

The West at its best



Is this the next French Laundry?

Something's up at the Willows Inn on Lummi Island, near Seattle. New inn chef Blaine Wetzel comes from ridiculously lauded Noma in Copenhagen, and he's bringing its brand of ultra-localism to the 10-room Willows—two farmers work for its restaurant full time. The result is zingingly fresh, seasonal food at prices that'll make you do a double take (local sourcing cuts down on middleman costs). Thomas Keller, watch out.

You grew up in Washington—are you trying to reinvent Northwest cuisine at the Willows? In Copenhagen, we focused on the hundreds of ingredients unique to that area. I'm trying to do that for Northwest food: Nothing gets on the menu that isn't at its peak—you can tell the weather by what we're serving.

How do the offerings here stack up? Everything I've used at any other restaurant, I've found here. Our grass-fed beef comes from island farmer Phil Tucker, and I can forage for woodruff, sorrel, wild

pea tips, and yarrow. [Willows Inn owner] Riley Starks supplies fresh-caught fish. Every day.

What's the menu like? We'll have a 5-course menu for \$70, but if the stars line up, maybe 5 courses become 12. And in midsummer, maybe 4 for \$40. I like sending out surprise snacks that aren't on the menu. We go through a lot of silverware. —INTERVIEW BY JOE RAY

INFO Rooms from \$135; from \$240 Thu and Sun, including breakfast and dinner; willows-inn.com



TASTING ROOM 2.0

Cheaper than full bottles, faster than a day of winery hopping, and super cute to boot, TastingRoom's new six-packs of minis bring wine tasting to you (they ship everywhere but Montana). Using new technology, California and Oregon wine is poured into tiny 50-ml. bottles in a zero-oxygen chamber to prevent oxidation, which changes taste. Order a single-winery sampler or one with a mix of labels. From \$20; tastingroom.com

Brainstorming getaways

That novel you want to write? The business you've been meaning to start? These hotels get the creative juices flowing.

	INSPIRATION FACTOR	BONUS
HOTEL MURANO TACOMA From \$159; murano.com	The lobby and hallways are filled with blown-glass artwork, shown alongside artists' sketches and process shots to get your wheels turning.	Each room comes with books and a fully loaded iPod by request.
HOTEL KEEN PALO ALTO, CA From \$119; hotelkeen.com	It's the go-to overnight for Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Whiteboard walls and of-the-minute technology help you dream up dot-com ideas.	Breakfast starts early (6:30 a.m.); tomorrow's billionaires don't sleep late.
JUPITER HOTEL PORTLAND From \$114 (from \$59 after midnight); jupiterhotel.com	Rooms with chalkboard doors (pictured) and painted murals jump-start your short story collection, while event spaces with floor-to-ceiling writing boards could be ground zero for the next big start-up.	It's walking distance from Powell's Books; future Hemingways can take the tour to Distillery Row.



FROM TOP: JIM HENKENS, JOHN CLARK, JEFFERY CROSS

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