

## Table Hopping with Rosie

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# Restaurant News

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This week Rosie tells us about the Benchmark holiday dinner at the Beard House in NYC, Restaurant Serenade in Chatham, dining deals, and much more news about NJ restaurants.

### BENCHMARK HOLIDAY DINNER AT BEARD HOUSE, NYC

On December 17, a Benchmark holiday dinner with Chef Peter Csikos of the Heldrich Hotel & Spa, New Brunswick, and Benchmark chefs and wine experts from other U.S. properties (Francisco "Paco" Aceves, Stonewall Resort, Roanoke, WV; John Billings, Eaglewood Resort & Spa, Itasca, IL; Hector J. Morales, Turtle Bay Resort, Kahuku, Oahu, HI; David Rodriguez, Costa d'Este Beach Resort, Vero Beach, FL; and chief wine officer Mary Watson-DeLauder, Benchmark Hospitality International, the Woodlands, TX) will be held at the James Beard House, 167 West 12th Street, New York City. The following menu will be presented.

Hors d'oeuvres: Saffron-glazed foie gras–tuna squares; Texas pecan–chèvre quenelles with peach-habañero preserves; wild salmon–wrapped quail eggs with caviar and toast points; lemon and olive oil–poached frutti di mare with fingerling potatoes; and Kahlua pig with lomi-lomi tomatoes, sweet onion compote, and Hawaiian sweet bread

(2005 Kluge Blanc de Blancs, 2008 Corcoran Vineyards Chardonnay, 2008 Barboursville Vineyards Pinot Grigio, 2008 Corcoran Vineyards Mary's Cuvée, 2007 Sunset Hills Benevino Cabernet Franc)

Bone marrow flan with butternut squash stew  
(2008 Folie à Deux Ménage à Trois White)

Pan-seared Chilean sea bass with citrus beurre blanc and microgreens  
(2008 Joel Gott Sauvignon Blanc)

Crab-avocado napoleon with melon gelée and tomato vinaigrette  
(2008 Kim Crawford New Zealand Pinot Gris)

Roasted lamb saddle with goat cheese–polenta egg roll, rapini, and herb reduction  
(2007 Donkey and Goat Mendocino Syrah)

Lakota bison Wellington with Native American fry bread, morel duxelles, lavender-cocoa demi-glace, saffron risotto, and roasted autumn harvest vegetables  
(2005 Folie à Deux Lewelling Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon)

Black raspberry–fig tart with amaretto syrup, mascarpone-lemon ice cream, and espresso tuile  
(Montevina Terra d'Oro Zinfandel Port)

7 PM; \$165, James Beard Foundation members \$125. For reservations call 212-627-2308.

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### RESTAURANT SERENADE, CHATHAM

Thirteen is a lucky number for executive chef James Laird and his wife, Nancy, owners of Restaurant Serenade, 6 Roosevelt Avenue, Chatham, as their restaurant has been open for that many years. This is quite an achievement in the restaurant industry, where half of new establishments close within their first year. Our recent dinner at the bar proved that the Lairds are doing everything right and Serenade is still producing memorable and exciting dishes worth seeking out.

Sitting at one of the four tables at the bar—or at the bar itself, which has ten stools—rather than in the dining room provides the diner with a casual, less formal experience. However, it was obvious from the minute we sat down that the service was just as professional and refined in this area of the restaurant. The bar menu is fun for sharing, and what a thrill it was to have a menu with print large enough that I didn't have to dig into my purse and seek out my glasses. Specialty as well as classic cocktails are offered; the pomegranate martini made with Absolut Citron, fresh lemon juice, and pomegranate juice was so refreshing that I wanted more than the sip I took from a friend's glass.

A basket of breads (potato, rosemary biscuit, and sourdough) was served, and everyone was partial to the rosemary biscuit. Four of us shared potato cups with herbed goat cheese, shaved apples, and microgreens; chicken satay; rice balls with mozzarella, tomatoes, and almonds with Romesco sauce; lobster roll with hand-cut French fries; pumpkin ravioli with wilted spinach, cherry tomatoes, and beurre noisette; and one of the best cheeseburgers we've tasted in a long time, served on a crispy oversize English muffin.

There are bar entrées and dining room entrées. The dining room selections can also be ordered in the bar area, and starting in January Serenade will offer the bar menu in the dining room on Sunday evenings. We tried the seldom-seen calf's liver from the dining room menu, cooked medium-rare; it was served with an onion tart, a straightforward presentation that was deeply satisfying. A special of lamb stew over polenta was hardy and a perfect dish to have on a crisp autumn night. We all tried different desserts; you can't go wrong with the apple tart, the berry cobbler, the cheesecake, and, my favorite, the rich and truly molten chocolate cake. Call 973-701-0303 for reservations.



Potato cups with herbed goat cheese, shaved apples, and microgreens.  
Photo courtesy of Lowell Saferstein.

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#### HIGHLAWN PAVILION AND THE MANOR, WEST ORANGE

Table Hopping With Rosie received the following information from Mitchell Altholz, executive chef at Highlawn Pavilion, Eagle Rock Reservation, West Orange (973-731-3463), and the Manor, 111 Prospect Avenue, West Orange (973-731-2360).

On Monday and Tuesday evenings through December, **Highlawn Pavilion** is offering a \$29 three-course prix-fixe dinner for parties up to six guests. Wine specials by the bottle at \$30 will also be offered. The following menu will be available.

Appetizer: Tuna tartar with fresh herbs, Spanish virgin olive oil, and fleur de sel; wild arugula salad with Parmigiano-Reggiano and Caesar dressing; or creamless soup of wild mushrooms

Entrée: Atlantic Maine salmon slowly poached in Spanish olive oil with wild mushroom risotto and black garlic sauce; organic Amish chicken cooked sous vide with asparagus, mashed potatoes, wild mushrooms, and truffle sauce; or, for an additional \$4, filet mignon with haricots verts, fingerling potatoes, and burgundy reduction sauce

Dessert: Valrhona flourless chocolate cake with crème anglaise; trilogy of crème brûlée (Tahitian vanilla, orange, and coffee); or petite artisanal cheese selection (Roquefort, Explorateur, Bijoux) with organic quince paste

On Wednesday and Thursday evenings through December, the Manor is offering a four-course chef's menu for parties up to six guests. Not available on holidays. The following menu will be available.

First course: Provençal vegetable and goat cheese parfait (Domaine Chandon Sparkling Rosé, California NV) or warm butter-poached lobster with chanterelle mushrooms (2007 Souverain Sauvignon Blanc, Alexander Valley)

Second course: Wild mushroom ravioli with cognac sauce (2007 Mount Eden Vineyards Chardonnay, Monterey County)

Main course: Filet mignon with sautéed Hudson Valley foie gras, baby vegetables, and truffle sauce (2006 Carpe Diem Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley) or classic French bouillabaisse with halibut, prawn, scallops, and black garlic aioli (2007 William Fevre Champs Royaux Chablis, Burgundy)

Dessert: Warm chocolate cake topped with pecans, caramel, and vanilla ice cream (2003 Ferrari-Carano Black Muscat, Russian River Valley); pomegranate-grapefruit-glazed cheesecake (2006 Robert Mondavi Moscato d'Oro, Napa Valley); or chef's assortment of artisanal cheese (2006 Newton Claret Cabernet Blend, Napa Valley)

Call the restaurants for reservations.

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#### GET READY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

On December 3, an Hors d'Oeuvres for the Holidays cooking class will be held at the **Cooking School at La Campagne**, 312 Kresson Road, Cherry Hill. 7 to 9 PM; \$45. On December 10, the school will offer a Holiday Desserts cooking class. 7 to 9 PM; \$45. Call 856-429-7647 for more information and reservations.

Learn how to make bellinis, midnight kisses, and champagne cosmopolitans, perfect drinks for the upcoming holidays, at Celebrate With Champagne classes that include complimentary hors d'oeuvres and recipe cards to take home. On December 3, the class will be held at **Liberty House Restaurant**, 78 Audrey Zapp Drive, Jersey City (201-395-0300), and on December 10 it will be held at **Stone House at Stirling Ridge**, 50 Stirling Avenue, Warren (908-754-1222). Classes start at 7 PM and cost \$35. Reservations are required.

There are many cooking classes this holiday season at the **Urban Kitchen**, 108 Adams Street, Hoboken, to help you wow your guests. Class offerings include Gingerbread Houses, Turducken, Christmas Cookies, Christmas Dinner, and Holiday Appetizers. For more information log on to [www.urbankitchen.biz](http://www.urbankitchen.biz) or call 201-418-0101.

Parents and children ages seven and up can decorate a pre-constructed gingerbread house with candies, gumdrops, peppermints, sprinkles, cookies, and more at a Gingerbread House Workshop that will be held at