

*Published in Blue Mountain Living Magazine, March 2006
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Tennessee Getaway: Blackberry Farm Offers World Class Luxury in a Low-key Setting

A short drive from Asheville, and situated on a pastoral 4,200-acre estate in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, sits Blackberry Farm which has earned its reputation as one of the most highly-acclaimed, small luxury hotels in the country.

Guests are welcomed to while away the hours and days in luxurious comfort and spectacular surroundings. They can design their own personal experiences through an array of activities such as guided fly-fishing trips, a visit to the Farmhouse spa, a personal tour of the farm, horseback riding adventures, Harley motorcycle trips, bicycling and shooting activities to world-class culinary classes and wine events.

“We will not stop,” Sam Beall, proprietor, said, “until we are known as the top food and wine destination in the country.”

The history of the farm dates back to 1940, when Mrs. Florida Lasier of Chicago snagged her silk stockings on a wild blackberry bramble while exploring the Smoky Mountains for a country home retreat. She discovered this land and Blackberry Farm was born. In 1976, Kreis and Sandy Beall invested their hearts and souls into the property and it became their family home and lifelong passion.

Kreis Beall, Sam’s mother, created a charming, six-room inn out of their home which has now evolved into a 44-room property that Sam still calls home. He watched his mother prepare meals for Blackberry’s first guests and he continues to oversee what takes place in the kitchen to this day.

John Fler, Executive Chef, is at the helm, and together with Beall, has worked to create wine events, culinary schools and food celebrations for their guests that are indulgent and memorable. They have developed a baker’s dozen of extraordinary cooking schools, wine events and culinary celebrations for the 2006 calendar year.

The world’s finest chefs are invited along with vintners, importers and other culinary professionals. According to Michael Green of *Gourmet Magazine*, “The food and wine program at Blackberry Farm is unrivaled by any other property in the United States. I can’t think of a more magical place to enjoy these epicurean pleasures.”

During Fler’s tenure at Blackberry Farm, he has worked to develop “Foothills Cuisine,” a signature, culinary concept designed around the tastes and flavors of the south, specifically the Appalachians. Delights such as pork cured with sweet tea, mango moon pies, and corn and green tomato risotto with Myrtlewood cream are all offerings that can be found on the menu.

“The food wanders the line between refined, rugged and classical,” Fler adds.

Fler’s regional ingredients transform into world-class fare during many of the cooking schools that Blackberry Farm has to offer. In addition, the resort is deeply connected and devoted to the Southern Foodways Alliance and their mission to celebrate, preserve, promote and nurture the traditional and developing cultures of the American South.

Blackberry Farm also has plans to focus on farm-to-table events that start in their garden and end up as memorable meals. Their commitment to sustainable farming

includes growing organic produce and vegetables, producing artisanal cheeses and yogurt, harvesting honey and eggs and raising livestock. The mix of unparalleled luxury and bucolic beauty is one aspect of Blackberry Farm that makes it so uniquely special.

“We want our guests’ experience to be driven by food and wine,” Beall said, “and to leave here having experienced a genuine combination of luxury and simplicity. It is a place to feed the soul and renew the spirit.”

For guests who wish to wander away from the comfort and epicurean delight of the farm, regional crafts can be found in nearby towns such as Townsend and Maryville. Visitors can seek out bluegrass music with little difficulty and also explore Knoxville, 30 minutes away, or Gatlinburg, approximately a 45-minute drive.

“Adventure abounds,” Brian Lee, Director of Guest Relations, said. “Guests can cruise the adjacent Foothills Parkway which runs for 17 miles or take a bike trip to Cade’s Cove and enjoy the majestic views that Smoky Mountain National Park has to offer.

Accommodations range from cozy, estate rooms to elegant and spacious cottage suites. All of the rooms offer feather beds with luxurious linens and exclusive spa amenities. The attention to detail is meticulous.

Guests can daydream in front of a wood-burning fireplace or enjoy their morning coffee from a rocking chair on a private, covered porch. And, my personal favorite, end up the evening relaxing with newly-found friends and family by the open bonfire while toasting marshmallows and assembling smores under the star-studded sky. It just doesn’t get any better than that.

If you go:

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