live in single-female households. "The parent is often working one to three jobs," says Koehler. "The boathouse is a safe place for their kids to be."

But anyone can join the program for the season and take out boats, or purchase a day pass. Launching from the Lawrence dock, paddlers can travel about an eighth of a mile downstream, toward the Great Stone Dam, on Bodwell's Falls, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. When completed in 1848, it was the largest in the world, and is so solidly constructed that it's never required significant repairs, and is still used for hydroelectric power.

Beyond the dam, and visible from a boat, stands one of the city's still-ubiquitous red-brick smokestacks. It's part of the Pacific Mills power plant, according to Jim Beauchesne, the Lawrence Heritage State Park visitor-services supervisor—one of

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the factories that manufactured fabric for military uniforms for the Civil War through World War II. And there's the Ayer Clock Tower. Built in 1910, it's still one of the world's largest; its four glass faces are only slightly smaller than those on Big Ben. The heritage park's museum, located in a restored 1840s mill-workers' boarding house, lays out the city's history and is well worth a visit.

Yet industry came at a stiff price. Koehler, whose father ran the boathouse during the

1980s and 1990s, says his older board members tell stories of how the river used to "run in colors"—most often vivid green—from vats of dyes dumped by textile firms. "In the 1950s and 60s, the parents would check behind their kids' ears to see if they'd been swimming in the river," he explains, "because the kids would wash themselves off in front of a mirror, and never remember to get out the ink or dye behind their ears."

Today, "the river is cleaner than it used to

be," he says. Steering away from the dam, up the river, he turns into a creek and touts the wildlife: American bald eagles, deer, nesting Canadian geese, dam-building beavers. Turtles lay eggs in the boathouse's yard. Once the hatchlings have emerged and "are trying to make their way to the water, across the backyard where a hundred kids are about to run around," he, the staff, and the children gently move them to the shore of the creek. For city kids, Koehler notes, the riv-

ALL IN A DAY: A Rural Retreat

Just 19 miles from hot and congested downtown Boston lies the bucolic town of Lincoln. Even before postwar suburbia arose, Lincoln's leaders and residents eschewed sprawl. As a result, more than 38 percent of the community is protected land. Eighty public trails, some of which begin at the MBTA commuter-rail station, skirt Walden Pond and wind through farmland, woods, and meadows.

The star cultural destination is the 30-acre **deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum**, dotted with 49 works. Jonathan Gitelson's existential billboard asks: *Are You Here?* (2016). Visitors walk right into Dan Graham's *Crazy Spheroid—Two Entrances* (2009), a half-circle of two-way mirrored glass, and they play *The Musical Fence* (1980), a vertical aluminum xylophone by Paul Matisse '54. Easy walking paths lead to a café, picnic spots, and shady lawns; the museum's stone terrace overlooks Flints Pond. On exhibit inside, through September 17, is "Expanding Abstraction: New England Women Painters, 1950 to Now," celebrating contributions by Natalie Alper, Reese Inman '92, Katherine Porter, and Barbara Takenaga, among others.

Not far away is a modernist enclave anchored by the **Gropius House**, the former family home of Bauhaus architect and influential Harvard Graduate School of Design professor Walter Gropius. It's now owned by Historic New England, and open for tours, as is the **Codman Estate** nearer to the town center. Beautiful gardens



A summer exhibit at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum (above) highlights abstract art, including the atmospheric *Untitled* (1979), by Jeanne Leger. Clockwise, far left: the formal Codman Estate; Gropius House; and Codman Community Farms



surround a Georgian mansion built by judge and politician Chambers Russell, A.B. 1731, A.M. '66 (who left it to a Codman relative). Russell also was instrumental in the founding of Lincoln in 1754; it's named for his ancestral home in Lincolnshire, England—not for the American president.

A short trail walk leads to the town-owned **Codman Community Farms**. Visit the barnyard, take classes, volunteer to work, or buy eggs, meats, produce, and flowers. Nearby, on a larger scale, Mass Audubon's **Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary** runs an animal farm and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, along with year-round events and workshops. For food and drinks, head to Lincoln's only commercial cluster, next to the train station. Dip into **Donelan's Market** or the **Trail's End Café** for picnic fare, or sit down for a meal at **Lincoln Kitchen**.

—N.P.B.

The Lincoln Land Conservation Trust and Rural Land Foundation
<http://lincolnconservation.org/trails>





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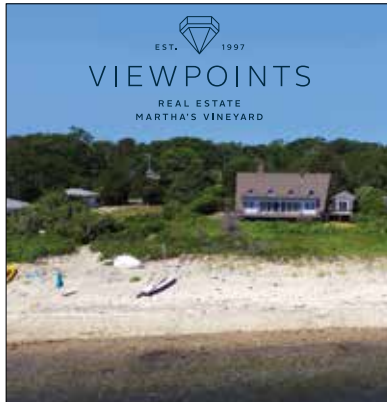


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HARVARD SQUARED

er is often their primary contact with nature—and plenty of adults, he adds, don't realize what a respite it offers. "Every evening, the orange sun sets—right there!" he says, pointing upstream from the boathouse. "Right down the center of the river, every night. It's like Aruba!"

About three-and-a-half miles upriver from the Lawrence boathouse are places to pull in and explore. People walk and picnic on a finger of land called Pine Island, owned by the MRWC. Koehler says the island was once home to a hermit who had a "little shack and a rowboat he used to get back and forth from the shore." Long before, archaeological evidence shows, the island hosted a Penacook Indian settlement.

The Penacooks once moved freely along the Merrimack River, hunting and fishing. "During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the Penacook Indians were feared by the residents of Andover," according to the Andover Village Improvement Society (AVIS) website. "In 1675, the Indians attacked from the north, crossing the river, killing some settlers, and taking others hostage."

Adjacent to Pine Island is the 131-acre Deer Jump Reservation, owned by AVIS. Its banks run about four feet high, but paddlers can travel up side streams, tie boats to a tree, and scramble ashore. A riverside trail offers easy hiking, and the land is home to hemlock groves and a meadow, an AVIS warden reports, along with fisher cats, otters, wild turkeys, foxes, coyotes, and skunks.

Back in Lowell, Soleil agrees the river offers "a real connection to nature that people are not expecting." At the end of their trip, the celebrating seniors pull up to the docks and pull out their kayaks. It's 5:30 P.M. Everyone is a bit wet and wind-blown. The mood is convivial as they thank Soleil for a fun time before bounding away to other evening activities.

"It is what it is," he says, almost shrugging when pressed to say more about the Merrimack's "mixed bag." "My position is that the more people we can get out to experience the river, the more people would care about it, and the better off it would be." ▽



COURTESY OF THE CLEAN RIVER PROJECT

The joy of finding frogs

If you would like to list a property in our September-October issue, contact Abby Shepard: 617.496.4032

HARVARD
MAGAZINE

The Eating Is Easy

A summer sampling of Massachusetts countryside restaurants



COURTESY OF CANTINA 229 (2)

COURTESY OF CARTER AND STEVENS FARM (2)



SUMMER IN New England is a time to relax, eat well, and have some fun. Restaurants, from the eccentric to the refined, offer the chance to do just that, while showcasing local produce and products in verdant settings.

Cantina 229, on five pastoral acres in New Marlboro, is a beautiful post-and-beam barn-style space with glass walls. Eat inside or out. Picnic tables sit on the grass, where “kids run around and visit the pigs, and free-range chickens come right up,” says Emily Irwin, who opened the restaurant last year with her chef-husband Josh Irwin. Lawn toys—Frisbees, horseshoes, and “corn hole” gear (a.k.a. bean-bag toss)—help foster schmoozing within a gustatory crowd that often includes the Irwins’ parents and friends. The menu has an Asian twist, thanks to Josh Irwin’s year of traveling in India, Thailand, and China. Korean *bibimbap* and *pa jun*, a pancake filled with leeks, scallion, and chives, are mainstays, along with a hefty cheeseburger topped with grilled onions and turmeric pickles. Tuesdays are Taco Night. (Entrées \$15-\$28; www.cantina229.com)

To the west, past Great Barrington, is the lovely John Andrews Farmhouse Restaurant, set on a homestead site dating to the

late 1700s. There are three small dining rooms, a tight-knit bar, and a simple terrace with views of woodlands, perennial gardens, and old stone walls. Chef/owner Dan Smith follows a locavore ethic, cooking whatever’s freshest, with no showboating about it. One night that was Wolfe Spring Farm’s asparagus (grown in nearby Sheffield). Crisp and tasting of minerals, it was tossed with organic greens, tart chèvre, and toasted pistachio nuts. The roast chicken breast entrée, faintly sweet with a perfect garlic confit, came with fennel and a handful of polenta fries. The restaurant sits just four miles from Mount Washington State Forest: go for a hike there, or a trip to Bash Bish Falls, before tucking in for drinks and dinner. (Entrées \$28-\$38; bar menu, \$13-\$25; www.johnandrewsrestaurant.com)



COURTESY OF DREAM AWAY LODGE

Dusk dining at Cantina 229, and a dish of its Cambodian pork belly and noodles; Carter and Stevens Farm (top) runs a summer BBQ shack that serves fresh meat with all the works; a glimpse of the Dream Away Lodge’s charming country eclecticism

Back toward Boston, in the town of Becket, is the un-pigeonhole-able Dream Away Lodge. For 90 years, this magical spot on the edge of the October Mountain State Forest

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HARVARD SQUARED

has attracted fine artists, musicians, showpeople, and anyone else devoted to the creative spirit. In 1997, the restaurant was bought and re-birthed by trained actor and "theater-maker" Daniel Osman. There are live bands, art shows, and performances—of cabaret, poetry, and plays. The oft-changing menu, devised by veteran Berkshires baker and chef Amy Loveless, is a tasty

mix of basic, affordable fare (burgers, mac and cheese, spinach salad) and more elevated entrées (tarragon chicken, seared scallops, rack of lamb). It tends to fill up, especially on weekends, so call for a table. "My thought is that when driving into the middle of the forest for dinner, you should always make reservations," Osman says, with a good laugh. And avoid using GPS to find this gem: real directions are on the website. (Entrées \$12-\$28; www.thedreamawaylodge.com)

Perhaps even more casual are the wood-fired BBQ stand and new Stone Cow Kitchen and its brewery, at the Carter and Stevens Farm in Barre. "It's nontraditional because the menu is always changing," says Molly DuBois, part of the fourth generation to run this spectacular 1,000-acre hilltop farm. "Last week we did tacos with our own micro greens, and at the brewery we grow our own ingredients for the beer as well." The restaurant, open until 6 p.m., serves a range of salads, soups, and sandwiches, but the real draw seems to be the BBQ shack. People travel for the farm's own grass-fed beef burgers and hot dogs, smoked ribs and chicken, and piles of hot, hand-cut French fries. Meals are served outside every Friday and Saturday evening in July and August. And sometimes there's live music. (BBQ menu, \$2.99-\$16; www.carterandstevensfarm.com)

Enter The Oregon Club, and step back into an older, more relaxed era. On a summer evening, diners can sit at an outdoor table on a country road in the Ashland Town Forest and look out at a peaceful green field across the street. Eating and drinking also happen indoors in cozy rooms (where a fireplace crackles in winter). Although only five minutes off Interstate 90 (near Framingham), the restaurant's ambiance recalls a 1920s roadhouse, which is exactly what it



The John Andrews Farmhouse Restaurant, not far from Great Barrington, balances comfort and elegance.

was in 1922 when Giuseppe Briasco founded the Briasco Inn, a rooming house and speakeasy that served spaghetti and steaks. Now rechristened The Oregon Club, the menu offers well-prepared homey classics (chopped salad, steak, lamb shanks) plus its signature spicy mushroom soup. (Entrées, \$18-\$28; www.theoregonclub.com)

Far more orchestrated is the dining experience at Just Right Farm, in Plympton, on Boston's South Shore. Up to 36 diners may arrive as early as 6 p.m., tour the gardens, and sip drinks before being ushered into a tasteful cottage where the walls are all screens, at 7 p.m. A five-course, prix-fixe menu is served; dining takes about three hours. The \$140 per person tab, paid in full when the reservation is made, does not include tax, tip, or booze. But patrons can bring their own; the menu goes online a few days ahead, with recommended wine pairings.

"We are an authentic, 300-year old Cape house on a 10-acre farm with ash trees you can't reach around," says Kimberly Russo. She owns the property with her husband, Mark, a veterinarian, and runs the restaurant with Elaine Murphy and Marilyn Browne. "We grow 80 percent of the produce we serve," she adds, "which is started from seeds in our greenhouse." She also constructed the 10-foot-long ash tables shared by all during what she thinks of as a large "dinner party." A chocolate tart often concludes the meal. The trio serves it, taking time to talk with guests before bidding them good night. Diners stroll back along a tree-lined way to their cars, and if it's clear, the stars are shining bright overhead. (www.justrightfarm.com) ~N.P.B.