

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

THE WHITE BARN GETS TASTIER

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As the saying goes: Everyone loves progress; no one likes change. And, no one certainly likes it when you mess with a good thing. So, when Matthew Padilla took over as executive chef at the venerable White Barn Inn Restaurant, a rare AAA Five Diamond and Forbes Five Star dining experience in Kennebunk, Maine, well, there were mutterings.

"It was a bit intimidating," Padilla admits. "I was nervous about living up to the reputation of the restaurant and past chefs, but I was also excited about the opportunity to put my own stamp on things."

Padilla is a Relais & Châteaux veteran. He was executive chef at Dos Brisas in Washington, Texas, and oversaw the fine dining restaurant at The Little Nell in Aspen, Colo., also a Relais & Chateau property. He's worked at Michael Mina's flagship Michelin-starred restaurant, and spent several months training at the award-winning Noma in Copenhagen.

"This is my first time on the East Coast," he said.

"I was really drawn by the history and the role that food has played in the region. The history of the property was also a driving force for me."

The beloved and longstanding White Barn Inn Restaurant will celebrate its 46th anniversary this year. When it opened in 1973, it was a pioneer on the culinary stage, offering ultra-sophisticated dining in a refurbished Maine 1860's barn. The juxtaposition of elegant, stylized dining in a rustic setting was revolutionary, way before "rustic chic" became common.

The setting is much the same: high ceilings and timber beams, glossy pine floors, and rafters filled with farm implements. Tall windows allow views to lighted paths and gardens. Under the rafters sit white linen-topped, candlelit tables, and original art.

Executive chef Matthew Padilla took over the helm of the White Barn Inn Restaurant in Kennebunk, Maine, bringing new flavor combinations.