



A taste for travel

BY DAMAINE VONADA

Good eats await at Ohio's small-town and rural dining destinations

burgers made from local grass-fed beef; homemade Belgian chocolate custard; and a PB&J for kids, served, of course, on sourdough bread. 330-263-2949; www.brokenrockscafe.com

Malabar Farm Restaurant, Perryville

Malabar Farm Restaurant is a delicious experience on many levels. It's part of Malabar Farm State Park, an actual working farm near Mansfield. Malabar Farm was created by famed author and sustainable agriculture pioneer Louis Bromfield. The restaurant is in an 1820s farmhouse with cozy dining rooms plus a dining deck affording fine views of the lush countryside. The menu features American favorites prepared from farm-fresh ingredients. "We use all the local produce and meat that we can get our hands on," says manager Kim Williams.

What to order? For lunch, try the Reuben; the slow-cooked brisket has homemade dressing. For dinner, ribeye with sautéed mushrooms and onions is a signature entrée, while the meatloaf with Andouille sauce provides incomparable comfort food.

419-938-5205; www.malabar-farmrestaurant.com

Michael Anthony's at the Inn, Versailles

First-time diners are often shocked to find this gem of a restaurant with its incredible food and service in a rural Darke County village. Located within the Inn at Versailles, a French-themed boutique hotel owned by Midmark Corporation, Michael Anthony's shines thanks to execu-

tive chef Michael Delligatta's passion for food and the genial hospitality of Telisa Delligatta, his wife, dining room manager and wine steward.

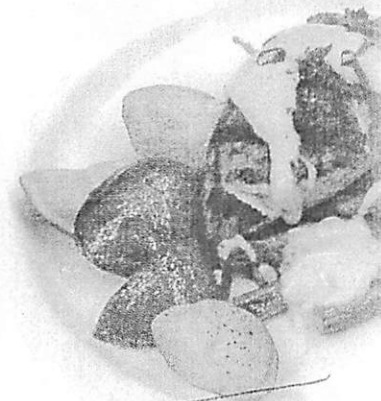
Years ahead of the locavore trend, Delligatta tapped Ohio growers for heirloom vegetables and heritage meats, and today the restaurant actually grows its own herbs and produce on an 80-acre farm along the Stillwater River. "The heart and soul of my vision is local sourcing," notes Delligatta. His distinctive regional American cuisine has Italian-Mediterranean influences, and the superb result is entrées like chicken parmesan, pan-fried walleye and pumpkin ravioli made from homegrown pumpkins. 937-526-3020; www.innatversailles.com

ONE REWARD OF TRAVEL is discovering new dining experiences, and throughout Ohio, off-the-beaten-path restaurants take advantage of the state's agricultural bounty with meals featuring locally grown ingredients. Located along scenic roads and in small towns and country villages, these special places serve wonderful food and have unique venues that are well worth the drive.

Broken Rocks Café & Bakery, Wooster

Some 20 years ago, Glen Grumbling rubbed yeast off the skin of wild grapes growing at a place in Michigan called Broken Rocks and used it to create starter for sourdough bread. Today, Grumbling still uses that starter for most of the round, rustic loaves — including rye, organic whole wheat and his signature sourdough — available at his café. "Bread like ours is hard to come by," says Grumbling. "We use high-quality ingredients and put them together with care."

Also prepared with care are house specialties like satisfying tomato-roasted garlic soup;



Restaurant at Glenlaurel, A Scottish Country inn, Rockbridge

There aren't many restaurants where you'll see couples holding hands across the dinner table, but it's commonplace at Glenlaurel, the elegant inn where the ambiance of a Scottish manor meets the gorgeous scenery of southeast Ohio's Hocking Hills. "Because of its romantic, secluded



setting," says executive chef Erik Keller, "people often come for anniversaries and birthdays."

Glenlaurel's white tablecloth restaurant offers fine dining and sophisticated cuisine prepared with seasonal ingredients that range from tender lettuce in spring to root vegetables during winter. Overnight guests enjoy homemade scones in the morning, and every evening, multi-course dinners feature entrées like pheasant and rack of lamb. On Saturdays (weather permitting), a bagpiper even summons diners to the feast. 800-809-7378; www.glenlaurel.com; *dinner reservations required*

Restaurant at the Inn & Spa at Cedar Falls, Logan

History practically jumps off the walls of the Inn's restaurant, which is like a secret treasure snugly ensconced in an old log cabin near Hocking Hills State Park. It also delivers something unexpected in the woody Hocking Hills — top-notch food and service. "It's casual fine dining that is elegant but not pretentious," says execu-

tive chef Anthony Schulz. "You're going to have a good time when you're here."

You're also eating very, very well, thanks to the upscale twist Schulz gives to his eclectic American fare. Book a guest room or cottage and you'll breakfast on the house granola and hearty quiches (hint: Wednesday morning's yummy main dish is stuffed French toast), but chef Anthony's dinner entrées — with ingredients ranging from wild morels to veggies from the inn's garden — include filet mignon with chianti, pork chops with pomegranate, and pan-seared diver scallops. 800-653-2557; www.inn-atcedarfalls.com; *dinner reservations required; lunch reservations encouraged*

Restaurant at the Murphin Ridge Inn, West Union

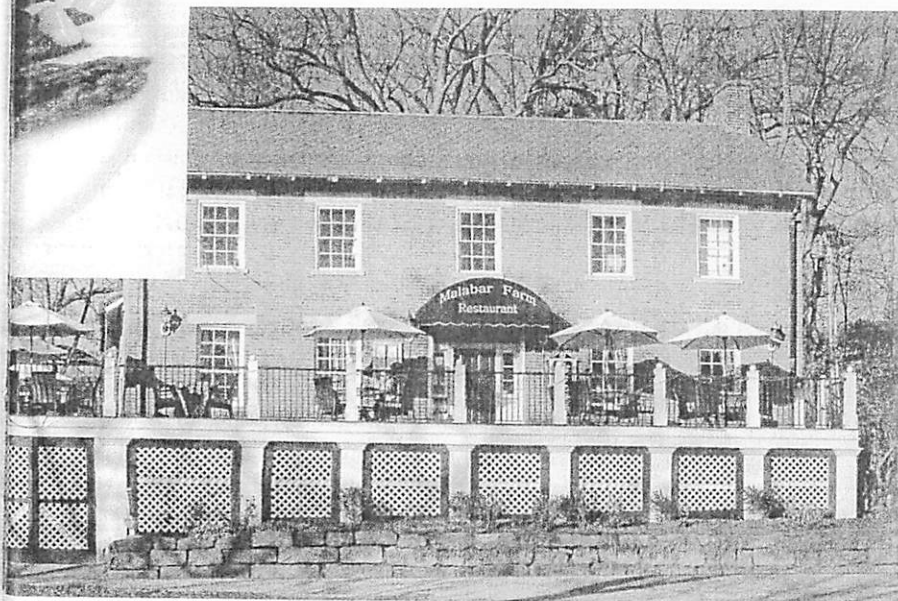
Murphin Ridge guests reap many pleasures — a pristine setting among southern Ohio's Appalachian hills, deluxe accommodations and the unfailing cor-

diality of owner-innkeepers Darryl and Sherry McKenney. But the secret of the inn's success may be its restaurant, where Sherry — a former caterer who has cooking in her DNA — sets a high standard in the kitchen. "We always are true to ourselves," says Sherry. "If the menu says the chicken came from a farm down the road, it really did."

Known for its fine country dining, the restaurant specializes in creating dishes — like mushroom consommé with a hint of ginger or homemade cannelloni with a flavorful pea and ricotta filling — that are familiar yet elevated to memorable levels. Overnight guests awaken to homemade coffeecakes and scrumptious Foggy Bottom pancakes, but regulars who come for dinner swear by the steaks and fruit cobblers. 877-687-7446; www.murphin-ridgeinn.com; *dinner reservations required*



The dining room at the Inn at Cedar Falls is in what was originally an old log cabin near Hocking Hills State Park.



The Malabar Farm Restaurant is in an 1820s farmhouse with cozy dining rooms inside and outdoor decks for alfresco dining during the warm months.

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