

Restaurant review: Jory

By [David Sarasohn, The Oregonian](#)

November 18, 2009, 7:22AM



Executive Chef Nathan Lockwood in action at Jory.

We know we're reaching the ultimate level of eating locally when we start naming restaurants after neighborhood dirt: topsoil as terroir.

[Jory](#), the elegant new restaurant at the elegant new Allison Inn & Spa near Newberg, is named after one of the trademark soils of Oregon wine country. It's a mark of the depth of its commitment to localism -- jory soil typically runs several feet deep -- as well as a kitchen not afraid to get its hands dirty.

By definition, that means an impressive emphasis on the wines providing the signature harvest of the surrounding hills. But the kitchen run by Nathan Lockwood, a talented Bay Area import, also displays the commitment to and command of local ingredients to claim a powerful grass-roots identity.

Lockwood and The Allison -- which opened in late September declaring its regional credentials with its own hazelnut orchards, vegetable garden and pinot noir vines -- pop the cork for a Willamette Valley wine country destination resort intended to re-imagine the region. "The next Napa" -- an unrealized ambition in the area for many vintages -- might now be close enough to roll around your mouth and taste.

The wine country has some impressive restaurants, with more arriving steadily. But Jory has a new scope and range. Lockwood draws on the proteins and produce of the entire Northwest to create bold new dishes, backed by a sweeping wine cellar and a dramatic setting of wood, stone and granite. Grilled Muscovy duck over roasted grapes is striking by itself; here, you can also watch it cook over a wood grill, with chefs providing play by play. And in the center of an upscale resort and spa it's part of an ambitious, long-awaited attempt to turn an appellation into a destination.

The first sign of the extent of the effort may be the size and shrewdness of the local wine list. But the next impression -- maybe an appetizer of agnolotti stuffed with guinea hen and duck that actually taste like guinea hen and duck, in a woodsy broth laced with Oregon truffle and tiny local wild mushrooms brought in the day before -- carves out its own local identity.

It's a mark of Lockwood's skill in distilling the intense and unusual -- not to say regional -- flavors, a style that's flashed in various other openers. Saffron fettuccine in a tomato-fennel broth with bay scallops, prawns and mussels may be a more delicate variation on cioppino, but it's also a warm home for Northwest seafood. Mouth-filling bacala crostini is a clear regional stretch; there's not a lot of Oregon salt cod. But its supporting salad of fennel and julienned black kale sets off the salty spread.

Dishes can topple over. Butternut squash soup is so rich that hunks of pork belly take the plate past unctuous. The shreds of fresh apple (a favorite ingredient of Lockwood's) that share the bowl set off the soup more cleanly and could have been left to their own devices.

The kitchen also does well with larger hunks of protein.

A trio of cuts of local lamb -- roasted loin, vividly flavored braised shoulder and the star, grilled ribs somewhere between spare and meaty -- makes a powerful case for the entire animal. Locally produced, a thick grilled Berkshire pork chop, faintly smoky, faintly spicy, rejects any claim of being another white meat. It's livestock, at a muscular medium-rare,

supported by dense dandelion mashed potatoes.



Crushed hazelnuts cut the richness of slabs of Muscovy duck breast, while bacon-wrapped sturgeon resists the chewiness that sets in if this fish is cooked a blink too long. Wine-braised venison shank has a straightforward tenderness rarely seen in any variation of osso buco.

On the other hand, a dish of spot prawns and ruby red trout has tasty ingredients that don't seem to have much to say to each other.

The high-ceilinged dining area, in appropriate earth tones, sweeps around an open kitchen and looks out toward the endlessly productive Willamette hills. And Jory again digs deep into local roots with its cheese offering, half a dozen equally divided between Oregon and Washington (selection of three, \$15). It reaches another peak of prandial personalism with a nutty, semisoft Sally Jackson cheese, Renata, made exclusively from the milk of a brown Swiss heifer named Renata. By comparison, simply naming the farm that grew the greens now seems so vague.

There's nothing vague about Jory's desserts. Especially the endearing orange-cardamom doughnuts accompanying a vanilla crème brûlée, which can make you wonder which Oregon wine goes with doughnuts. Equally comforting is a brown butter cake with addictive hazelnut praline ice cream. The most ambitious offering is a chocolate platter featuring a super candy bar of dark chocolate mousse with a base of hazelnut crisp layered in ganache, and a re-imagined ice cream sandwich of espresso gelato between butter-powered shortbread cookies.

Most entrees are in the mid-\$20s, relatively reasonable for this level of elegance. (Room rates are less forgiving.) Service is not only engaging but knowledgeable; servers offer the kind of wine insights sometimes limited to sommeliers.

There's a lot to talk about. The wine list is not only considerable, it's imaginatively arranged. A hundred Oregon pinot noirs may be unusual, but this list is also arranged into seven different neighborhoods such as Chehalem Mountain, Dundee Hills and Ribbon Ridge. The list includes numbers of reasonable and interesting choices in the \$30 to \$50 range, and also an extensive list of frequently forgotten half-bottles, which include not only a dozen Oregon pinot noirs but unusual semi-size options such as Chateauneuf du Pape and Brunello di Montalcino.

Two dozen wines by the glass are also available by half-glass samples or 1-ounce tastings, along with half a dozen four-wine flights, including a flight of four samples of the widely dismissed 2007 pinot noir vintage titled "The Critics Are Wrong." (The Brickhouse, just by itself, makes the case.)

Jory is a successful, inviting, creative restaurant, with a range new to the Oregon wine country, a scope that allows it not only to reflect but also express the region and the Northwest. With grape vines on one side and a sweeping view of Willamette Valley hills on the other, it's a bold attempt to make an appellation a destination.

In the past two sessions of the Oregon Legislature, efforts were launched to name jory the official state soil. In the next session, supporters will have a whole new argument.

-- [David Sarasohn](#)

Summing up:

Grade: A-

Cuisine and scene: Exciting, ambitious new resort and kitchen in and of the Oregon wine country, featuring a menu with the depth and richness of Oregon pinot noir.

Recommended: Agnolotti pasta filled with duck and guinea hen; saffron fettuccine with seafood; bacala crostini with black kale; grilled Berkshire pork chop; trio of lamb; vanilla crème brûlée with warm orange-cardamom doughnuts; warm brown butter cake with hazelnut praline ice cream

Vegetarian friendly? Chickory salad, cheese course

Sound level: Quiet enough to hear a cork pop, except for proximity to lounge music (Saturday nights) and crackling of the wood grill.

Beverages: Remarkable 700-bottle wine list, including 100 Oregon pinot noirs, wine flights, 1-ounce tastes, half-glass samples.

Price range: Appetizers, \$9-\$13; entrees, \$23-\$36; desserts, \$8-\$9. Three-course Sunday family suppers, \$29

Extras: Reservations; major credit cards; parking (with priority for hybrid vehicles); disabled access

Serving: Breakfast, lunch, dinner, daily; brunch Sunday

More info: 2525 Allison Lane, Newberg; 503-554-2525, www.theallison.com