

Top-Chef Country

See chefs-in-training and wander presidential estates in Hyde Park, New York.

BY MAUREEN EGAN

Issue: R Home May/June 2009



A visit to Hyde Park, N.Y., 90 minutes north of Manhattan and home of the Culinary Institute of America, where aspiring chefs sauté and study along the Hudson River, is part of a sensible diet: equal measure epicurean delights and historical insights.

Do

At the **CIA**, chefs-in-training swarm about an impressive campus that was formerly a Jesuit seminary. The hallways smell divine. On our tour we watched students wield knives and make candy through classroom windows. The highlight: our tour guide insisted that one adorable chef walking by was “the man who brought crème brûlée to America” (\$5, 845-451-1588, ciachef.edu). The CIA also offers one-day to five-day classes and “Boot Camps” for the food enthusiast (\$225-\$2,095, 800-888-7850).



Hyde Park is also home to many historic homes and sites that are open to the public. **The FDR Presidential Library and Museum** offers a combination ticket with the adjacent FDR home (\$14, fdrlibrary.marist.edu and nps.gov/hofr). Also don't miss Eleanor Roosevelt's country cottage, **Val-Kill**, the only NPS

site devoted to a first lady (\$8, nps.gov/elro).

The Vanderbilt Mansion, overlooking the Hudson, once the home of Frederick W. Vanderbilt, is a superb example of country living in the Gilded Age. Walking under ancient trees on softly sloping grounds that lead to the river is as close to feeling aristocratic as most of us will ever get (800-FDR-Visit, nps.gov/vama).

Stay

The Journey Inn, a B&B run by two exuberant and chatty sisters, is a warm, restful place, with comfortable rooms that echo their many journeys with common rooms ideal for tea-drinking and talking in front of fireplaces. I still pine for the roasted plums with mascarpone cheese and the French toast stuffed with dried apricots and cream cheese (845- 437-4688, journeyinn.com, \$150-\$225 a night with breakfast).



Le Petit Chateau is a lovely inn built in 1900. Enjoy informal cooking lessons as the chefs prepare the full breakfast (845-437-4688, lepetitechateauinn.com, \$165-\$280).

Eat

The CIA's five student-run restaurants feature Italian, French and American cuisine. As part of their education, CIA students prepare and serve meals, and as we found at **Ristorante Caterina de' Medici**, not everyone deserves an A-plus. Our main courses rated Bs, but the appetizers and desserts were phenomenal. Dining in a butter-yellow stuccoed room with a roaring fire nearby, we loved the ambiance and appreciated the servers' care (845-471-6608, ciachef.edu).

Locals recommended **Twist**, a casual and perky Hyde Park gem run by a top-notch CIA grad (845- 229-7094, letstwist.com). In nearby Rhinebeck, **The Terrapin**,



boasting a casual bistro and a more formal dining room in a multi-turreted former church, has received accolades from both Wine Spectator and The New York Times for its inventive cuisine featuring fresh Hudson Valley bounty (845-876-3330, terrapin_restaurant.com).

Shop

Serious cooks drive to Rhinebeck to savor **Warren Kitchen & Cutlery** for its display of more than 30 knife brands with 1,000 knives in stock (845-876-6208, warrenkitchentools.com).

For those tired of the kitchen theme, the gift shop at the Vanderbilt Museum has art books and gifts for the home that evoke a bygone era.



See

To see the lovely estates on the banks of the Hudson River from another vantage point, take a kayak tour spring through fall with **The River Connection** (\$50-\$120, 845-229-0595, the-river-connection.com). For more leisurely leisure, **Hudson River Cruises** in Kingston plies the river on the double-decker, 125-foot Rip Van Winkle from May through October, passing orchards, wineries, mansions and lighthouses

(\$20, 800-843-7472, hudsonriver_cruises.com).

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:

Take a class, a tour or just eat in one of the five student-staffed restaurants at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America that overlooks the Hudson River in upstate New York.

Springwood, the first presidential library, was once home to FDR, our only president elected to four terms.

The Ristorante Caterina de' Medici is located in the CIA's Italian food-and-wine wing.

Take in the landscape on a Hudson River Cruise.

The sweet Journey Inn will lure you in with its stuffed French toast.

Photos courtesy Culinary Institute of America, Journey Inn and Hudson River Cruise