

The Barnard Inn



An extraordinary
restaurant and tavern

By Dian Parker
Photos by Lynn Bohannon

What better way to enter into the autumn season in Vermont than an outdoor dining experience under blazing orange and red maple trees, seated in broad-backed Adirondack chairs, a sweater draped around your shoulders, enjoying a hot bowl of sweet corn chowder seasoned with house-smoked bacon and heavy cream. These are just a few of the delights awaiting you at the Barnard Inn and Max's Tavern.

The upper terrace and courtyard at the Barnard Inn.







Celebrating the 20-year anniversary of owning the inn, Chef Will Dodson will grace your senses with food that is beyond delicious. Everything from slow-roasted Muscovy duck tortellini with blood orange glace de volaille all the way to his maple crème brûlée is a feast for the eye and the palate. It's been said when dining all five senses should be awakened. Will's Autumn Pumpkin Risotto with kabocha and butternut squash pulls you in with the rich aroma and then coats the palate with the complex taste. For the eyes, he presents the dish in a roasted mini pumpkin with Romano cheese, aged balsamic vinegar, and pumpkin seed oil—a sculptural art piece. The touch of the creamy arborio rice and fresh herbs on your tongue is thrilling. And after making a choice from the list of fine wines or craft beers, you bring your glasses together, and with that happy sound you begin your wonderful meal.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Will Dodson owned two high-end bistros in San Francisco for a number of years and was looking for a change of scenery. He saw an ad for the sale of the Barnard Inn on 10 acres and jumped at the opportunity. After selling his restaurants, he moved to Barnard and began his now 20-year journey to making the Barnard Inn one of the top restaurants in Vermont. "My dream was to bring high-end dining to small, intimate occasions, chef-tailored parties, and weddings, as well as casual fair in the tavern," Will says.

After moving to Vermont, Will met his wife Corinna, and they blended their families. Since COVID-19, the restaurant is manned by a small staff and by the Dodson family: Max, now 19, whom the tavern is named after; the twin girls; and the youngest, June, who makes the cakes. All four kids work in the kitchen and help with serv-

Above: The family includes (from left) Ava, June, Max, Chef Will Dodson, wife Corinna, and Eliza. Corinna's son Elijah Dooley is not shown but has also worked at the inn.

Opposite, clockwise from top left: The Barnard Inn sign on Route 12. Pan-roasted venison tenderloin with Turley zinfandel and black currant glace de viande. The welcoming arbor. Private event in the barn.





ing, and Corinna does all the marketing, social media, events planning—everything but cooking.

“It’s been tough,” Will says, “running a restaurant in these difficult times. But with the help of my family, as well as making use of our outdoor gardens and a tent, we’ve managed to offer take-out and window service to our customers.” Will has a loyal clientele that come back time and time again, craving his expert skills as a chef.

PREPARE TO BE WOWED

In the fall, Will is a devoted forager of wild mushrooms. In the general vicinity of the inn, he collects oyster mushrooms, chanterelles, and chicken of the woods. One of the delectable delicacies is Will’s Wild Mushroom Pappardelle with locally foraged black trumpet, hen of the woods, and chanterelle mushrooms, sweet Doton Farm corn, and white truffle essence tossed with house-made noodles, fumé blanc–shallot herb butter, and aged sheep’s milk cheese. Be prepared to be wowed.

In the spring, Will gathers wild ramps and fiddleheads. He also grows microgreens. Farm

to table is essential for Will’s focus on bringing quality food to his clientele. “I want people to be surprised by the intricacies of flavors. For this, I need excellent products. I use Doton Farm for eggs, their miniature pumpkins for stuffing, hard squashes, sweet corn, and maple syrup; Curiosity Farm for cranberries, peaches, popcorn, mesclun lettuces, and heirloom tomatoes; Heartwood Farm for kohlrabi, buttercup squash, hard squashes, kales, rainbow carrots, fingerling potatoes, herbs, and heirloom tomatoes; and Kiss the Cow Farm for ducklings and chickens. All these farms are in Barnard. I like to support our local farmers.” Will also uses Second Wind Farm in Woodstock for the American shorthorn beef.

DRINKS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND MORE

The Barnard Inn has a full bar for cocktails, a whole section of 802 Vermont beer and many craft beers, and an extensive wine list. Music nights are another wonderful addition to the restaurant and tavern and currently feature Jim Yeager every Thursday night (familiar classic

Above: Guests relax in the perennial gardens. Opposite, clockwise from top left: A happy customer. Adapting to COVID-19 outdoor grilling. Guests enjoy lawn games. Third Avenue Music. Duckling tortellini with wild mushrooms. Tables are set for a barn event.



rock), as well as other local musicians including Jack Snyder, Kathleen Dolan, Mark Van Gulden, Amanda Ukasick, and Justin Park, to name a few. Around the inn's extensive lawns and beautiful perennial gardens there are five picnic tables, four bistro tables, and 11 Adirondack chairs able to accommodate 50 people with safe distancing. The number of guests has had to be limited due to concerns about COVID-19, but the inn is currently booking events for 150 to 250 people for 2021 and beyond.

During the pandemic, they also have small private events for anywhere from two to forty guests. A featured offering is a Family Dinner for up to 10 guests. A delightful two and a half hours begins with a cocktail hour, then dinner and dessert, all around a firepit. Additionally, the inn offers custom boutique weddings and events focused on quality, personal attention to details, and tailored menus. Each boutique event can accommodate from 20 to 60 people.

Off-site catering is available for small

events. Custom parties with a private chef are a good way for guests to feel safe, with classic meals curated in their own home—a creative culinary evening with all five of your senses deliciously engaged.

The Barnard Inn is not technically an inn as they don't have guest rooms; the family lives upstairs. The historic 1796 brick chateau has an ambiance that is warm and welcoming. The front dining rooms are intimate, with understated Vermont craftsmanship, open to parties



Clockwise from above: New COVID-19 outdoor dining. Craft beers. Harvesting from the chef's garden to infuse cocktails.

of a maximum of 10 per room with two seatings a night. Chef Will creates seasonal tasting menus with wine pairings available at a measured and comfortably paced service. And always, the food is of the highest quality.

For the past 20 years, the Barnard Inn has survived fire, a recession, a hurricane, and an earthquake. "We will survive this pandemic too," Will says. "We are versatile and creative. We can change on a dime to make it work." The Dodson family not only makes it

work—they surpass all expectations. The casual dining bistro of Max's Tavern, the elegant restaurant, the lovely grounds, and most certainly the exquisite food is an experience you will never forget. 🍷

The Barnard Inn Restaurant & Max's Tavern

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