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Guests at this ultra-exclusive country resort — a restored 19th-century farmhouse in the rolling countryside of the Litchfield Hills — seem to speak in hushed tones. That may be in reverence for the artful plates constructed by chef Chris Eddy. He has a true gift for balancing ingredients both familiar (truffles, local trout) and exotic (sea urchin, squid ink) so that each somehow stands out on its own while simultaneously contributing to a gloriously unexpected whole. With table service that's both precise and welcoming, and a wine list that pulls from 13 countries and 37 regions, the argument for lingering over a postprandial drink is as compelling as the food itself. *155 Alain White Rd., 860-567-9600, winvian.com.*

PHOTOS BY ELLEN SILVERMAN

THE WHITE BARN INN

Kennebunkport, ME
> *Miles from Boston Common: 85*
> *Average meal price per person: $$*
> *Meal on a scale of 1 to 10: 10.0*

The rafters of this 1820s barn-turned-dining room are full of antiques and wooden animals, calling to mind half-remembered fantasies of childhood. Below, white-jacketed waiters go about making those dreams a reality, offering crisply choreographed service that befits the big occasions diners regularly celebrate here. Chef Jonathan Cartwright's menu is over the top without being showy: The lobster appetizer here is smoked, giving it a subtle bacon taste, while foie gras–braised short ribs would be superfluous atop steak if the dish weren't so delicious. Book one of the inn's plush guest rooms (trust us), and work off dinner the next day with a walk alongside the mansions of Kennebunk Beach. *37 Beach Ave., 207-967-2321, whitebarninn.com.*

With reporting by Michael Blanding, Brittany Jasnoff, Erin byers Murray, Amy Traverso, and Chin Wang

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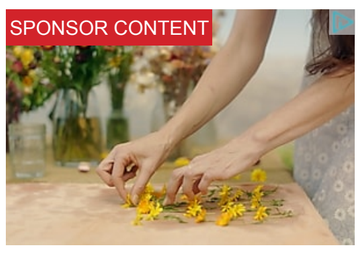

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