

Something Old and Something New

By Cathy Harding-La



When my sons were young, we often made day-trips to the Village of St. Jacobs, in southwestern Ontario. We gazed out the car windows at the Mennonite farmers, in straw hats or bonnets, selling brown eggs and maple syrup from roadside stands. We would stroll along the restored 19th century streets, or take a horse-drawn tour, stopping to enjoy ice cream cones from a street vendor.

Fast forward to 2010. We decide to celebrate my son's first university exams with a getaway to St. Jacobs, which today, offers dining options to please every palate. The Stone Crock Restaurant and Stone Crock Village Bakery are known for home-style fare that really schmecks. Vidalia's Grill offers contemporary selections and fabulous desserts.

We opt for their historic sister property, Benjamin's Restaurant & Inn. Built for stagecoach travelers in 1852, this

refurbished inn has intimate guest rooms, and a dining room complete with hand-hewn beams, and open fireplaces.

Chef Jess Krulicki, a Stratford Chef School graduate, delights Benjamin's patrons. As a child, Krulicki spent a lot

of time on his grandfather's farm. "I was always digging potatoes, picking fruit, making maple syrup or collecting honey," Krulicki recalls. "Today, I can't buy from a grocery store. I need fresh ingredients, right from the farm. Great cooking is all in





Come follow the horse-drawn buggies to discover St. Jacobs for yourself.

Benjamin's Restaurant & Inn
www.stjacobs.com/benjamins
(519) 664-3731

Best Western St. Jacobs Country Inn
www.stjacobscountryinn.com
800-972-5371 or 519-884-9295

the details." We agree: Jess' prosciutto-wrapped beef tenderloin with port wine and roasted tomato jus is cooked to perfection!

Then there is the Best Western St. Jacobs Country Inn, a refuge for leisure travelers and corporate clients, providing well-appointed rooms, a fitness centre with a jumbo whirlpool and steam room, and a complimentary hot breakfast. Local innkeeper Larry Martin has gone far beyond the Best Western requirements to meet guests' expectations.

"We're strategically located," Martin explains. "Waterloo offers high-tech giants like RIM. St. Jacobs is home to the 'Old Order' Mennonites, a community resistant to modern life." Amidst a patchwork of farms and fields, the Best Western is near the Village, Market Road Antiques, the enormous St. Jacobs Farmers' Market & Flea Market, and several theatres, too! Innkeeper Martin believes that St. Jacobs' appeal lies in its unique blend of tradition and innovation. "Mennonite culture – and our respect for it – has always been central to our mystique, but we're also continually evolving with new ventures for visitors to explore."





Recipe courtesy of Chef Jess Krulicki, of Benjamin's Restaurant and Inn

Prosciutto Wrapped Beef Tenderloin

Ingredients:

4 8oz beef tenderloin steaks
4 slices prosciutto ham
canola oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper (or your preferred steak seasoning)

Method:

Slice each piece of prosciutto lengthwise down the centre. Overlap the slices and wrap firmly around steak. Lightly oil the filet, season generously with salt and pepper. Grill on a hot grill for approximately 3 minutes each side for medium rare. Remove from the grill and let rest 5 minutes. Serve with home-style mashed potatoes, fresh sautéed seasonal vegetables, and port wine and roasted tomato jus (recipe to follow).

Port Wine and Roasted Tomato Jus

Ingredients:

4 cups beef stock simmered down until 1 cup in volume
2 Roma tomatoes
½ cup port wine
1 tsp minced garlic

1 medium shallot, finely minced
1 tsp each, dried thyme, oregano and basil
2 tbsps extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup very finely chopped fresh chives

Method:

Top and quarter tomatoes. Season with half the olive oil, dried herbs, garlic, salt and pepper. Place tomatoes on a baking sheet in a 400° F oven for 25 minutes or until golden and beginning to caramelize. Remove from the oven and cool slightly then chop the tomatoes into ¼" dice. In a medium saucepan, sauté the shallots in the remaining olive oil over medium heat to soften; do not brown. Add the port wine and simmer to reduce by half (approximately 3 minutes). Add tomatoes and reduced beef stock (if you don't have homemade beef stock, substitute canned beef gravy rather than store bought stock, store bought will be too salty.) Gently simmer the sauce for a few minutes and taste, add more salt or pepper if needed. Just before serving, add the chopped chives to preserve their color and freshness.

