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Chef Jin's Garden-to-Table at Jory

by Tamara Muldoon

THE ALLISON INN AND SPA in Newberg, Oregon, brings the garden-to-table concept home with its 1.5-acre chef's garden and greenhouse, providing fresh, organic produce year-round for the resort's award-winning JORY restaurant. Located 45-minutes south of Portland, The Allison is notable for its striking, energy-efficient architecture, which earned LEED Gold Certification, and for its ongoing commitment to sustainable operating practices.

"That's what we preach, and we shouldn't talk about garden-to-table if we can't provide just that," says The

Allison's Executive Chef, Sunny Jin, a 2015 James Beard "Best Chef Northwest" award semifinalist. He works closely with full-time Garden Manager, Anna Ashby, deciding what to grow each season, ranging from kitchen staples like leafy greens, tomatoes and squash, to edible flowers and exotic plants. Bee hives support pollination and provide honey for the kitchen. Tucked among the resort's landscape are fruit-bearing plants, including plums, figs, apples, berries and grapes.

"One great benefit of having your own garden space is understanding more

about the plant and what's usable," says Jin, who utilizes parts of produce that are typically discarded, for example, arugula flowers and pea tendrils. He also gets ideas while on foraging walks with his wife. Among current garden experiments are burdock root, purslane, and Italian red-stemmed dandelion.

Guests are welcome to visit the garden, where Ashby is likely to offer a leaf or flower to taste. Don't be shy—ask about that intriguing yet unrecognizable flavor in your meal at JORY. Servers are tutored daily on menu items, and the chefs know every component of every dish and where it was sourced. "Education is really important," says Jin. "It doesn't matter how well we know the food if it's not being showcased properly."

Established in 2009 with a half-acre, the chef's garden expanded to its current size and a greenhouse was added in 2013.

Jin feels that the benefit it brings to their overall operation, in the ability to grow some of their own produce and ensure the freshest ingredients, is invaluable. The chef's garden provides harder-to-source items and products that enhance flavor; things like heirloom tomatoes, fresh horseradish and dragon's-tongue mustard. At the same time, the focus on relationships with local suppliers is just as strong, if not stronger.

A graduate of Portland's Western Culinary Institute, Chef Sunny Jin learned his craft from some of the world's top chefs, working at Napa Valley's renowned French Laundry, as well as Catalanian standout, El Bulli, in Spain. Extensive European travel exposed him to a wide variety of international cuisine. However, Jin was drawn back to the Pacific Northwest, recognizing its burgeoning food and wine scene.

The 100-seat JORY restaurant, named for the Willamette Valley's distinctive soil type, features what it terms "Oregon Wine Country Cuisine." In addition to menus based on local, seasonal ingredients, diners enjoy Northwest wines, microbrews and distilled spirits. An impressive wine list of 800 labels, plus 40 by-the-glass vintages, includes wines made from pinot noir and pinot gris grapes grown on the resort grounds.

Ashby writes a weekly in-house blog, State of the Garden, to keep kitchen staff informed on what produce is nearly ready for harvest, what is in abundance, and what is nearly done, helping them to plan JORY's ever-changing menus. It is this seasonality, the Willamette Valley's agricultural abundance, and the opportunity to experiment in the chef's garden that keeps JORY's cuisine fresh and exciting. Chef Sunny Jin sums it up by saying, "It is our ambition to remain influenced by our community purveyors, our on-site garden as well as the surrounding wine region, and the changing seasons."

To reserve a table at Jory, go online at theallison.com. To find out more about staying in the Newberg area, visit chehalemvalley.org. 