

JUNE 7-20, 2017 • SUMMER DINING

the *Improper* Bostonian

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE
Foraging With a Pop-Up Chef

SHUCK, YEAH!
Dishing With the Eventide Oyster Co. Guys

GRILL THRILLS

RECIPES TO FIRE UP YOUR NEXT COOKOUT

GRILLED
STONE FRUIT
with MACADAMIA
CRUMBLE and
VANILLA BEAN ICE CREAM

By Chef David Bazirgan
of Bambara



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PEACHY-KEEN GUIDE
to ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURE
and BACKYARD BITES

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20



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now serving

BREAKFAST

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(MADE WITH LOCAL EGGS,
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FRESH-PRESSED JUICES
& SMOOTHIES



BREAKFAST SERVED 9AM-11AM
AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:
BOYLSTON ST / WASHINGTON ST
MANS AVE / SUMNER ST
BALTIMOUTH ST / SEAPORT
LONGWOOD MEDICAL AREA

LAP OF LUXURY: Ballyfin's sprawling grounds and elegant rooms are an easy 1.5-hour drive from Dublin Airport, and private cars are regularly arranged.



The Escape Artist / Carley D. Thornell

DOWNTON CROSSING

IRELAND'S BALLYFIN DEMESNE OFFERS THE HEIGHT IN PERIOD LUXURY.

FORGET THE DELOREAN—ALL YOU NEED to travel back in time is a horse and carriage. It's what you'll find at Ballyfin Demesne, a grand estate hotel set on 614 picturesque acres in Ireland's Slieve Bloom Mountains.

Learn about the lavish Georgian mansion's history as a home for the Coote family and its lively years as a 20th-century boarding school during an introductory grounds tour with Lionel Chadwick, whose delightful brogue brings to life centuries of traditions. As his horses' clip-clopping competes with the chirping of birds, you'll pass the Ice House, the Gardener's Cottage, horse pastures and a Rapunzel-worthy stone tower with views of a dozen counties, but there's plenty of time to explore these on your own later via complimentary bicycles or golf carts. For now, be enraptured as Chadwick—who previously had a career as a carpenter working on period projects throughout Ireland—details the extensive restoration that returned Ballyfin to its original glory and created the 20-room hotel. One of the

most amazing tales is of a former school worker who had the foresight to lovingly remove each piece of the hand-carved and hand-laid wooden floor in the Saloon, first created by the same artisans who outfitted Buckingham Palace. All were numbered and put into storage to someday be fitted back together like a jigsaw puzzle, and the result is breathtaking.

Looking up here is just as much of a trip as gazing down, thanks to magnificent ceiling and cornice relief carvings and stained glass that lets in the light from above. (If your neck is sore from admiring, a massage in the spa is well worth it.) Each afternoon, interior walking tours reveal the stories behind the Coote crest, family portraits of the landed gentry and marble floors imported from Italy. If the staff has spun these yarns hundreds of times before, it's hard to know it, and the Irish gift for gab is just as warm as the fireplaces in nearly every room that take the edge off the chilliest of evenings.

Though the environs are impressively posh, a big part of the charm is the sense of

Traveler's Checks

Activities like horseback riding, carriage rides and falconry should be reserved early due to demand.

A new gardener's cottage will open early next year, offering two bedrooms separate from the main house—great for families or couples who want more privacy. Speaking of, this is where Kim and Kanye honeymooned!

intimacy created by the friendly staff. Undoubtedly you'll meet most and they'll already know who you are—and your wine, juice or home-made bread preference (don't pass up the transcendent Pink Discovery apple juice, grown and pressed on-site). The locals who work here are just as much in awe of the property as the visitors who helped vote it *Condé Nast Traveler's* top hotel in the 2016 Readers' Choice Awards. "We want this to feel like your home," says general manager Damien Bastiat, "just as much as it did for the Cootes." Kick back on a well-upholstered couch and grab a book or magazine in the library with a fresh-baked cookie. Or take in the views in the Conservatory, a breathtaking glass and wrought-iron atrium filled with light and flowers grown on-site; it's like lunching in the world's most elegant birdcage. For a more relaxed atmosphere and a bit of the Irish craic, check out a new addition to the original home, the Cellar Bar, to enjoy fine-whiskey pours and Guinness on draught.

You'll need to be sober, however, for one of the property's popular outdoor activities: Skeet and clay pigeon shooting are a hit at Ballyfin, and whether you're a novice or an expert, the crack of the orange targets popping against the miles of green fields is deeply satisfying. Other outdoor options like horseback riding, fishing and archery are enough to work up an appetite for whatever chef Sam Moody has in store, although those who prefer knives to guns may be more enticed by the canapé crusader's culinary demos. Turning out artful morsels, he regales guests with facts about the foods produced in Ballyfin's fruit and vegetable gardens (also available for touring) and the few products that need to be outsourced.

It all comes together on Spode china in the State Dining Room, where Champagne tickles the palate, hazelnuts crunch in counterpoint to butter-and-lemon-poached scallops and Madeira jus adds depth to native Dexter beef. The best dessert, however, may be the sweet compliments that will flow from fellow diners if you choose to don period finery from the costume closet, filled with elegant frocks, accessories and debonair garb from the Lyric Opera Company in Chicago. Not to worry, though—corsets are optional for vacationers living the life of a *Downton Abbey* resident, so eat up. ♦

Ballyfin Demesne, County Laois, Ireland. ballyfin.com



nubar

come enjoy
summer on our patio

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