



Blackberry Farm is nestled in the mountains of Tennessee.



Squab with wheat berries (farro) and raw Swiss chard

BLACKBERRY FARM

A FOODIE'S DREAM DESTINATION



The Barn restaurant at Blackberry Farm

PHOTOS/COURTESY OF BLACKBERRY FARM

BY HOPE S. PHILBRICK

TRAVEL Upon arrival at Blackberry Farm, it's immediately clear that this is someplace different. Before I can slip off my sunglasses, someone is opening the car door for me. "Welcome to Blackberry Farm," he says, then—get this—escorts me into the lobby. He doesn't just open the door for me, or point me in the right direction, or say, "You'll find the registration desk on the right-hand side once you pass through the door that's three steps in front of you." No. He opens that door and walks through it with me to the desk, as if I could get lost or lonesome in that short distance. And then, before parting, he formally introduces me to the registration clerk. This just may be as close to having a coachman as I'll ever get. Check-in is a breeze, of course. And before I return to my car, all of my bags have already been unloaded and hauled up the stairs to my room. Voila.

What else would you expect from a place that Travel + Leisure picked as the hotel or resort with the "No. 1 best service in the world" in 2006? Lucky for Atlantans, Blackberry Farm is an easy four-hour drive north of us in Walland, Tenn. Though the price of staying at Blackberry Farm puts it into the

once-in-a-lifetime category for most folks, foodies and wine-lovers will especially find it's worth saving up for the splurge. "Everything we do in our restaurants is influenced by this place Blackberry Farm," says proprietor Sam Beall. The award-winning cuisine showcases product grown and produced on the 4,200-acre estate. Local ingredients get the celebrity treatment. "We are committed on a daily basis to delivering our guests a culinary experience unlike any other," says Beall. "First of all, that means breakfast, lunch and dinner, 365 days a year. But in addition, we host 12 to 18 special events during the year that highlight world-class culinary personalities, guest chefs, farmers, cheese makers and more. The themes vary very much." The weekend of my visit showcased French cuisine via guest Chef Jean-André Charial, a two-star Michelin chef, and Martine Saunier, a wine importer. Memorable menu items included wild striped bass with hen-of-the-woods mushroom ragoût, roasted quail with heirloom beans and swiss chard, and fennel pollen-dusted braised lamb with confit of fennel and fingerling potatoes, all paired with exceptional wines. "I actually have never repeated the same event twice," says Beall. "We have such a following with some of our guests—80 percent of our guests are repeat visitors—and we want to give them a new experience every time."

IF YOU GO

GETTING THERE
Blackberry Farm is approximately a four-hour drive from Atlanta. The driving directions provided on the resort's Web site are flawless.

WHEN TO GO
Blackberry Farm is open year-round, but to satisfy a particular craving, plan your trip around scheduled epicurean experiences and cooking schools. Upcoming events through 2008 include:

- November 16–18, Paramount Pastries with Guest Chef Nancy Silverton
- December 4–6, Wine Geek 101 with Sommelier Andy Chabot
- December 7–9, Grand Grenache with Chef Jean-Robert de Cavel and Eric Solomon Selections

WHAT TO DO
There's plenty to do at Blackberry Farm besides eat: go horseback riding, shoot sporting clays, go fly fishing, hiking, biking or canoeing, test drive a Lexus, rent a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, explore a cave, go rock climbing or repelling, experience hot air ballooning, relax at the spa and much more.

MORE INFORMATION
■ **Blackberry Farm**
1471 West Millers Cove Road
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www.blackberryfarm.com

Beyond dining in either of Blackberry Farm's two restaurants, the Main House Dining Room and the Barn, guests can explore the farm-to-table journey by visiting the various artisan producers who work on the property. Among them is Michael Sullivan, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America-Hyde Park, who serves as the butcher. You'd be hard-pressed to find anyone more enthusiastic about charcuterie. After hosting a tour of his facility, he sliced scrumptious sausages to taste while reflecting on his role. "This is artistry," he says of his 12-hour days crafting the meat products that are in high demand in the resort's restaurants.

At the root of the culinary scene is Master Gardener John Coykendall, who says, "Everything we have are heirlooms. We practice sustainable agriculture. We're completely organic. Most of the things we grow are native to this region or at least the Appalachian region." But don't think that means the selection is limited: Consider that Blackberry Farm grows 50 different varieties of heirloom tomatoes. Plus, "We've got 5,000 acres to forage for mushrooms and wild edible fare," adds Jeff Ross, garden manager. Indeed, visiting Blackberry Farm is an opportunity to savor the season as it's presented on your plate—and be spoiled in the process. **SP**