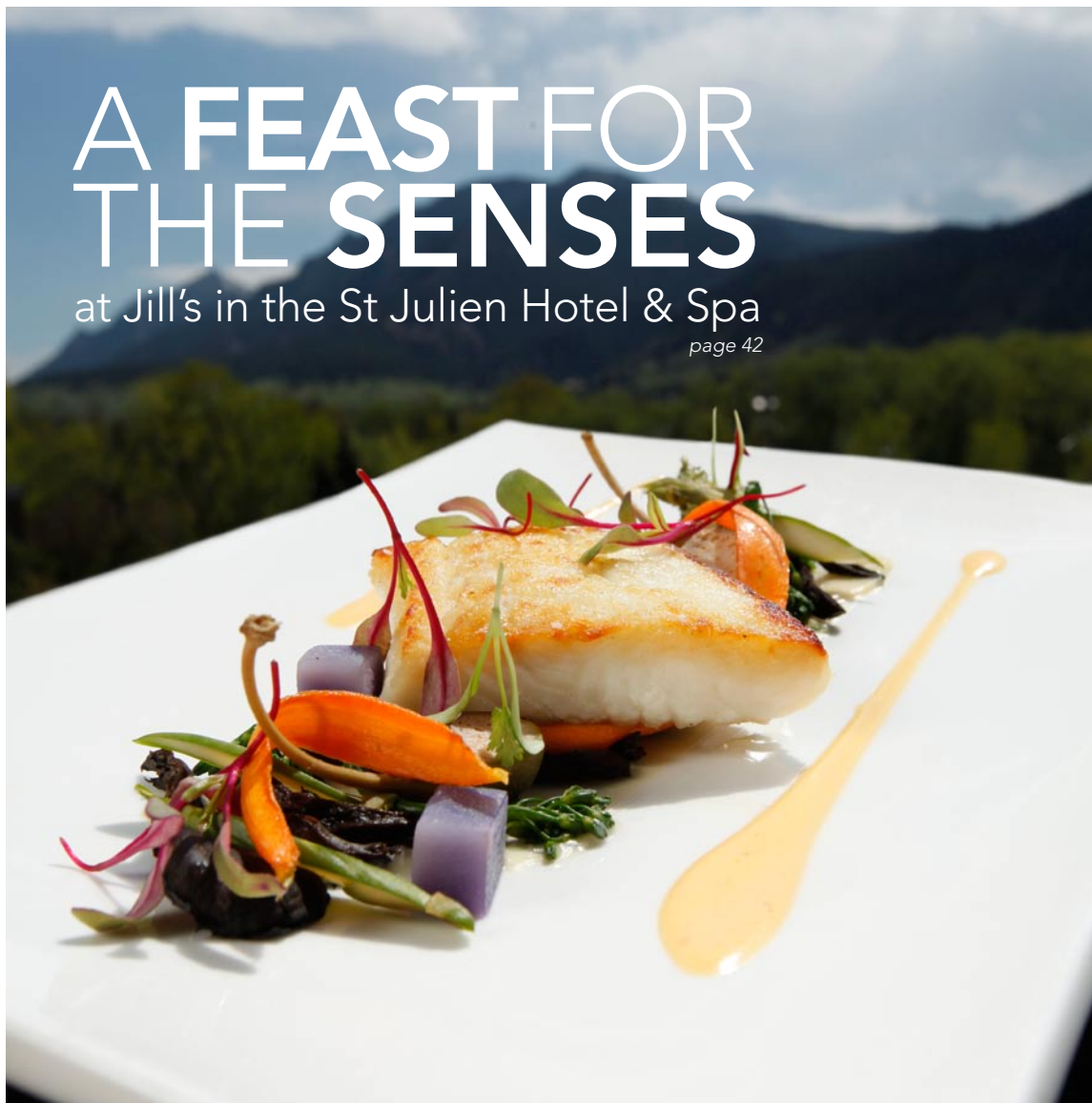


# DINING OUT

the great restaurants of **denver & boulder**



## A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

at Jill's in the St Julien Hotel & Spa

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\$4.95US





# The Everything Experience

by Nathan Wand

Delicious living at Boulder's **St Julien Hotel & Spa**

Walk into the St Julien Hotel & Spa on a Saturday night and the incredibly spacious but inviting lobby pulses with life. Guests relax in the many brown couches, soaking up a décor that quietly encompasses Colorado chic with just a dash of Art Deco. Well-dressed locals file in and out of the T-Zero bar across the room from a strip of fire dancing on a glowing berm of quartz pebbles. In the courtyard outside, throngs of guests and locals move to live Latin jazz, drinks in hand.

But the action in the lobby is just one facet of the St Julien experience, for a short stroll down a quiet hallway lives a gustatory treasure on par with Boulder's culinary elite: Jill's Restaurant.

"Perception is our biggest challenge in many ways," Executive Chef Laurent Mechin says, noting that it's been hard to shake the stereotypical associations people have with restaurants in hotels. "We offer a great experience with the freshest ingredients possible at a great price, but people tend to assume that because we are in such a beautiful hotel our meals are going to be overpriced."

On the contrary, everything on the menu at Jill's is as reasonable as it is fresh and delicious. Dinner entrées, for instance, top-out at less than \$25, meaning you can enjoy a complete experience—one bracketed by appetizers and desserts and awash in fine wine—for less than you might spend at many of the city's other renowned restaurants.

But the real value here is in *what* you get. Chef Mechin grew up in rural France, foraging and fishing with his father, and these experiences are central to a career that has included kitchen posts in Burgundy, Costa Rica, and Southern California. Bottom line: The man knows fresh ingredients, and his trips to the Boulder Farmers' Market and his relationships with vendors parlay into delectable cuisine that mirrors the seasons.

An alluring buffet of Italian delights with American twists, the Tuscan Table is a great way for diners to experience the fresh and innovative lunchtime

creations of Chef Mechin. The midday menu also abounds with wood-fired pizza options, sandwiches, salads, and a build-your-own pasta bar situated right in front of the lively open kitchen.

Like the hotel lobby, the dining room is bright and vibrant but also intimate and cozy. Dark wood tables contrast the earth-toned walls and the room is lifted by pieces of colorful hand-blown glass. For private dining, Jill's offers its Honey-Onyx Room—one of the city's most stunning—and in the warmer months, the Terrace provides unmatched views of the Flatirons that continue to stun into the night.

For his new spring dinner menu, Chef Mechin is most excited about his three daily specials, called, simply, "Cut," "Catch," and "Risotto." Cleverly, these highlight a stunning cut of meat prepared simply with seasonal ingredients, a piece of fresh fish minimally dressed, and a creative risotto based on whatever is at hand.

"Perception is our biggest challenge in many ways." — Executive Chef Laurent Mechin

"Every dish starts with the main ingredient," Chef Mechin says. "Where I grew up, if it's white peach and pheasant season, they might end up in the same pot."

"We're refined and rustic," Chef de Cuisine Daniel Cofrades adds.

Fittingly, the evolution and refinement of pastoral pleasures reverberate throughout the hotel, where fresh foliage greets you at every turn. Separate though they are, Jill's Restaurant and the rest of the property are part of a lush organic tapestry that lives and breathes like prairie grass.

Located unassumingly just off the beloved pedestrian thoroughfare Pearl Street, the St Julien belies its clandestine aura with that grand lobby and




200 luxury rooms fully appointed with high-speed internet access, laptop safes, full mini bars, cozy robes, large-screen TVs, and fine linen. Just off the lobby, The Spa offers a full roster of services, including a mojito scrub made with mint from Chef Mechin's herb garden. The nearby lap pool shares a room rich in natural light with an oversized hot tub.

"We're so lucky to be in such a great location," Director of Sales Valerie Knorr says. "There are trails for hiking and bike riding right outside our doors and at the same time, the Pearl Street Mall, which has so much personality, is right around the corner."

In this way, the hotel and restaurant feel like an extension of their home city. To some, Boulder represents a synergistic blend of the positive potential of human ingenuity and an approach to daily life that embraces the common sense of yesteryear.

Needless to say, for a hotel to succeed here, it needs to have a green mind, and the St Julien goes well beyond pat touches like eco-friendly cleaning products. The hotel has diverted over 350,000 pounds of landfill waste over the past year and has a 90-percent diversion rate goal for this year. Among the many, many environmental initiatives—the list is three pages long—are a fleet of cruiser bicycles for guests to enjoy, in-room recycling bins, energy-saving bulbs throughout the hotel, paper keycards, and a policy of reusing old menus as scratch paper before recycling them.

Remarkably, all of these green touches haven't diminished the luxurious feel of the St Julien, which ranked 51st in a *Condé Nast* readers' survey of the country's top 100 hotels. It's also worth noting that along with 10,000-square-feet of indoor banquet space, the hotel also offers 7,000 square-feet of outdoor space perfect for weddings, celebrations, and corporate events.

So whether it's for a drink at T-Zero, a relaxing Saturday afternoon tea, or a few hours in The Spa, there's no shortage of reasons for a visit to the St Julien. But, as locals know, a meal at Jill's Restaurant is an experience all its own to be savored time and again. 



... a stunning cut of meat prepared simply with seasonal ingredients, a piece of fresh fish minimally dressed, and a creative risotto based on whatever is at hand.

