



- Advertisement -

Three shining stars in the U.S. lodging/dining galaxy

By

Kathleen Thomas Gaspar

October 17, 2023

The service industry is taking note: in-house hotel dining options are increasingly important to travelers. And with demand on the rise for interesting and unique places to stay — with outstanding meals as well — lodging facilities are fulfilling consumers' expectations not only with creativity but also authenticity.

Today's business/recreational/little-bit-of-both traveler has a renewed sense of adventure, and our post-pandemic world is now a wayfarer's hotel/dining oyster. American travelers can research and virtually pre-visit hundreds of facilities coast -to- coast and border-to-border. From flights of nomadic fancy to deep-rooted history, the choices of accommodations and cuisine/cultural reflections are close to endless.

A world away from the everyday hustle and grind in concept and cuisine is Campo at Los Poblanos Historic Inn & Organic Farm in Albuquerque, NM. This establishment doesn't simply serve up authentic and indigenous Southwestern fare; it actually produces many of the menu items on-site.

Its website, www.lospoblanos.com, describes this unique hotel/restaurant in its history-drenched setting as "a family-run business with personable staff that are dedicated to its unique model of historic preservation and regenerative agriculture. The result is one of the most pure field-to-fork menus in the country, using organic ingredients grown on site and other farms in the Rio Grande Valley. With charming guest rooms and signature lavender products, the rich history of Los Poblanos is the foundation for the dynamic model it has grown into."

Its historical significance is immense — in the 14th century the land was inhabited by Ancestral Pueblo Indians, and many of those who originally settled in the area are believed to have come from Puebla, Mexico. Citizens of Puebla are called "Poblanos."

In the mid-teens of the 1700s the Poblano land was made part of the Elena Gallegos land grant, and the original ranch was owned through the 19th century by Ambrosio and Juan Cristobal Armijo. It was "reassembled" by Albert and Ruth Simms in the 1930s, and today it includes the original headquarters of the 800-acre ranch that extended to the crest of the Sandia Mountains, owned by Albert Simms and Ruth Hanna McCormick Simms.

Considered one of the most magnificent historic properties in the Southwest, Los Poblanos of today was designed in 1932 by renowned architect, John Gaw Meem, the "Father of Santa Fe Style." The Inn has 45 guest rooms in three settings — the elegant Meem Room and Suites, the Farm Suites and the Field Rooms. Los Poblanos also boasts a full-service spa and a working organic farm, all of which make for a spectacular special events and wedding setting.

No less spectacular are the Campo menus, which are "rooted in seasonal organic ingredients

plucked from the farm as well as provisions sourced from local farmers and ranchers.”

The handmade pastas “are a true labor of love, along with a pre-or post-dinner cocktail that includes lavender simple syrup sourced straight from their own backyard.”

If the hook is the food, lodging and amenities, the bait, as it were, might well be what the operation describes as its ethos.

Campo means field in Spanish, and that “reflects the property’s dedication to organic farming both on the Los Poblanos farm fields and within the local foodshed.

For diners looking for something extra special, there’s a chef’s tasting and sommelier-guided wine pairing dinner that is available and can be requested in advance.”

Head Chef is Christopher Bethoney, and Sous Chef is Kennedi Martinez.

What might a guest find on the Campo seasonal menu? A nosh board that includes an assortment of cheeses and meats, house-made pickles, homemade bread and crackers. There are also seasonal soups and salads ranging from Warm Potato Salad to Lemon Za’Atar Salad to an intriguing Field Salad with pistachio, Aries cheese, pickled beets and onions and Monticello Balsamico.

Local lamb is sourced through a long-term partnership with the Manzanares family, who produce Shepherd’s Lamb label certified meat and graze their lamb on wild land. Dishes of note include Braised Lamb Birria with roasted seasonal vegetables, blue corn hominy and house-made Sonora wheat tortillas.

The Tamale Adovada — red chile-braised beef tamale, wood-fired mushrooms, roasted radish and potato, Oaxacan cheese and mantequilla beans — is another stellar offering. Seared Duck Breast boasts the fowl with mole blanco, grilled carrots, braised greens, pickled mulberry sauce. Crispy Pork Memela comes with local beans, cilantro, quick-pickled cabbage and basil. The Sweet Potato Pierogi has Holey Cow Swiss, house kimchi, caramelized onion and sour cream, and Ceviche is seasonal fish with chiles, mint, cilantro, lime and house-made corn tostadas.

More Los Poblanos-grown goodness comes with Wood-Fired Cabbage, a dish that also includes chivo blanco beans and summer squash, cheesy hominy grits and pecan chimichurri. The Roasted Mushroom & Goat Cheese Agnolotti has spring alliums, turnips, crispy mushrooms and native sumac.

And there’s this: In addition to its lavender farm, Los Poblanos also grows botanicals, including piñon, rose, hawthorn and chamomile — and it makes its own gin. Wow.

“Los Poblanos has been growing and distilling botanicals on our historic farm in the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque for over two decades. Our botanical spirits are thoughtfully developed by dedicated farmers, gardeners, herbalists, distillers and mixologists to capture the flavor profiles of our unique high desert landscape.

“Born on the farm and distilled in house, our western dry gin combines sixteen botanicals that express the spirit of the Rio Grande Valley and thrive on our small organic farm including pin?on, rose, hawthorn and chamomile. Our lavender gin highlights the soothing medicinal and aromatic properties of lavender with the complexity of four varieties to transport you to the fields of Los

Poblanos.”

Easy is a word often associated with time spent relaxing in hotel surroundings and dining on the region’s signature fare. And if the hotel and dining facility are located in New Orleans, Easy takes on a much Big(ger) connotation.

The Hotel Peter and Paul and The Elysian Bar combine for what is certainly one of New Orleans’ most unique lodging/dining experiences.

About the repast setting: In classical mythology, the Elysian Fields was literally paradise, where the departed souls of those who had been blessed went after mortal death. In more recent times the term “Elysian Fields” came to be known as that “peaceful, easy feeling” a special place or time evokes. And in NOLA, Elysian Fields Avenue is a main artery in the Marigny Neighborhood, a place known for eateries, bars and jazz.

Property renovation was completed in 2018, transforming three 1870s’ buildings that were originally a Catholic church, school and rectory. The restoration spanned four years and culminated in lodging and dining that are indeed peaceful and easy. The hotel’s guest room buildings — with no two guest rooms alike — are The School House, The Rectory and The Convent. And the 5,000-square-foot church itself, breathtaking in its restored state, has been deconsecrated.

No two School House rooms are alike, with guests ensconced in the school theater, classrooms and original sleeping quarters under the eaves. Décor reflects European cultures.

The Rectory is the building where the clergy was housed, and the five rooms in it are gracious. Once home to the Marianite nuns who taught at the school, The Convent is described as “sanctified and secluded” and has seven lovely, quiet rooms.

The Elysian’s kitchen, which serves European-influenced seasonal Southern fare, is headed up by Chef Jonathan Klaskala. There are many dishes not to be missed, meaning return visits are absolutely necessary. The Café Menu’s breakfast-brunch features lovely pastries and a palette of coffee and tea refreshments. Brunch is served Friday-Monday with regional items including Brioche Rolls and Croissants, Marinated Octopus, Mapleque Premium Oysters, Beet Salad, Fried Grits, French Rolled Omelette and the cleverly named Baked Eggs in Purgatory.

Receiving high marks are locally sourced shrimp and shellfish, available on the Dinner Menu, and the meal is a wonderful kaleidoscope of flavors, textures and colors. Choices include Fettuccini and Clam, Roasted Gulf Shrimp, Grilled Louisiana Squash, Crab & Ricotta Gnocchi, Chicken Under a Brick, Strip Loin and Daily Fish.

Desserts are the epitome of eclectic and exuberant New Orleans: Rosemary Chocolate Tart and Goat Milk Panda Cotta — and there’s music to boot.

Last but certainly not least, there’s one slightly different star in the trio described here, and it is not actually a hotel any longer — although the building continues to house a restaurant to which locals-in-the-know and adventurous travelers alike gravitate — the Idanha Hotel in downtown Boise, ID.

Built at the turn of the 20th century for an astronomical (at the time) cost of \$125,000, the Idanha converted from classy hotel rooms and suites to apartments in the 1970s, but the lower levels still house a number of businesses, including the popular Bombay Grill.

The historic French-chateau style Idanha was designed by William S. Campbell. When it opened on New Year's Day in 1901, it was Boise's first and only skyscraper — with an elevator!

During its long run as a hotel, it saw its fair share of celebrities, notably U.S. Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. It's a popular rumor that during Prohibition in the Roaring 20s, the Idanha turned a pretty profit keeping imbibers happy with liquor served in a hidden card room.

Local lore also has it that when he was a guest at the Idanha in the 1960s, the late singer/songwriter Roger Miller was inspired to write the iconic King of the Road. Famed jazz pianist Gene Harris, who semi-retired to Boise in the mid '70s, continued to perform at the Idanha regularly for years.

The Idanha had its otherworldly side, too — guests and employees often reported strange happenings in the hotel, with doors opening and closing and the elevator moving when no one was operating it.

Now that we're well into the 21st century, otherworldly at the Idanha translates to out of this world with the food at the Bombay Grill, which is known for its authentic Indian and Pakistani food. Visit the restaurant and peruse the menu at www.bombayboise.com/menu.

Now, maybe it's the easy access to the nine-month consistent supply of Spanish Sweets from the Treasure Valley of Idaho-E. Oregon — Bombay Grill makes good use of onions across its extensive menu, with center-plate dishes heaped high and of course onions essential as an ingredient in other items.

Among the many standout dishes are Vegetable Pakoras, a postcard of batter fried onions, potatoes, spinach, cauliflower served with chutney; Kachumber Salad Chopped with fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and onions; and Chicken Tikka Masala Tender broiled chicken pieces in tomato, onion and cream sauce. There's also Chicken Kadai Chicken with tomatoes, green peppers and onion; Lamb Curry in an onion sauce; Lamb Boti Kebab in tomato, onion and cream sauce; and Paneer Tikka Masala with onions, tomatoes, butter and cream.

Homemade breads at the Bombay Grill include Onion Kulcha Stuffed with onions. All authentic, prepared fresh with a nod to onions.

So it's not a stretch to say the glorious upshot of this resurgence of wanderlust is multifaceted: The nation's economy can use a boost, and increased travel and restaurant dining definitely is step in the right direction; lodging and foodservice industries, hard-hit by the pandemic, have upped their games and responding to consumer preferences, both established and emerging.

New adventures await at destinations beyond the big blue sky, across the deep blue sea and along the faded blue highways.

And the allure of travel is heightened even more by fabulous food: Southwestern and indigenous in New Mexico, Southern fused with European in the Big Easy, Indian in the happy surroundings of historic Boise... maybe even strawberry and onion pizza in your own backyard.

To paraphrase Julia Child, it's hard to imagine any of it without Spanish Sweets from Idaho-E. Oregon.

[Kathleen Thomas Gaspar](#)

About Kathleen Thomas Gaspar |

Kathleen is a Colorado native and has been writing about produce for more than three decades and has been a professional journalist for more than four decades. Over the years she's covered a cornucopia of crops grown both in the United States and abroad, and she's visited dozens of states – traveling by car from her home base in Colorado to the Northwest and Southeast, as far as Vancouver, BC, and Homestead, FL. Now semi-retired, Kathleen continues to write about produce and is also penning an ongoing series of fiction novels. She's a wife, mother of two grown sons and grandmother of six, and she and her fly fisherman husband Abe reside in the Banana Belt town of Cañon City.

[Print](#)
