



Rustic Luxury



Farm to table is only a few steps away at the Ravens restaurant in charming Mendocino, CA.

by MARK HAWTHORNE

When you're enjoying food that is as beautiful and nourishing as your surroundings, you take your sweet time. And that's how it is at the Ravens, a culinary oasis in the shade of redwood, cypress, bull pine, and grand fir trees where there's an unmistakable synergy between nature and nutrition. Created in 1996 by entrepreneurs Jeff and Joan Stanford as both a physical and philosophical extension of their Stanford Inn—the only vegan eco-resort in the United States—the restaurant offers a gourmet dining experience in fabled Mendocino, CA. Guests tend to linger as they soak up the ambiance and eagerly share photos of exquisitely plated entrées on social media.

Although its menu is influenced by international haute cuisines, the restaurant is as unpretentious as its mountain lodge décor, with a homey vibe enhanced by hardwood floors, pine-paneled walls, and spacious windows offering sweeping views of the forest and Pacific Ocean. There's something about the spectacular sylvan scenery here that stirs the appetite, and the Ravens doesn't disappoint.

Epically epicurean

The decadence begins when your server brings you a complimentary amuse-bouche—just a tantalizing little morsel from talented chef Sadhana Berkow to prime your palate. If you're lucky, you might enjoy radish slices topped with creamy kale sauce (a house specialty) or a dab of Kalamata olive pâté on toasted crostini. As you peruse the menu, decide which of the flavorful greens you'll try: culinary savants should opt for the massaged kale salad topped with plump raisins, cauliflower ceviche, and avocado tartare, impressively layered into a stunning tower. Crowd favorites among the array of tempting small-plates include a rotating selection of sushi, tamari-maple glazed tofu, and tacos with barbecued trumpet royale mushrooms and fresh pineapple.

Innovative dishes are fueled by the resort's on-site, certified organic garden, where edible flowers distract insects from the produce (no herbicides or pesticides are used here), and a combination of



biodynamic and French intensive methods (using compost, not manure) help grow multiple varieties of lettuces, cabbages, beets, carrots, spinach, strawberries, raspberries, and greens. You'll find no mock meats at the Ravens; the kitchen is out to prove that seasonal produce, grains, nuts, and herbs are all you need to create food that is as succulent as it is nourishing.

The Ravens' principles may be best exemplified by the signature Sea Palm and Root Vegetable Strudel, a whimsical entrée that pairs baked phyllo-wrapped sea palm and root vegetables with pickled plum and wasabi sauces. Other savory showstoppers are the ravioli filled with spinach and herbed ricotta, tamales stuffed with local butternut squash and Serrano chilies, and the tangy Thai red curry—an artful combination of garden-fresh vegetables and tofu in a fragrant coconut-milk

always help you pair a selection with your meal for a genuine gastronomic experience. For those with a taste for something distilled, the mixologist at the Inn's full bar—the Ravens Nest—is ready to blend, stir, or shake your favorite cocktail using top-shelf spirits.

Holistic hospitality

The Ravens—so named because of the two birds who took up residence on the property as the restaurant was being built—also offers a breakfast menu that you will dream about long after you return home. Begin with fresh-squeezed orange juice and your choice of organic coffee or tea, then get ready to be dazzled by chef-prepared waffles, French toast, pancakes, chilaquiles, country potatoes, and portobello benedict. And the fresh-baked scones and muffins are a must.

Dining at the Ravens is a revelation in plant-based pleasures.

sauce served over Jasmine rice. Almost everything on the dinner menu either is or can be made gluten-free, and the servings are deceptively filling, so save room for dessert.

Indeed, sumptuous sweets are reason enough to dine at the Ravens, and you can tuck into a delectable assortment that includes pastries, tortes, custards, and housemade ice creams. For a truly lavish treat, try the Frangelico-infused crème brûlée, which has all the distinctive tastes and textures of its dairy-based counterpart. Or go old-school and order the banana split crafted with chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla-rum coconut ice creams and served with softly whipped coconut cream finished with a dusting of toasted coconut. This gooey confection, framed by two generous chunks of bittersweet chocolate-almond bark, is even more delicious than the sundaes you devoured as a kid.

As for libations, almost everything on the Ravens' expertly curated wine list is produced by certified organic vineyards or using sustainable, traditional farming practices. If you wouldn't know a *vin gris* from *Vin Diesel*, relax: your server can

But don't just come to eat. With 41 guest rooms, an indoor lap pool, a solarium, and a wellness center, the Stanford Inn is deeply committed to providing a true eco-resort experience. A stay here is both tranquil and invigorating, and guests won't want to miss the opportunity to indulge in the many spa options, including facials, yoga classes, tai chi, and Ayurvedic treatments, to take their relaxation to the next level.

Designed as the ultimate vegan getaway, the rustic-yet-luxurious Stanford Inn by the Sea is a seductive getaway for body and soul. You're not likely to find a more animal-friendly escape anywhere (a portion of the garden crops are grown specifically for the deer and other foraging critters), and dining at the Ravens is a revelation in plant-based pleasures. Take in the surrounding beauty, take your time over carefully crafted courses, and take an omnivorous friend for what could be a life-changing experience. [VN](#)

Mark Hawthorne is the author of *A Vegan Ethic: Embracing a Life of Compassion Toward All and is thrilled to live just across the county line from Mendocino.*



10 Reasons to Visit the Stanford Inn

The Inn's plant-based ethos doesn't end at the restaurant door. The award-winning, environmentally friendly haven fully reflects a deep vegan ethic—from the organic bedding in the guest rooms to the water bottle fill-up stations to the sweet potato dog treats throughout the resort. Here are 10 reasons a stay at the Stanford Inn is the perfect recipe for restoration.

- 1 Cozy wood-burning fireplace in every room for chilly evenings
- 2 Private decks overlooking the gardens and Pacific Ocean
- 3 Complimentary desserts as part of "Afternoons at the Inn"
- 4 Custom picnic lunches for those on the go
- 5 Companion animals are always welcomed
- 6 Bouganvillea-covered greenhouse enclosing a saltwater swimming pool
- 7 Acupuncture, massage, and facials at the spa
- 8 Yoga and cooking classes led by seasoned experts
- 9 Bike rentals to explore charming Mendocino ("Mendo" to the locals)
- 10 Electric car-charging stations at no cost