Old-fashioned buckboards transport guests along winding country trails.

CHRISTMAS AT THE HOMESTEAD

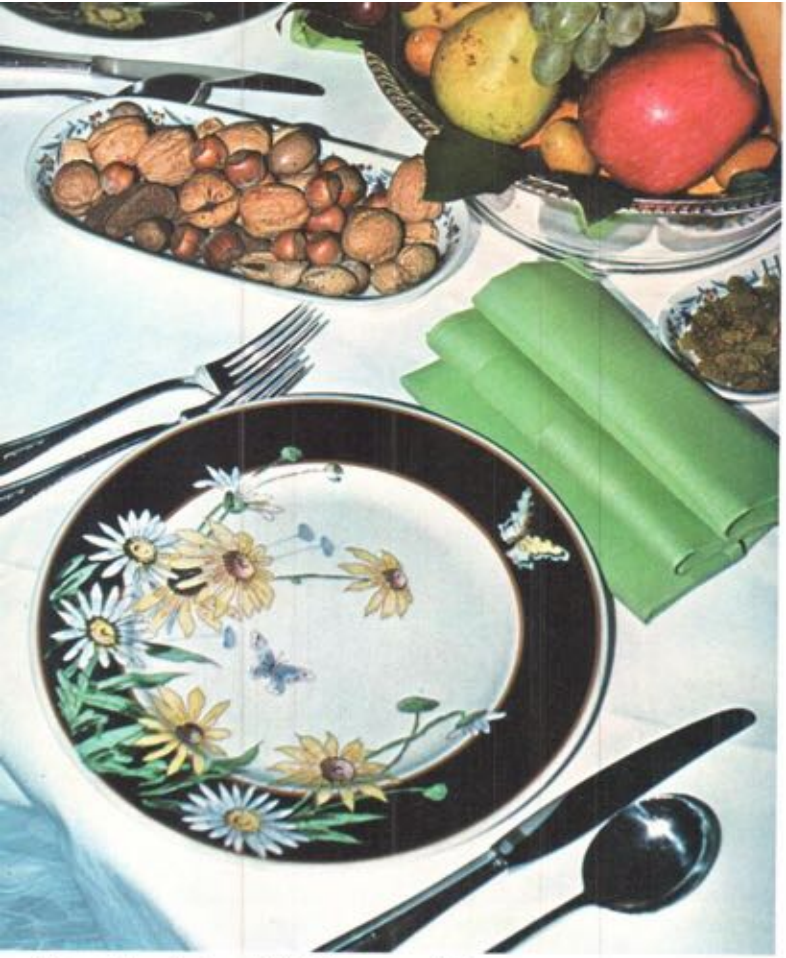
By Mimi Elder

Photographs by Lans Christensen

After countless strained climbs, inching up one side of the mountain and coasting down the other, the steam engine pants into Hot Springs station. There is a long, high-pitched squeal of brakes, a loud "pffft" as the engine blows her steam; the conductor steps out of a sumptuous private car, and servants, a mind-boggling collection of steamer trunks, portmanteaus, and hatboxes, and a parade of fashionable travelers soon emerge behind him. The year is 1907, and the ladies and gentlemen have arrived to luxuriate in the famed mineral baths at The Homestead, a delightful spa nestled in the rolling hills of Virginia.

THE LONG DRIVE that winds up to the imposing white-columned building is the most busily trafficked road in Bath County, with cars, horses, jeeps, and even a U-Haul trailer, and the activity in the drive is nothing compared to the bustle beneath the portico. Carols play, and the doors swing nonstop as friends and families whirl in and out greeting one another joyfully and making introductions. A couple who became engaged here fifty-three years ago waits by the door to bundle into hugs the exuberant great-grandchildren that come tumbling out of a car and romping inside, and the lilt of "Merry Christmas" echoes through the Great Hall. Everyone seems to be collecting ski caps and riding boots, disentangling skates from needlepoint, and loading bundles of packages into the giant bins fitted atop the luggage trolleys. The time is the present, and the holidayers have arrived with their shopping, wrapping, baking, and decorating behind them, to revel in Christmas at The Homestead.

Inside, the youngest children race the length of the Great Hall, only to brake in awe before the most grandiose indoor Christmas tree they have ever seen. Before the fireplaces cousins and aunts and in-laws chatter amid a bright sea of



Place settings feature Virginia flowers or birds.

Winter fruit salad The Homestead

presents, and interspersed with the poinsettias that lead all guests, inevitably, to the foot of that splendid tree are shopping bags and totes bulging with gifts. Here and there, a bored and beribboned Dachshund and a frenzied and beribboned Pekingese strain at their leashes. The room itself is a package—filled with teasers to introduce the hotel's true treasures.

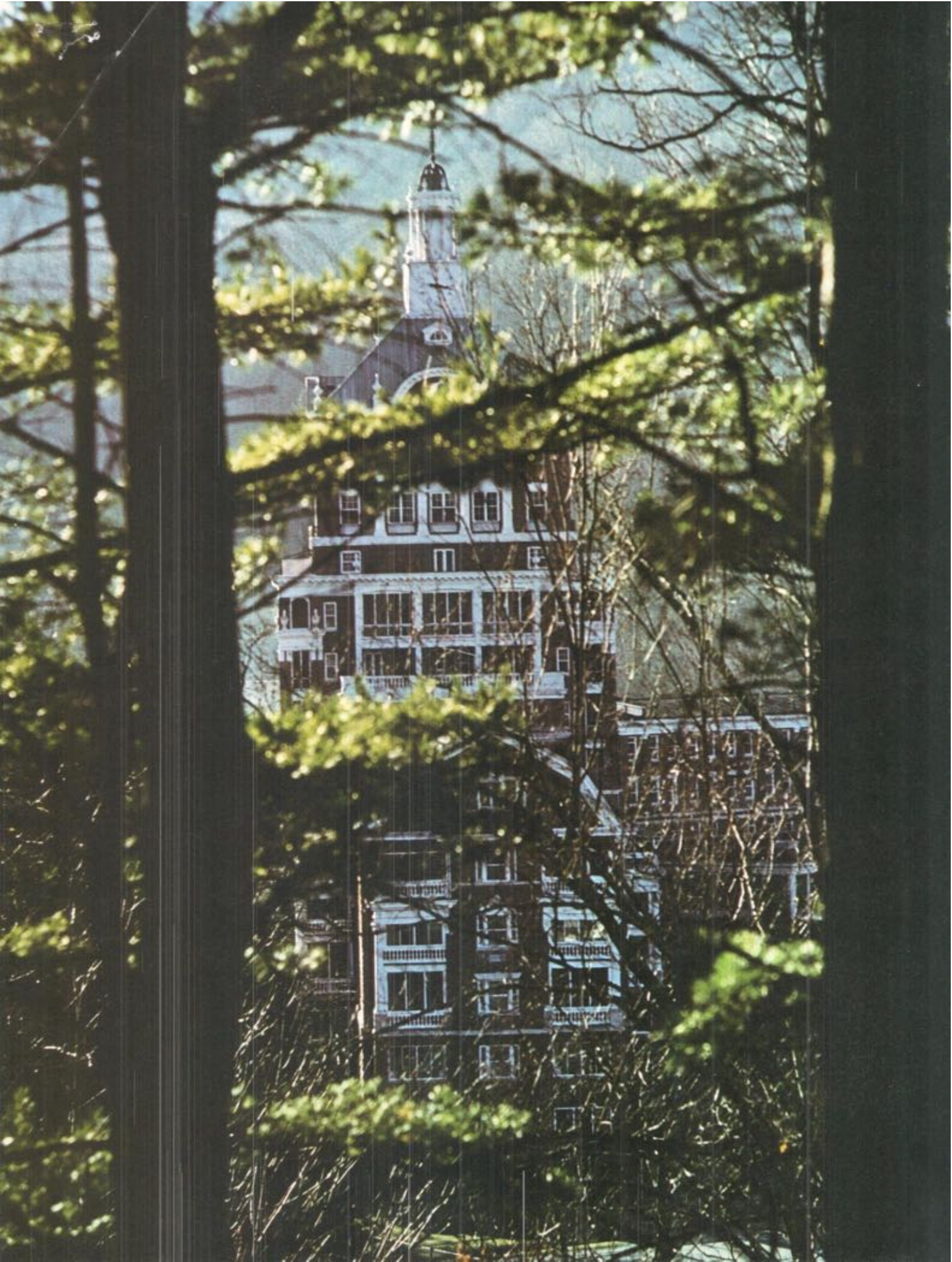
Christmas trees large and small appear throughout The Homestead, some tinsel-draped traditional, others whimsically bedecked with miniature toys or musical instruments. Mantles are bonneted with pine boughs, candles, ribbons, and wood carvings, and doorways wear evergreen halos. The rooms are alive with the sounds, sights, spirits, and, most especially, the tastes of Christmas.

The main dining room fairly hums with festivity. There is much cheerful greeting—to friends and waiters known for years—and the glittering traffic of formal-clad guests of every age weaving paths to and from the dance floor. Great round tables, each centered with a poinsettia, accommodate even the largest families, and they are set with white linen that points up striking china. The plates, with designs of Virginia flowers or birds inside a deep green rim, were made many years ago for the hotel and cannot be duplicated. In daytime the large L-shaped room is filled with sunlight, and on the cream-colored walls hang numbered Audubon prints.

Crab meat is used abundantly here, and I began my first dinner with a gratin of deviled crab. During our stay we savored fresh crab in every guise and ordered it each time Chef Albert Schnarwyler prepared it. The gratin is napped with a spiced cream sauce, sprinkled with Parmesan cheese, and put briefly under the broiler—and it is among the kitchen's best preparations. A companion's selection brought slices cut from a galantine of capon garnished with a bit of apple and walnut salad and served with Cumberland sauce. Next came a fine roast chicken with wild rice and hazelnut stuffing and mandarin sauce and a pair of thick and succulent veal chops. The wine list, though not extensive, includes a good selection of California wines, and we ordered a bottle of Freemark Abbey Chardonnay. Our desserts were a delightful Champagne and pineapple sherbet (the sherbet and ice-cream repertoire is vast, and a different flavor is made each morning) and impeccable strawberries in wine sauce.

Other first course possibilities that night included *gravlaks*, which I chose another evening and determined should not be passed up again; and, among the entrées, breast of pheasant on a crouton spread with duck liver and napped with périgourdine sauce, a trio of pink and meaty lamb chops, and a fillet of trout taken only hours earlier from the nearby Allegheny river.

Established as a "modern hotel" in 1846, The Homestead was for its early-twentieth-century guests the second stop on a journey that took them to four spas: Warm Springs, known as "The Warm"; Hot Springs, five miles from The Warm, with water five degrees warmer, and known as "The Hot"; Healing Springs; and White Sulphur Springs. The privileged "bathers" would travel from one spring to another in the prescribed order, usually spending



of the log fires. Comfortable sitting rooms accommodate everyone from the skier's grandmother to tiny grandchildren. A relaxed informality exists that makes guests feel immediately welcome and quite at ease with the Norwegian style of meals.

Breakfast, for instance, is something special and usually works on the self-service principle. A long table is decked out with a variety of foods that tempt the most jaded palate. For the connoisseur, there are as many as fifteen kinds of pickled herring and next to them an array of cold meats. One end of the table has three wooden tubs filled with breakfast cereal, including a crunchy *muesli* mixture; the other end has half a dozen sorts of crisp bread as well as hot white rolls and boiled eggs, which nestle under napkins in baskets.

Cheese has an important place on the Norwegian breakfast table. *Gjetost* is square and brown with a distinctly caramel flavor that comes from the mixture of goat's and cow's milk. From the west coast of Norway there is a much stronger cheese—*gammelost*. Well matured and made of ewe's milk, it is penned, by sensible tradition, in a tightly lidded tureen. The Roquefort-like *normanna*, the mild Tilsit, and the waxy Jarlsberg are all there, too. Huge bowls of local raspberry jam stand ready to be served with cereal or rolls, and the thin yogurtlike *surmelk* in big jugs is usually consumed by the glass but also tastes good poured over cereal.

Skiers, already dressed in traditional knee-length breeches and thick woolen stockings, pad to and fro, trying this and that, some eating a lot, others a little. When they are well warmed, they snap on their skis, which are stacked handily by the front door, swish across the car park, down a sharp dip to the wooden bridge, and away past the chair lift to the slopes. Even parents with young children set out, the babies trailing along in egg-shaped plastic sleds tied by reins to their fathers.

The chair lift swings high above the ski school and plods its way up the hillside between the tall straight pine trees toward the Kanten Kro restaurant at the top. Downhill skiers can turn at once there and dance their merry patterns back down the hill; but cross-country buffs tighten their rucksack straps, glance at the brightly painted signposts, and set off on trails that suit their abilities.

The Kanten Kro is on the edge of a huge plateau that stretches away to a far valley. Over 250 miles of well marked trails wind across the low, rounded mountains, which might explain the popularity of cross-country skiing in Norway. Whereas the Alps are steep and slashed with valleys, the older, weathered rocks of Scandinavia allow skiers to slip their way over the landscape, uninterrupted by nature's pitfalls.

"I've been to Vermont, the Rockies around Banff, and the Laurentians," says Unn Schøyen. "The Laurentian terrain is similar to what is found here. Vermont has a gentler expanse, but neither place has the broad areas that we have, where you can go for ages without meeting people." And it is the wide open spaces that are so appealing, though one trail from the top of the lift wanders through the dark-green pines and forks to the left in a loop that suddenly dips

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Herring tartare at the Sjusjøen Høifjellshotell

Cheeses at the Sjusjøen Høifjellshotell

two weeks at each. Even though The Warm was the farthest north and thus most inconvenient for those from the Deep South, it was the first destination for a society that considered it a social gaffe to take the baths in any other sequence.

Having arrived in Hot Springs, guests were assisted from their railroad cars into carriages that conveyed them to the front door of the hotel, and the masses of luggage were brought up in wagons that followed. (To arrive at The Homestead by automobile was unthinkable until many years after that controversial transport had been invented, and the first man to do so, in 1922, was Fay Ingalls, whose father was primarily responsible for the direction of the hotel around the turn of the century. Mr. Ingalls' mode of transportation so angered his father that the young man hid his car the morning after his arrival and let it remain out of sight until the day of his departure.)

Once ensconced in the hotel, guests were informed of the proper procedure for taking the baths:

> The two sexes bathe alternately. . . . You may take three baths a day. . . . To bathe comfortably you should have a large cotton morning gown of a cashmere shawl pattern lined with crimson, a fancy Greek cap, Turkish slippers, and a pair of loose pantaloons; a garb that will not consume much time in doffing and donning. Stay in the bath 15 minutes, using very little exercise while in the water. As soon as you come out, hurry to your cabin, wrap yourself in a dry nightgown, go to bed, cover up warm, go to sleep, get into a fine perspiration, grow cool by degrees, wake up in half an hour, dress and go to dinner, with what appetite you have. This process, except the dinner, may be repeated twice a day.

Not all visitors followed this advice, for we heard delicious tales of bathers who lay for hours in the pool and had mint juleps floated out to them on cork trays.

The hot and warm springs are still used, and there are numerous ancillary treatments as well, but today one can find many additional reasons for visiting The Homestead.

Breakfast at The Homestead is a delightful idyll on a winter morning. The pantry is stocked with an astonishing variety of fresh fruits that are served at their peak, ripe and succulent. Our favorites were the perfectly ripened strawberries, lovely syrupy compotes, and some of the best baked apples we've ever had—puffed, full of juice, and not overly sweet.

For staunch Anglophiles there are kippers and herring, finnan haddie, creamed chipped beef, and the expected gamut of hot, fortifying fare, but once we had tasted the buckwheat cakes we rarely departed from that choice. Served with maple and fruit syrups, melted butter, and thick, lean bacon that also had a hint of maple flavor, they may have constituted a measure of monotony but surely one to which I willingly succumbed. A few mornings those true Southerners among us fell prey, with no regrets, to grits (served creamy and *hot*, as they should be) and country ham (not on the menu but always available and well worth requesting), as well as the irresistible assortment of warm breads and pastries. A silver pitcher of exceptionally

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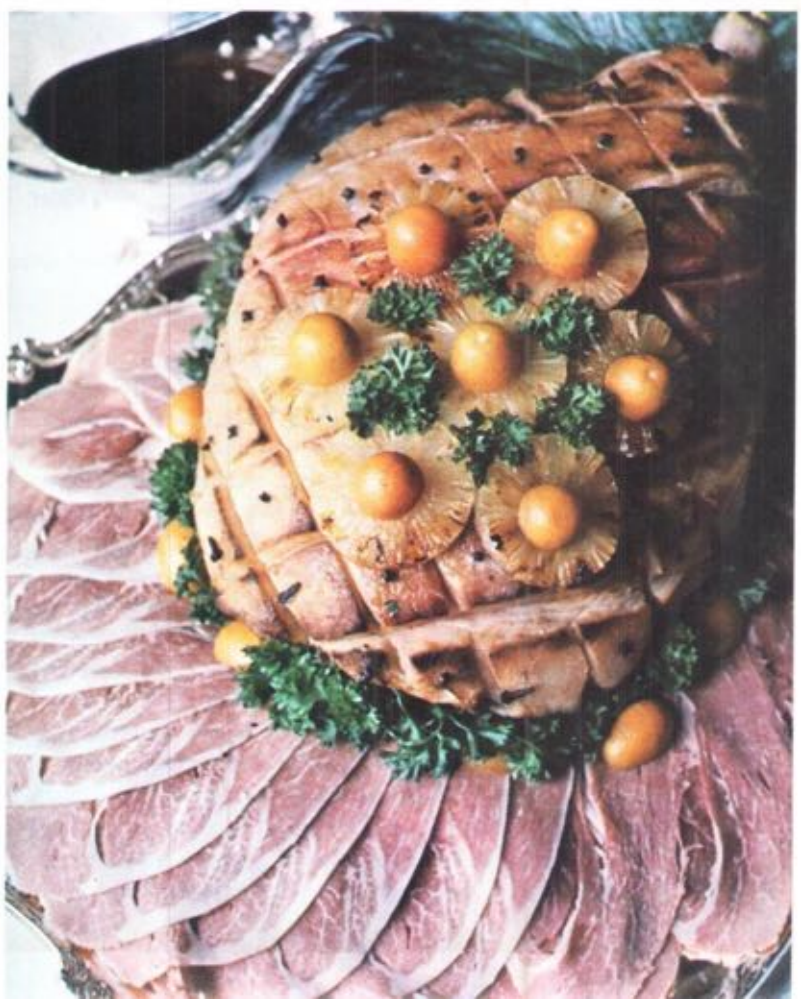
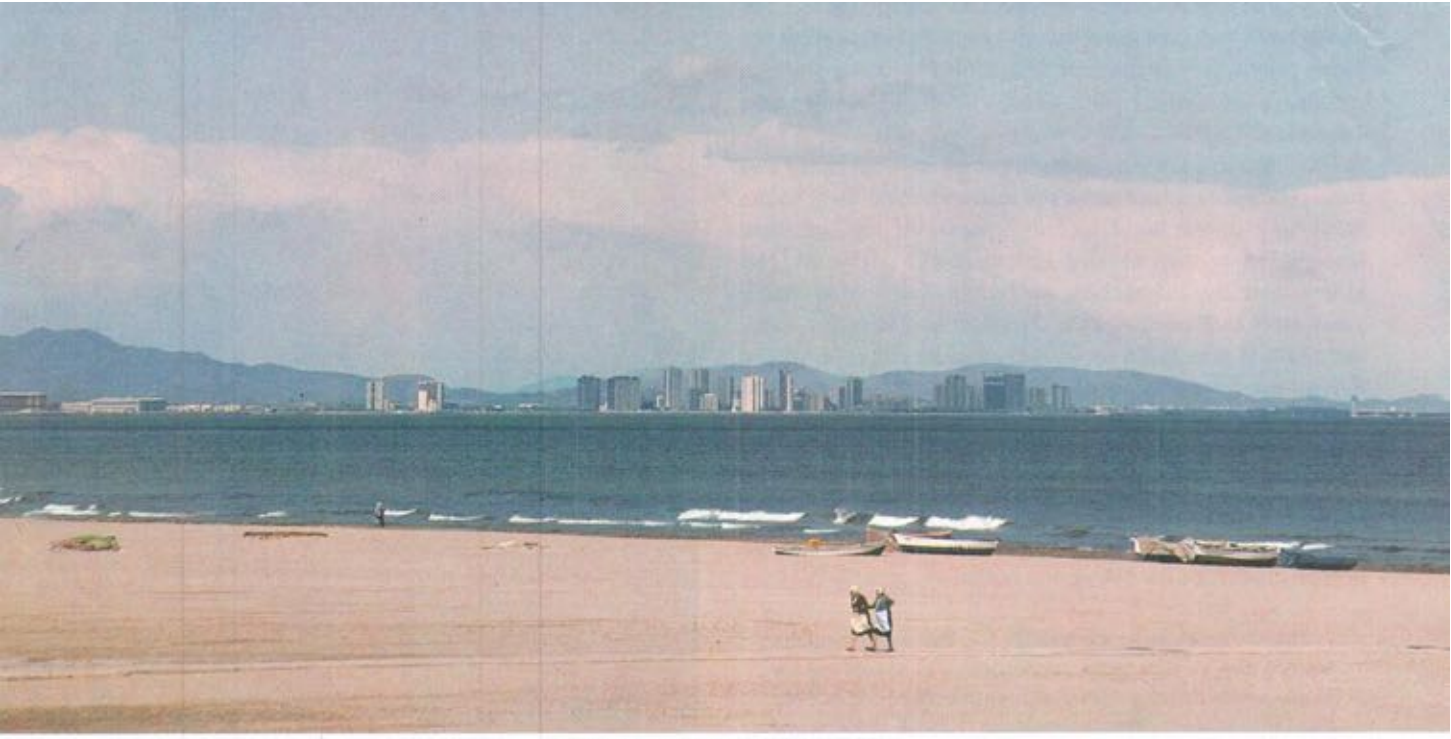
Plum pudding The Homestead

Baked Virginia ham





View of Sagunto from Las Arenas

Gourmet Holidays
VALENCIA

By Peter Todd Mitchell

Photographs by Ronny Jaques

THE SPANISH VERSION of the song "Valencia" opens with an evocation of *las huertas valencianas*, the groves of orange and lemon trees, pomegranate, and other fruits. Valencia is a region like the Nile valley, slender but immensely rich, its sunlit orchards, rice paddies, and palms watered by the rivers and streams of the interior on their way to the Mediterranean.

The orange groves begin to hug the road from the north soon after Sagunto, with its Roman theater and violent history. It was the Saguntum of the Punic wars, whose population preferred mass suicide by immolation to surrender. The Valencian plain levels out there, and the trees stretch for miles. On our last visit they were overloaded with fruit, a solid blanket of orange and green interrupted only by the thatched white *barracas* of the workers or the nineteenth-century villas, often "neo-Moorish" in style, of the landowners. Nearer Valencia, the city, other reasons for the region's wealth appeared: factory chimneys and new industries among them. The city is, after all, the third largest in Spain.

Valencia's spell has reached far beyond the *huertas*. The city beloved by the French Romantics as the frontier of their authentic Spain was later described with ardor by Ernest Hemingway and the local literary giant, Vicente Blasco-Ibáñez. Their writing, along with the paintings of Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida and quite a lot of music, helped make the legend of the city international.

We entered Valencia via one of the graceful Baroque bridges that span the wide bed of the river Turia, or Guadalaviar. From them one has a panoramic view of the city. One would love to have seen Valencia when Victor Hugo saw it and counted three hundred belfries. The walls were still standing then. They were leveled in 1865, leaving just two monumental gates, the Torres de Serranos and de Cuarte. These were only left because they served as prisons, if rather grand ones. One can get some idea of how

good coffee is placed on every table the moment diners are seated and is constantly refilled.

Prides of the kitchen are those breads and pastries, every crumb of which is made on the premises, and the selection is endless: buttery corn bread, golden-capped biscuits, tender Danish pastries, sticky pecan buns, crusty French and Italian loaves, fragrant rye, sandwich loaves of whole wheat, sourdough, and white, crusty dinner rolls, croissants, English muffins, and doughnuts—glazed, filled, sugared, and spiced. We never tired of peering into each hot tray that was passed, and the more we sampled, the more difficult it became to resist just a small morsel of each.

A special early-morning visit to the bread and pastry kitchen provided a feast for all the senses. Warm and sweet-smelling near the ovens, it was cool and airy where the pastry dough was being shaped on stone slabs. At the doorway loaves of French bread had been tucked into baskets, and sandwich loaves, already cooled, were slipped into shallow-shelved compartments with wire mesh doors where they would rest for a day before slicing. Biscuit trays were taken from the ovens to make room for fat mounds of rye dough slid to the rear on long, wooden peels.

The breads are baked in a specific order, determined by the temperature of the ovens. Each of the two bread ovens is twelve by thirteen feet and just high enough for the tallest loaves to have air space after rising. Made of brick, they are so well constructed that although they are in constant use they need only be lighted for two hours daily: The remainder of the time they bake on retained heat. They were built over seventy-five years ago and have long outlived their thermostats, but a baker assured us, "Oh, I know how hot they are. If I can hold my open hand in there for just thirteen seconds, then it's four hundred degrees—time to put in the croissants."

Mounds of sourdough are weighed and divided into loaves. Then the dough is given a final kneading and left to rise while the hard rolls bake. In another corner a baker spreads dried peas in tart shells to prevent the crusts from puffing as they bake. He removes a tray of elephant ears and some puff-pastry rectangles that will be made into napoleons and then slides the tart shells into the oven. An assistant selects unblemished strawberries to fill the shells while another stirs dark rum into a rich pastry cream.

After this early-day feasting, a shuttle bus takes skiers, skaters, and the merely curious up Warm Springs Mountain to the slopes, skating rink, and chalet. There are three ski slopes, including an "expert" slope with a double chair lift that is new this year and a ski school for both children and adults. The children's school is especially popular, and after a few lessons we saw some youngsters who were little more than toddlers happily scooting down a gentle slope while their parents skied within sight on more advanced inclines. Although the combined slopes are capable of handling two thousand skiers, there are rarely more than five hundred—even when the ski conditions are excellent—so it's possible to get in lots of runs. In good weather families may spend the entire day on the mountain, taking the shuttle up together and then going their separate ways, only to meet again for lunch in the chalet.

A glassed-in aerie, the chalet provides a ringside seat for those sporting types who can't bear to miss a minute of the action as well as those who prefer to watch the spins and spills of others—without cooling their heels. Such hearty fare as chili and beef bourguignonne, plus all manner of sandwiches, doughnuts, cider, and hot chocolate, can be enjoyed at table, or at ease (feet up) around a large central hearth.

The skating rink overlooks one of the hotel's golf courses at the foot of the beginners' ski slope. It was virtually empty when we arrived the first morning and thus seemed a good place for a novice (me) to begin wobbling tentatively across the ice, as well as for someone more skilled (my husband) to demonstrate his prowess. I could number my cumulative ice-skating experiences to once on a crowded indoor rink and once on a cracking pond, so I spent some shaky mornings inching around the rink and cringing each time someone spun close to me. It seemed obvious that a lesson would be in order.

The skiing and skating instructors here are first rate, offering encouragement to beginners as well as pertinent tips to those who are more experienced. Just having a professional within grabbing distance gives new skaters confidence, and within a surprisingly short time most of those with a couple of lessons behind them are moving in time to the music and feeling much less imperiled—in fact, having fun. Lessons over, we skated for a long time, absorbing the spectacle of the mountains, oblivious to windburned cheeks and an occasionally dampened derriere. Silver blades glinting in the late afternoon sun, chiseling up a spray of ice . . . oops!

On Christmas Eve every guest is invited to a lavish cocktail party. Donder, Blitzen, et al, in the form of an enormous ice sculpture, prance along the length of a center table towing Santa behind them, and on each side holly and charming creatures of the forest, carved of beeswax, encircle ice bells. Whole tables are laden with trays of smoked salmon and appropriate garnishes; at one end of the room deft waiters pry clams and oysters from their shells to supplement bowls of shrimp and crab claws; a long table holds platters of clam shells stuffed with all manner of morsels; and on another are arrayed delectable canapés, ham biscuits, and crudités. For anyone inclined to accompany Champagne with a sweet, salvers of fresh pineapple chunks, grapes, and luscious strawberries wreathed around a compote of chocolate fondue are tucked away in a far corner—for surreptitious enjoyment. Indeed, the offerings seem to be all things for all people: We detoured past a troop of shined-up little boys with heads bowed around a table of salted nuts, and on the way out we saw nary a peanut in any dish.

The first real snow of the season began before dawn on Christmas morning, a fat-flaked, storybook snow that added the final fillip to a near-perfect setting in our room—crackling fire, lighted tree, and stockings (filled by some mysterious Homestead elf) hanging from mantles. The fragrance of smoky logs and evergreen mingled with that of yeasty rolls and coffee, and we toasted our good fortune before happily attacking our gifts.

By afternoon the snow had stopped falling and lay sparkling in the sun. Ski slopes were sprinkled with new parkas looking like colored sugar on white frosting, and the shuttle buses were packed with untested skis, boots, and skates.

Christmas dinner brought a joyful feast—and a fitting conclusion to the day. Diners could choose between crab meat and ambrosia for starters and follow their selection with traditional turkey and stuffing, cranberry sauce, creamed onions, sweet potatoes, green beans amandine, and mincemeat pie or English plum pudding. But for those with a yen for something less homespun

...ere was cream of watercress soup or creamed mushrooms on buttered croutons and handsome portions of roast beef with Madeira sauce or a ring of fork-tender veal scallops with *Spätzle*. The other desserts were equally special, among them a sinfully rich Yule log garnished with trails of buttercream ivy, knobs of meringue mushrooms, and sprigs of holly, or, my choice, a bourbon soufflé doused with bourbon sauce.

Catering to those with a sweet tooth is pastry chef Roland Mesnier, who previously plied his art in the kitchens of The Savoy and the George V. A talented Frenchman who enjoys all types of baking, Monsieur Mesnier is a true genius when it comes to sugar blowing, his specialty. A little-known endeavor in this country, sugar blowing is similar to glass blowing and requires an equally skillful hand. M. Mesnier agreed to demonstrate his art, and because his current project was a fruit-basket centerpiece he began by blowing a pear. He cooks a sugar syrup until it becomes paste and then transfers it to a shallow pan where it is maintained at a precise temperature beneath a heat lamp. Taking a ball of the paste, he places it on the end of a metal tube and begins to blow, all the while turning the tube and gently prodding and shaping the mass with his hand. M. Mesnier works rapidly so that the paste will not cool too much to be malleable, and when a piece is completed it is cut from the tube with a propane flame and placed on a stone surface to cool and harden. Leaves and other ornamentations are made by pulling out small amounts of the paste, pressing them onto a smooth surface, and cutting out designs with a cookie-cutter type mold. These embellishments are then heated with the propane flame and attached to the major piece.

After all the parts have been attached, M. Mesnier begins to paint, with a rainbow of hues all mixed from red, yellow, and green food coloring. Completed creations are kept airtight when possible, but often they must stand for hours as the focus of a party table, and if the weather is humid the colors run and the forms begin to sag.

At this season Chef Mesnier demonstrates his creativity further with exquisite chocolate candies, a gingerbread mansion—which, when we saw it, had been returned to the kitchen for extensive repairs due to nibbling—and, in guests' rooms, a jaunty marzipan Saint Nick that guards a tray of florentines.

Once outside The Homestead gates, visitors are in the center of Hot Springs. The little train station is still there, with a clean coat of creamy yellow paint and deep green trim; but it's no longer on the railroad line and the station houses are now a handful of boutiques. One shop offers an imaginative selection of local handicrafts including quilts, sturdy hand-carved toys, Christmas-tree ornaments, calico wreaths, and an enchanting bevy of rag dolls.

According to a reliable local authority there is not one traffic light in the entire county, and in our numerous treks we saw none. Just an hour's drive from Hot Springs lies Lexington, a carefully restored historic small town. It is the site of the Virginia Military Institute and Washington and Lee University, both schools that enjoy a measure of their fine reputations because of the famous men that have served on their faculties. The most prominent of these leaders were Stonewall Jackson, who in 1864 led his cadets into battle at New Market, Virginia, and Robert E. Lee, who after the Civil War served as president of Washington and Lee until his death in 1870.

The Washington and Lee campus is especially lovely with its red-brick Colonial halls stretched across a low ridge overlooking the town. The focal point is the beautiful Lee Chapel wherein simple white-painted pews, globe lamps, and the somber white marble statue by Edward Valentine bespeak elegant tribute to this distinguished general.

We nipped into a cheese shop for some sandwiches and then continued on a walking tour past some of Lexington's fine old town houses. The Alexander-Withrow house, in particular, is characterized by magnificent diamond-pattern brickwork and a pretty wrought-iron balcony. Built in 1789, it is one of the few Lexington houses to have survived a fire that razed the town in 1796, and it has in its almost two centuries served as bank, school, and post office, as well as a series of retail stores. The Gables is typical of Gothic cottage architecture, and a small separate kitchen at the rear, which is also Gothic, has a gable on either side of its steeply pitched roof. The Stonewall Jackson house of brick and stone, the only house the General ever owned, is the most recent project in the restoration program that has tucked a page of history around every corner in town.

In winter this countryside takes on a stark and desolate beauty. Burnished-gold and bare of brush, the hills could easily have been whisk-broomed. Wide valleys flecked with slim church spires are etched by both hot and ice-glazed streams. Curls of smoke from cabins and farmhouses spiral like hazy corkscrews into the clouds, and on unclear days a heavy mist hovers above hot springs and nestles in coves. In Cowpasture river, still pools mirror bare oaks and mini-waterfalls are crusted with icy beards. On the hilltops stand fine houses of clapboard and mellowed brick, encircled by wide verandas, massive boxwoods, and berry-heavy nandenas. There are miles and miles of beautiful white fences bending around the roads and neatly dividing fields of corn from tobacco.

We find that the Blue Ridge Mountains are justly named, indeed. As the sun slides behind a ridge, a shadowy mauve dims the blue and then deepens to purple while the mountains lie in striking silhouette against a still-peach sky. The air is crackling cold and, soon, enough stars shine against the blackness to outtwinkle every Blue Ridge Christmas tree.

What a pleasure it is to return in late afternoon to The Homestead, to sink into a squashy chair in the Great Hall at teatime and warm to the music of the chamber ensemble. The year *could* be 1907. Drinking tea and nibbling cinnamon toast, enjoying backgammon or a jigsaw puzzle, dozing, mesmerized by the fire, or simply watching the procession of returning sports enthusiasts can quickly become a ritual; and the time is one of delightful transition between outdoor play and evening activities.

It is a mingling of homeyness and grandeur that makes a visit to The Homestead like nothing else so much as a crossing aboard an ocean liner. There is the same thoughtful service and attention to detail, as well as the innumerable extras that make for luxury: flowers in every room, a good supply of well-dried wood in rooms with a fireplace, an iceman who cometh daily to refill every cooler, special dinners for those children who prefer to eat early and unsupervised (no adults allowed), a nightly discotheque for teenagers, and specially printed schedules of outstanding events—in our case, the football games on New Year's Day.

We liked exploring outdoors, whether by mapped trail or by serendipity, roving the frozen land

through fields of corn stalks and deep into cloud-stoppered coves; but the favored transport here is sleighs. Equipped with blankets and bells and loaded with children and grandparents, they set the scene for carol singing as well as for snowy surveyal of the miles of Homestead trails. Lacking snow there are equally appealing surreys and buckboards in which to ramble, and, as one bounces along behind a team grown furry with winter coats, it is once more easy to imagine having slipped into another era.

One especially pleasant luncheon—on a day when all the blankets our surrey carried had not been quite enough—began on a warming note with marjoram-flavored vegetable bisque. Next came an order of *Kässler Rippchen*, a smoky loin of pork accompanied by Swiss farm sausage and a slice of tongue, all artfully arranged atop a bed of sauerkraut and surrounded with small wedges of parsley potatoes. For less hearty appetites there are seafood salads, stuffed avocados, beautiful fruit and vegetable salads (which I would invariably consider bottomless until I finished them), Cheddar and ham omelets, and a quarter-pound frankfurter on a toasted bun with German potato salad.

Chef Schnarwyler, for seventeen years the executive chef at The Homestead, demonstrates his capability with an extensive menu that changes daily—at both luncheon and dinner—with no rotation. This impressive feat has twofold benefit: Not only does it provide a true culinary adventure for guests at every meal, but as Chef Schnarwyler puts it, "It's much better for the kitchen staff too because they're constantly learning new preparations and techniques and their interest is maintained. When the staff becomes bored, that's when the quality begins to slip." Clearly the staff is not bored, for each menu is a pleasure to contemplate and each meal, a delightful event.

Welcoming the new year in spectacular fashion is another party, and this occasion, in particular, resembles a shipboard celebration. Dinner reservations are made in a festive ballroom where two dance floors prove to be an ingenious way of keeping couples from rumbaing their way so far from friends that they might not see one another until the following year.

Dinner began on an auspicious note with more of that unsurpassed crab meat, this time with rémoulade sauce. A rich Sherry-spiked consommé followed, and for entrées diners chose between roast stuffed pheasant and filet mignon. One member of our party opted for the Madeira-sauced pheasant, which she pronounced superb, and the rest of us had the steak. Cooked to the degree of doneness requested in each case, accompanied by artichoke bottoms topped with spinach purée, potatoes *Clamart*, and grilled and stuffed tomatoes, the steaks were tender and savory, a fitting choice to mark the year's end. We ordered a bottle of Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon '70 and found its deep fruitiness a fine complement to our meat. A colorful cone of homemade ice cream and sherbet—chocolate, vanilla, and raspberry—with beautifully glazed and decorated petits fours followed by demitasse made a grand finale.

The evening-morning was capped by midnight breakfast for anyone whose resolutions would allow it, and, for those who wished the night might never end, the band played on. . . .

On January 1, a bountiful breakfast buffet could well make non-breakfast eaters resolve to amend their ways. Highlighted by an enormous punch bowl of eggnog, the table set a spirited precedent for the new year ahead.

A bit later, before the football games get under way, sustenance is provided by a luncheon in one of the banquet rooms. Ice sculptures make a sparkling backdrop for the array of tempting fare. We chose a light route, and I assembled a composite of favorites: marinated vegetables, chilled shrimp and crab claws, lobster salad, a trio of perfectly ripened cheeses, and a magnificent winter fruit salad that combined both fresh and dried fruits in a delectable potpourri.

Christmas is many things, but among them for us will always be the thoughts of hallways filled with children's laughter, of the nightly stroll past the poinsettia-rimmed tree and through the glorious Great Hall, of sealing the next day's plans over hot chocolate with mounds of frothy cream—of having stepped into a setting of elegance and hospitality that is today unique.

These recipes are among our tangible keepsakes from The Homestead.

Buckwheat Cakes The Homestead

In a large bowl proof ¾ teaspoon active dry yeast in ¼ cup lukewarm water with a pinch of sugar for 10 minutes. Stir in ¾ cup each of buckwheat flour and all-purpose flour, 1 cup buttermilk, and ½ teaspoon salt, beat the batter until it is smooth, and let it stand, covered with a tea towel, in a warm place overnight. Beat in 1 egg, 1 tablespoon unsulfured molasses, and ½ teaspoon baking soda, let the batter stand for 5 minutes, and thin it slightly with buttermilk, if necessary.

Heat a griddle over moderately high heat until it is hot and brush it with clarified butter (January, 1979). Spoon the batter onto the griddle in 3-inch rounds, cook the pancakes for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the undersides are browned and the tops are bubbly, and turn them. Brown the other sides, transfer the pancakes to heated plates, and serve them with softened butter and warm maple syrup. Serves 6 to 8.

Deviled Crab Meat Gratiné The Homestead

In a small saucepan reduce 1 cup heavy cream over moderately high heat to ½ cup, stir in 1 teaspoon each of snipped chives and minced parsley, and remove the pan from the heat.

In a small skillet cook 1½ tablespoons minced shallot and 1 tablespoon each of minced red pepper and minced green pepper in 2 tablespoons butter over moderate heat, stirring, for 3 minutes, or until the vegetables are just softened. Stir in 2 tablespoons dry white wine, 1½ teaspoons dry mustard, 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce, and Tabasco, salt, and pepper to taste, simmer the mixture for 2 minutes, and remove the skillet from the heat. Stir in 1 pound cooked crab meat, flaked and picked over, the cream mixture, and ¼ cup fresh bread crumbs and spoon the mixture into a well-buttered gratin dish. In a small bowl combine 3 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese, 2 tablespoons fresh bread crumbs, and 1 teaspoon paprika and sprinkle the mixture over the crab mixture. Drizzle 2 tablespoons melted butter over the top and bake the dish in the top third of a preheated moderately hot oven (375° F.) for 10 minutes, or until it is golden brown and bubbly. Serves 3 or 4 as a first course.

Shellfish Newburg The Homestead

In a saucepan cook ¾ teaspoon paprika, ½ teaspoon dry mustard, and a pinch of cayenne in ½ stick (¼ cup) butter over moderate heat, stirring, for 2 minutes, stir in ¼ cup flour, and cook the *roux* over low heat, stirring, for 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat, add 2 cups fish stock (January, 1979) or 1 cup each of bottled clam broth and dry white wine, heated, and ½ teaspoon thyme, and whisk the mixture vigorously until it is thick and smooth. Simmer the sauce for 10 minutes, stir in 1 cup heavy cream, and simmer the sauce for 5 minutes.

In a small saucepan poach ½ pound

sea scallops, halved horizontally, in ¼ cup medium-dry Sherry, covered with a buttered round of wax paper, over moderately low heat for 2 to 3 minutes, or until they are just cooked. Strain the poaching liquid into the simmering sauce and reserve the scallops.

In a skillet sauté ½ pound shrimp, shelled and deveined, and two 6-ounce lobster tails, shelled and cut into 1-inch pieces, in ½ stick (¼ cup) butter over moderately high heat, stirring, for 3 minutes, or until they are just cooked. Season the mixture with salt and white pepper, fold it and the reserved scallops into the sauce, and heat the mixture over moderate heat until it is hot. Transfer the mixture to a serving dish and serve it over steamed rice. Serves 4.

Corn Pudding The Homestead

In a saucepan bring 4 cups milk to a boil over moderately high heat and stir in 1 cup yellow cornmeal (preferably stone-ground), 3 tablespoons sugar, and ¾ teaspoon salt. Bring the mixture to a boil and simmer it, stirring, for 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let the mixture cool slightly.

In a bowl whisk together 4 eggs, 1 stick (½ cup) butter, melted and cooled, and 1 teaspoon each of double-acting baking powder and vanilla and beat the mixture into the cornmeal mixture. Scrape enough cooked corn from the cob to measure 1½ cups (about 3 ears) and stir it into the cornmeal mixture. Pour the mixture into a well-buttered 1½-quart soufflé dish and bake it in a preheated moderate oven (350° F.) for 45 minutes, or until it is lightly browned and puffed and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Serves 6.

Veal Scallops with Creamed Morels The Homestead

In a heatproof bowl cover 1 ounce dried morels with boiling water and let them soak overnight. Drain the morels and rinse them well under running cold water. Pat the morels dry with paper towels and mince them.

Dust eight 2-ounce veal scallops, flattened slightly between sheets of wax paper, with flour and in a large skillet sauté them over moderately high heat in ¼ cup clarified butter (January, 1979) for 1 minute on each side. Transfer the scallops to a platter and keep them warm. Add to the skillet 2 tablespoons butter, ¼ cup minced shallots, and the morels and cook the mixture over moderate heat for 2 minutes, or until the shallots are softened. Add ½ cup Sercial Madeira and reduce it over high heat to 3 tablespoons. Add 1 cup heavy cream and ½ cup brown stock (February, 1979) or tinned beef broth, scraping up the brown bits clinging to the bottom and sides of the skillet, bring the liquid to a boil, and cook the mixture over high heat until it is thickened and reduced to about ¾ cup. Season the sauce with salt and pepper, spoon it over the scallops, and sprinkle the scallops with minced parsley. Serve the scallops with *Spätzle*. Serves 4.

Spätzle The Homestead (German Egg Noodles)

In a large bowl combine 1¼ cups flour, ¾ teaspoon salt, and ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg, stir in 2 eggs, lightly beaten, and add gradually ¾ cup milk, beating the mixture with a wooden spoon until it forms a smooth soft dough. In a large saucepan bring to a boil 6 quarts salted water, set a very coarse grater, smooth side up, over the pan, and with a wooden spoon press the dough through the grater. (A *Spätzle*-maker, available at kitchen specialty shops, can be used.) Stir the noodles gently to separate them and boil them for 8 minutes. Drain the noodles well in a colander and transfer them to a bowl of cold water. Drain the noodles well, in a large skillet sauté them in 3 tablespoons butter until they are golden, and transfer them to a serving dish. Serves 4.

Lamb Curry The Homestead

In a large flameproof casserole brown 3¼ pounds boneless lean lamb shoulder, cut into 1-inch cubes and lightly salted, in batches in ¼ cup lard over moderately high heat, transfer it with a slotted spoon to a bowl, and reserve it, covered loosely with foil. Add to the casserole 2 cups each of chopped onion and cored, peeled, and chopped apple, 1 cup chopped celery, 1 garlic clove, minced, ¼ teaspoon thyme, and 1 bay leaf and cook the mixture over moderate heat, stirring, for 5 minutes, or until the vegetables are softened. Add ¼ cup flour, 2 teaspoons curry powder, and 1 teaspoon tomato paste and cook the mixture, stirring, for 5 minutes. Whisk in 8 cups hot chicken stock (January, 1979) or tinned chicken broth and boil the mixture over moderately high heat, stirring frequently, for 30 minutes, or until it is reduced to about 2 cups. Strain the mixture through a sieve into a bowl, pour the liquid into the casserole, and add the reserved lamb and 1 cup coconut milk (March, 1979) or bottled coconut milk (available at specialty foods shops). Cook the mixture, covered, over moderate heat for 1 hour and 30 minutes, or until the lamb is tender. Season the mixture with lemon juice and salt, transfer it to a heated serving dish, and serve it with *poppadums* (April, 1979) and saffron rice with raisins, pimiento, chutney, and eggplant. Serves 6.

Saffron Rice with Raisins, Pimiento, Chutney, and Eggplant The Homestead

In a bowl let ½ cup raisins soak in boiling water to cover for 5 minutes and drain them in a sieve.

In a flameproof casserole cook ¼ cup minced onion in 2 tablespoons butter over moderate heat for 3 minutes, or until it is softened, add 1 cup long-grain rice, and cook it, stirring to coat each grain with butter, for 3 minutes. Stir in 2 cups hot chicken stock (January, 1979) or tinned chicken broth, ¼ teaspoon crumbled saffron threads, and 1 small bay leaf, bring the liquid to a boil, stirring, and bake the rice, covered, in a preheated moderately hot oven (375° F.) for 18 minutes. Remove the bay leaf.

In a large skillet sauté 1 pound eggplant, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes, in ⅓ cup olive oil over moderately high heat for 5 minutes, or until it is lightly browned, and transfer it to paper towels to drain. Add the eggplant to the rice, toss the mixture with the raisins, ½ cup each of mango chutney and chopped pimiento, 2 tablespoons butter, and salt and pepper to taste, and transfer the rice to a heated serving dish. Serves 6.

Winter Fruit Salad The Homestead

In a saucepan combine 1 cup apple juice, ½ cup each of halved dried apricots, halved pitted dates, pitted prunes, and raisins, and 2 tablespoons sugar, bring the juice to a boil, and simmer the mixture for 5 minutes. Let the mixture cool and chill it, covered, for 2 hours.

In a bowl combine 1 cup pineapple cubes, 1 orange, peeled, halved lengthwise, and cut into ½-inch crosswise slices, 1 pear, peeled, cored, and cubed, 1 banana, sliced, and ½ cup chopped walnuts. Add the dried fruit to the fresh fruit mixture with a slotted spoon, fold the fruits together, and sprinkle them with 1 to 2 tablespoons kirsch, or to taste. Transfer the salad to a shallow serving bowl, garnish it with 1 apple, cored and sliced, 1 kiwi, peeled and thinly sliced, and 10 strawberries, halved, and chill it, covered, for 1 hour. Serves 4 to 6.

Plum Puddings The Homestead

Arrange 2 tart apples, peeled and cored, in a small baking dish, add enough water to measure ½ inch, and bake the apples, covered, in a preheated hot oven

(400° F.) for 30 minutes, or until they are tender. Transfer the apples with a slotted spoon to a cutting board, let them cool, and chop them.

In a large bowl combine the apples, 2 cups each of chopped pitted prunes, dried currants, raisins, golden raisins, firmly-packed dark brown sugar, and fresh bread crumbs, ¼ pound suet, minced, ¼ cup each of diced glacéed citron and diced glacéed orange peel, 1½ tablespoons ground allspice, 1 tablespoon grated orange peel, 2 teaspoons grated lemon peel, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon each of ground ginger and freshly grated nutmeg. In another bowl whisk together 4 eggs and 1 cup each of Grand Marnier, dark rum, bourbon, brandy, and dark beer until the mixture is well combined, pour the mixture over the fruit mixture, and stir the mixture with a wooden spoon until it is well combined.

Spoon the mixture into 2 lightly buttered 1-quart pudding basins or decorative molds, cover it with buttered foil, crimping the edges over the rims, and drape a tea towel, rinsed and squeezed, loosely over the foil. Secure the towels with kitchen string, knot opposite ends of the towels over the puddings, and put the puddings on a rack in a kettle. Pour enough boiling water into the kettle to reach three fourths of the way up the sides of the basins, bring the water to a boil over high heat, and simmer the puddings, with the kettle covered, adding more water as necessary, for 4 hours. Remove the molds from the kettle and let them cool to room temperature. Remove the towels and foil and re-cover the puddings tightly with foil. Chill the puddings for at least 3 weeks, or up to 1 year to let them ripen.

To serve a pudding, steam it in the same manner for 1 hour. Run a knife around the edge, invert a platter over the mold, and invert the pudding onto the platter. Garnish the pudding with a sprig of holly and serve it warm with *crème anglaise* (July, 1979). Makes 2 puddings.

Bourbon Soufflé with Bourbon Sauce The Homestead

Make 1½ cups *crème anglaise* (July, 1979), add 2 tablespoons bourbon while the sauce is hot, and chill the sauce, covered, for 1 hour.

In a large bowl beat 4 egg yolks with 2 tablespoons sugar until the mixture is light and fluffy and beat in slowly ¼ cup bourbon in a stream. In a bowl beat 4 egg whites with a pinch each of salt and cream of tartar until they hold soft peaks. Add gradually 2 tablespoons sugar and continue to beat the egg whites until they hold stiff peaks. Stir one fourth of the whites into the yolk mixture and fold in the remaining whites. Pour the mixture into a well-buttered 1½-quart soufflé dish and bake the soufflé in a preheated moderate oven (350° F.) for 15 to 20 minutes, or until it is puffed and golden. Serve the soufflé with the bourbon sauce. Serves 4.

Apple Ice Cream The Homestead

In a large saucepan combine 2 pounds apples, coarsely chopped, with enough water to cover them by 1 inch, bring the water to a boil, covered, over moderately high heat, and cook the apples for 20 minutes, or until they are soft. Drain the apples in a colander and purée them in a food mill set over a bowl. In a saucepan combine 2 cups of the purée with 1 cup sugar, reserving any remaining purée for another use, bring the mixture to a boil over moderate heat, stirring, and cook the syrup, stirring, until the sugar is dissolved. Pour the syrup into a bowl set in a bowl of cracked ice and chill it for 1 hour. Stir in ⅓ cup lemon juice and ¼ cup each of heavy cream and *crème anglaise* (July, 1979) and chill the mixture for at least 2 hours. Freeze the mixture in an ice-cream freezer according to the manufacturer's instructions. Serve the apple ice cream sprinkled with apple brandy. Makes 1 quart.

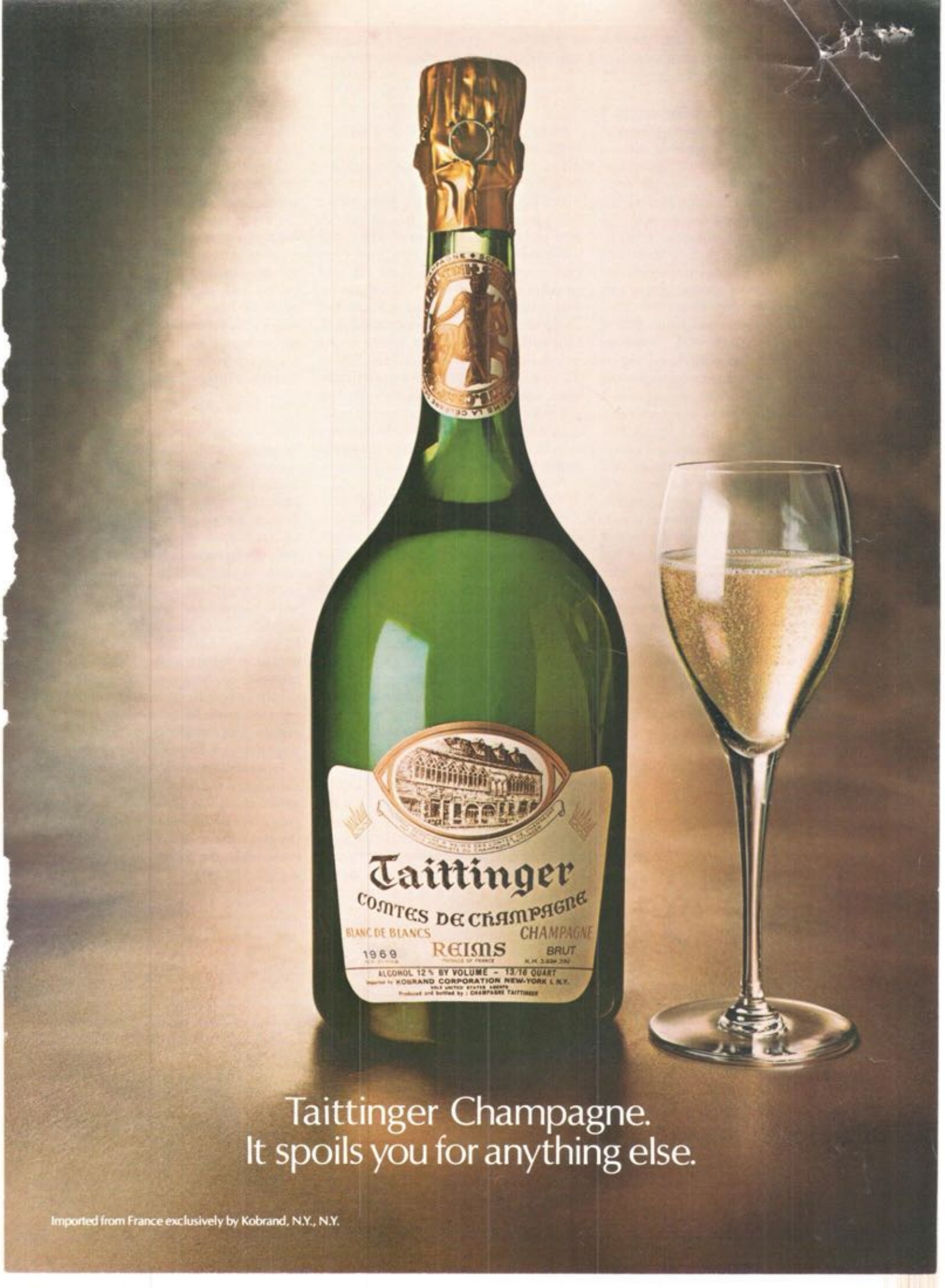
Champagne Pineapple Sherbet The Homestead

In a stainless steel or enameled saucepan combine 1 cup each of Champagne and sugar, bring the Champagne to a boil over moderate heat, and cook the syrup, stirring, until the sugar is dissolved. Pour the syrup into a bowl set in a bowl of cracked ice and chill it. In a blender in batches or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade blend enough pineapple, peeled and cored, to measure 2 cups purée and stir the purée into the syrup with ⅓ cup lemon juice. Chill the mixture for at least 2 hours and freeze it in an ice-cream freezer according to the manufacturer's instructions. Makes 1 quart.

Florentines The Homestead

In a heavy saucepan combine 1 stick (½ cup) butter, ½ cup sugar, 5 tablespoons honey, and 2 tablespoons heavy cream and simmer the mixture over low heat, stirring, for 15 minutes, or until it is golden. Remove the pan from the heat, stir in 3 cups sliced blanched almonds and ½ cup halved glacéed cherries, and spoon the batter in heaping teaspoons, 2 inches apart, onto baking sheets lined with parchment paper. Flatten the mounds with the back of a spoon dipped in milk and bake the cookies in a preheated moderate oven (350° F.) for 10 minutes, or until they are bubbly and golden brown. Remove the baking sheets from the oven, let the cookies cool completely, and transfer them carefully with a spatula to a flat surface.

In a small bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water melt 6 ounces semisweet chocolate. With a small spatula spread the underside of each cookie with the chocolate and invert the cookies on a rack until the chocolate has cooled completely. Makes about 50 cookies. ✤



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