

OTAHUNA ON A PLATE

A gourmet weekend getaway to Otahuna Lodge combines luxury and learning, with chef Jimmy McIntyre sharing culinary secrets and the guests getting to sample the results in a deliciously decadent degustation dinner.



Executive chef Jimmy McIntyre makes it look easy as he cranks the handle on the

pasta machine and turns the dough for his roast pumpkin and goat cheese tortellini into a flat sheet. The secret, he tells the guests gathered in his kitchen at Otahuna Lodge, is in the ingredients and the preparation – one egg per 100g of powder-fine Double-O flour (“It’s crucial to weigh it out”), kneaded then rested for at least an hour, to ensure the flour is sufficiently hydrated.

The beautifully restored Otahuna Lodge, nestled at the base of the Port Hills in Tai Tapu, makes the perfect venue for a weekend of luxury. Getting there was pretty cool too, thanks to the nifty MINI Cooper SE. The name ‘Otahuna’

means ‘little hill among the hills’, and from its Port Hills perch, the lodge offers commanding views of the Southern Alps and Canterbury Plains. The heritage surroundings have been lovingly restored, along with the extensive grounds and gardens. And once you climb between the high thread-count sheets, the sleep of the sated is not far away.

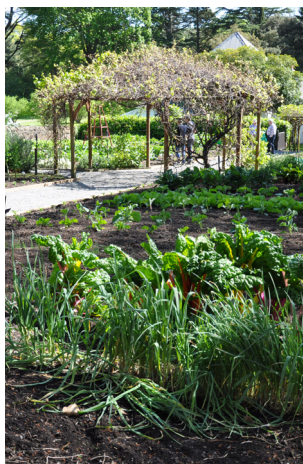
But as well as pampering, we are here to learn. Otahuna Lodge hosts events throughout the year, and the Italian Gourmet Getaway weekends with Chef Jimmy are among the most popular.

The three-hour class begins with a glass of sangria – school was never like this. The eight guests on the weekend then gather around as Chef Jimmy prepares the evening’s five-course Italian-

‘Class begins with a glass of sangria – school was never like this’

themed degustation dinner, listening attentively as he generously shares secrets from decades of culinary experience gained overseas and in some of Christchurch’s top restaurants.

Class dismissed and heads buzzing with fresh ideas for the home kitchen, we take the chance to explore the grounds and gardens before meeting up with our fellow guests for pre-dinner drinks and canapés in the opulent downstairs lounge, where magnificent 19th



EVENTS AT OTAHUNA

To celebrate its 125th anniversary, Otahuna Lodge is open for a series of special events between March and November. The full schedule of garden tours, high teas, live performances and a series of collaborative Winemaker's Dinners can be found on the Events page of their website. Also, in June, Otahuna will for the first time offer dinner-only reservations featuring their renowned Five-Course Degustation Menu. Dinner-only reservations will be accepted 30 days in advance, but with a nightly capacity of only 14 guests, this may be the most difficult dinner reservation to get in New Zealand.

To guarantee your table in advance and to fully enjoy the wine experience, reserve a suite for the night by calling the lodge at 03 329 6333 or via email at enquiries@otahuna.co.nz

THE MENU

Roast pumpkin & Otahuna Valley raw milk ricotta-filled tortellini, olive oil-poached tomato, hazelnut pangrattato, and truffled pecorino.

Wine match: Nosiola Trentino DOC, Cantina di La-Vis, Valle di Cembra.

Otahuna salumi, buffalo mozzarella, pickled pear, rocket.

Wine match: Gavi 2016, Villa Sparina di Massimo Moccagatta.

Otahuna lamb osso bucco, potato pea and mint gnocchi, broccolini and gremolata.

Wine match: Barolo 2012, Cordero di Montezemolo.

Vanilla bean and mint pannacotta, biscotti and fresh berries.

Wine match: Moscato D'Asti 2017, Agricola Paolo Saracco, Castiglione Tinella.

Cheese course: Gorgonzola

The MINI Cooper SE was kindly supplied by Christchurch MINI Garage

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Century fittings and modern furnishings define luxury.

Called through to the dining room, we meet Brad Nolan of Red + White Cellar, who has curated the Italian wine matches for our degustation dinner. Before we sample each dish and matching wine, Brad expertly talks us through the provenance of each bottle and suggests some of the tastes our palates are about to experience. It's so hard to pick favourites among such divine fare but the osso bucco made with lamb from Otahuna's own paddocks paired with a glass of Cordero di Montezemolo Barolo set a very high bar.

Next morning, after breakfast with Prosecco, it's time to don gumboots and check out the

historic grounds of Otahuna under the expert guidance of head gardener Steve Marcham. A highlight is the restored formal Dutch Garden laid out like a windmill, but just as fascinating are the kitchen gardens and orchards that ensure Chef Jimmy and his team have the freshest ingredients possible – straight from the soil or tree. There's also sheep in the paddocks and pigs in the pen, the latter poking their cute noses through the fence to check out the visitors.

All too soon our idyll is at an end. We farewell our new friends and head back to reality, stopping at the supermarket on the way to pick up some Double-O flour.

otahuna.co.nz