

From the Desk of

Alese Kummer

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Good morning,

The enclosed material is about Chef Johel Kummer who graduated from Emmett O'Brien in 1993 from the Culinary Department within the school. At that time, it was under the direction of Chef Dan Marano.

Throughout the years since Johel graduated he has explored a variety of quality known food establishments within the United States and has, over the past number of years, settled in Stowe, Vermont working his way up the "ranks" at the distinct Spruce Peak Lodge.

I thought the Culinary group might enjoy seeing a magazine article that was written by a reporter that saw what Johel was able to do working solely with a hot fireplace to cook over - and all this was his idea when he saw the skiers coming in cold and hungry - all this from a EOB graduate taking what he learned at a tech school and consistently learning how to make and present a different standard and concept of cooking - a little twist here and another bigger twist there- you never know what you are going to get! In this case using only the fireplace to prepare the meal.

Thank you for a terrific Culinary Department and a staff that supports those who are interested! Johel loved every moment of time he spent in the culinary department

+ and it shows in his creativity and yummy dishes of mouth-watering food that he is able to prepare.

Johel's Mom,
Alese Kummer



A TASTE OF VALAIS IN VERMONT

AFTER A DAY ON THE SLOPES, GATHER WITH LOVED ONES
FOR WOOD-FIRED RACLETTE THAT WILL MAKE YOU MELT.

By Rachel Stearns

Stepping into the Spruce Peak Whistlepig Pavilion is like being transported to a ski lodge in the Alps; a massive stone fireplace with a crackling fire commands immediate attention, and a savory, toasty smell permeates the room. Guests are mesmerized by a cast iron contraption holding half a wheel of cheese, softening from the fire's heat. A chef moves deftly around the dancing flames, his small stature and the fireplace's huge height allowing him to enter the hearth to adjust embers and add logs. When the cheese has reached gooey perfection, he scrapes it from the wheel directly onto a number of tasty dish options: from French bread and mushrooms to marinated steak.

This inviting tableau depicts the Swiss tradition of raclette—with a Stowe twist. The name raclette—which comes from the French "to scrape"—refers to the cheese itself, the apparatus used to melt the cheese, and the overall dining experience. It is said to originate from shepherds in Switzerland's French-speaking Valais region, with some sources dating the meal back as far as the year 1291. Needing cheap and satisfying food, roaming shepherds would melt cheese over a fire and eat it on bread or potatoes. Starting in the late 1800s, the dish gained fame in both the French and Swiss Alps (where much of the cheese is produced), solidifying its association with ski culture.

Popular for decades in Europe and slowly gaining traction in the U.S., raclette evokes slowing down and enjoying food with friends as an experience. The fire creates a convivial environment, and pools of silky cheese make for a hearty and warming meal that can be shared.

In the heart of Spruce Peak village, overlooking the ice skating rink, the warmth of the Whistlepig pavilion beckons. Inside, Chef Johel Kummer is in his element in the unique dining environment. Growing up in Providence, Rhode Island, he learned how to cook over an open fire from his mother, who taught Colonial cooking. The pavilion is the first opportunity he's had to tap into that skill set as a professional chef



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, and his excitement for the open hearth is bringing new dishes to the scene.

This winter, he plans to slow-roast chicken, turkey, and pork, and have soups bubbling away over the flames. But the main attraction, of course, is raclette. "Everybody 'oohs' and 'ahhs' at the cheese-melting device," Kummer says. The apparatus, forged especially for Spruce Peak by a local blacksmith, consists of a spindle with half moon-shaped clamps that grip half a large cheese wheel at a time.

For authenticity—and maximum deliciousness—Kummer uses raclette cheese from the French Alps region that is aged for more than 60 days and melts beautifully. The fire intensifies the nuttiness and imparts a subtle smoky flavor. It takes about five minutes to melt before he scrapes it right onto a plate, smothering bread, vegetables, and meats with an avalanche of velvety cheese.

You can order up traditional fixings like potatoes and cornichons or inventive dishes like Steak Whistler (fire-grilled steak with chimichurri) and the Figgy Piggy (prosciutto, apples, pears, and figs). Meanwhile, Bavarian pretzels and bratwurst sausage nod to raclette's popularity in Germany.

To round out the experience, you'll want to try some of the whiskey the pavilion is named for. "Whiskey's earthy notes go well with cheese," says Katie Thompson, the wine and beverage manager for Spruce Peak. "It cuts through the creaminess and cleanses your palette." She suggests Whistlepig's SmokesStock—the wood-fired whiskey's smoky essence complements the fire-softened cheese.

Back at the hearth, while Kummer melts cheese, warms pretzels, and sizzles steaks to perfection, he answers curious diners' questions about the raclette device and the cheese. If it's not too busy, he lets people try their hand at scraping the cheese, which many ask to do.

Even if you prefer to leave it to the pro, the raclette at the Whistlepig Pavilion is not to be missed. Kummer says, "There's nothing better than coming off the mountain after a cold day of skiing to a plate of warm cheese and steak."

01 The Bavarian Pretzels are a classic salty favorite. 02 Chef Johel Kummer stands by the roaring open fire and custom made raclette spindle. 03 The Figgy Piggy dish has become a new crowd favorite.