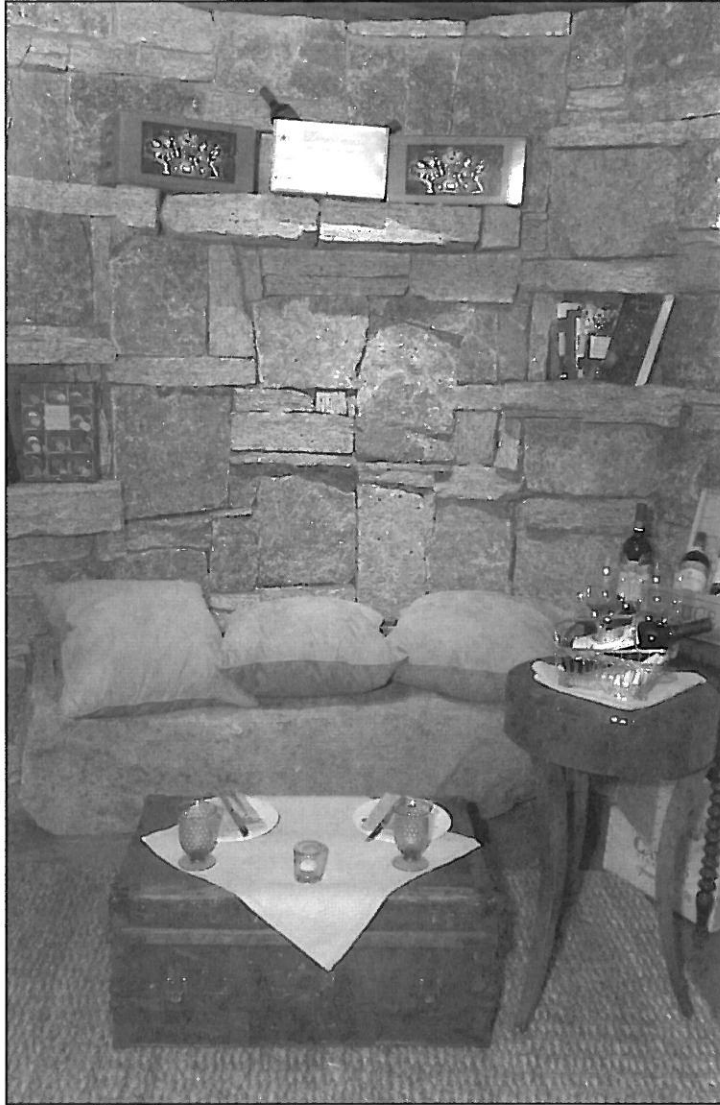
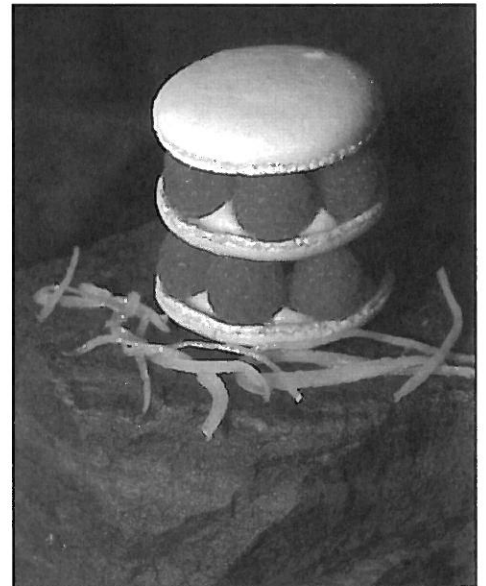


# dining

WRITTEN BY Douglas P. Clement • PHOTOGRAPHED BY Laurie Gaboardi



Left, a nook in the extensive wine cellar at Winvian in Morris is popular among guests who want to enjoy the stellar cuisine of chef Chris Eddy in a particularly atmospheric setting. Above right, the Games Room. Right, a raspberry and pistachio dessert created by pastry chef Gilles Ballay. Facing page, top, seating in the solarium; bottom left, and bottom right, Mr. Eddy.



## Winvian Keeps Getting Better

On the Web site of the Winvian inn, restaurant and spa in Morris, chef Chris Eddy, whose technique “is heavily ingrained with classic and southern French,” offers a declaration of culinary philosophy. Every guest, he says,

deserves to have meals prepared with “integrity, craftsmanship and a whole lot of love.”

“If a chef takes this path,” he goes on to say, “nobody ever leaves the table hungry or dissatisfied.”

One declaration deserves another: Mr. Eddy, who trained at the French Culinary Institute and has

served as sous chef for both Alain Ducasse and Daniel Boulud—two of the top restaurateurs in New York City—is the most under-appreciated chef in Connecticut.

Why? Because more than a year after the upscale Winvian opened its dining rooms to the general public by reservation, the per-

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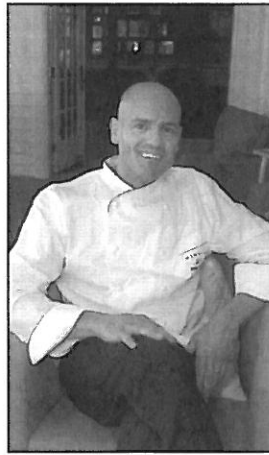
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ceived exclusivity of the resort—you have to get buzzed through a gate to get in—is unintentionally preventing more area residents from getting acquainted with a chef who simply turns out utterly fresh, inventive and delicious dishes.

On a recent Saturday evening, Mr. Eddy offered an eight-course menu in which each successive dish seemed to be the most perfect, until the next one arrived.

His handmade gnocchi are unbelievably light and delicate, and pairing them with morel mushrooms, peas and cubes of pancetta-like bacon made for a rich, earthy

dish that was never heavy.

The gnocchi checked in as the third course, and about that time you realize that the chef hasn't just cooked a meal but has scripted a culinary drama—on a gorgeous “stage” like no other—that will not only delight you as the flavors dance along the palate but also leave you exulted by the overall tour de force performance and vowing to dig deeper into life and its riches.

Actually, this feeling is launched almost immediately when Winvian manager Paolo Middei announces the menu just before the arrival of a split of luscious Tattinger cham-

pagne and the house terrine trio, which consists of foie gras torchon, ménage a tout and chicken mousse.

Like stanzas in a profound poem, each dish adds to the beauty and complexity of the meal—graffiti eggplant salad with yellow fin tuna; roasted swordfish (unbelievably moist, redolent of salty seas) with warm corn salad and Laudemio olive oil; a duo of grouper and (heavenly) Maine diver scallops Grenobloise; roasted Pekin duck with tomato chutney and picholine olive jus, and (perfectly cooked, full-flavored) all-natural beef tenderloin with ▶ 22



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## WITH TAPAS AND BRUNCH MENUS, WINVIAN OFFERS GREAT VALUE

◀ 21 oxtail and foie gras in red wine.

And each of those courses—just the right size to let you savor each bite without overindulging—is complemented with the perfect wine. Standouts in our tasting dinner included the 1995 reserve chardonnay from Ferrari-Carano, which has incredible fruit and depth, the Three Rings Shiraz from Australia, which is dense and purple and full of black fruit, and an Amarone that Mr. Middei described like this: "Aromas of earth, tobacco and distinct herbs like sage, thyme and bayleaf, definitely black fruit and licorice; great with lamb and game dishes."

Dining like this is the best way to experience Winvian, but it

doesn't come without cost. The eight-course tasting menu without wines is \$100 per person, and with wines it starts at \$160 per person, depending on the level of wines chosen. Also, everyone at the table has to participate in the with-wines approach. A three-course dinner without wine—allowing guests to choose a bottle from the extensive cellar—is \$85 per person. Mr. Middei recommends starting with a half-bottle of white and then a bottle of red with dinner.

### New Tapas Menu

In a show of sensitivity to our times and to help more of its neighbors discover and enjoy its charms on a regular basis, Winvian has debuted new menus and features that offer very afford-

able options.

The most intriguing in terms of a combined culinary and lifestyle experience, perhaps, is the new tapas menu being served in Winvian's bar and solarium. The atmospheric setting, near the Games Room, is the perfect accompaniment for a roster that features marinated olives (\$4), a selection of fine cheeses (\$12) to pair with the artisanal breads (\$4) and chicken terrine with grilled bread (\$6).

Add to that gnocchi with wild mushrooms (\$8), a brandade-stuffed piquillo pepper (\$7), roasted chicken with root vegetables (\$7), black nocchette pasta with scallops (\$10) and you can see that the appeal of dining in this elemental way at this magnificent place should be obvious. Add in some drinks or wine—by the bottle or glass—and guests can have all the flavors of the full Winvian experience at a fraction of the cost of the prix-fixe options.

Offering an entirely different experience, Winvian is also featuring a Sunday brunch menu available to members of the public by reservation. Guests can choose between breakfast- or lunch-style options. An omelet with mushrooms, asparagus and Swiss cheese, for example, is \$12, while a handmade pappardelle alla Bolgonese entrée is \$16, making the brunch another affordable way to connect with Winvian.

Sealing the deal with regard to any of Winvian's menus are the desserts of pastry chef Gilles Ballay. For brunch, it might be a cookie plate with ice cream (\$8), and with the more formal, eight-course dinner, the accompaniment can be a plate of distinguished cheeses to pair with wine or a sampling of desserts that includes chocolate soufflé like you've never had it before, citrus baba and almond cherry clafoutie.

However you choose to experience Winvian—the gourmet dinner, brunch or the tapas menu—check out its Web site and make a reservation. For all of its beauty and luxury, Winvian and its staff are friendly and approachable, and all guests are treated with equal regard no matter if they are stopping by for an omelet and coffee on a Sunday or staying for a week.

The Web site, which has lots of information about dining at Winvian, is [www.Winvian.com](http://www.Winvian.com), and the phone number for reservations is 860-567-9600. ■

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Above, the Forty Winks Suite in the spa at Winvian in Morris.

## A PRE-DINNER RITUAL FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT

**H**appiness is about the right combinations—cream in one's coffee, breakfast in bed, reading into the night with a glass of wine never out of reach. Some pairings are obvious, while others may not be.

Dining out on any evening from Thursday through Sunday makes perfect sense, but even most gourmets would need a prompt to realize that their dinner experience can be enhanced by one particular type of prelude—a way to relax into the evening, set the tone and slow things down. A massage.

Savvy schedulers can optimize

their experience at Winvian in Morris by calling the spa and making a date for a pampering pre-dinner treat.

While the Winvian Spa—which is happily taking reservations from area residents—provides a full range of body-soothing services, the ultimate experience is the “Couples Massage in the Forty Winks Suite.”

Tucked away within a spa building whose architecture and attitude is light, soothing, supple and calm, the suite is a piece of heaven outfitted with blond wood floors, two massage beds, walls of windows bedecked with flowing translucent draperies and two ample slipper cozied up in

front of a massive stone hearth.

Against the backdrop of a soundtrack that includes thunderstorms that somehow seem soothing, Winvian's expert massage therapists coax stress, kinks and the residue of the day out of the body—for 60 or 90 minutes. Swedish or Deep Tissue—and then leave couples alone for 30 minutes to enjoy Pommery “Pop” champagne minis, left on ice in a silver bucket next to a plate of pear slices, biscotti, and truffles. Flowers brighten the display and a fire brings heat

if desired.

Coordinating the massage-before-dinner experience is easy, thanks to the spa's luxurious changing rooms, and the views offered by the magnificent, 113-acre property will entice you to stroll leisurely to the main house for dinner.

The cost for two for the 60-minute massage experience in the Forty Winks Suite is \$425, which includes the gratuity. A basic 60-minute Swedish massage, without the amenities of the suite for couples, is \$150 for each guest.

For a full list of services and more information, see the Web site at [www.winvian.com](http://www.winvian.com) or send an e-mail to [spa@winvian.com](mailto:spa@winvian.com). ■

## A PRIVATE DRIVER, AND MERCEDES STYLE

**J**ust when it seemed that the experience of dining at Winvian was as luxurious as it could get, the owners of the inn are offering a further enticement to indulge in the form of a new car service.

Guests who come to enjoy the restaurant's multi-course dinners, complete with a roster of perfectly paired wines, can now be picked up and driven home in the comfort of a shiny, spotless Mercedes.

The car—a roomy but sleek silver coupe, perhaps—arrives in the driveway at the appointed time, and the driver's congenial courtesy is the first hint of the pampering about to unfold. And after dinner, the moment you're ready to depart, the car is waiting.

The service is complimentary for those who live within a 10-mile radius, and the fee beyond that depends upon distance.

For the details, call Winvian at 860-567-9600. ■

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Swamp Medley: Spicy Southwestern Sauté of shrimp, alligator, crawfish tails, frog's legs with shallots, garlic, onions, peppers, capers, tomatoes, ancho-chipotle & lemon juice served over rice  
Northwest Salmon Filet: Topped with sautéed shrimp, garlic, tomatoes and capers. Finished with white wine and juice of half lemon. Served with mesclun greens

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