



THE LITTLE NELL

| BY TRACY BEARD

Fall and winter are excellent times to visit Aspen, Colorado. In the fall the heat of summer is over, but the days are still warm, and the nights are cool and crisp. The weather is ideal for outdoor adventures, and the landscape is picture perfect. The winter months bring snow, turning Aspen into the proverbial winter wonderland. The Little Nell is Aspen's only Five-Star, Five-Diamond, ski-in/ski-out hotel and a fantastic place to stay and play any time of year.

FALL IN ASPEN

Aspens, cottonwoods, Douglas firs, lodgepole pines, Rocky Mountain maples, and willows paint the hillsides of Aspen in the fall. The evergreens retain their dark shades of green throughout the year, but the broadleaf deciduous trees provide an ever-changing array of colors. These leaves turn from their myriad shades of spring and summer greens to scarlet red, carnelian (a reddish-orange), and vibrant yellow. As fall progresses, the red turn to russet (a reddish-brown), the orange to amber, and the yellow to lurid (a pale-yellow color signifying that the leaves are fit for dying). This spectacular color palette draws many to Aspen in the fall.

WINTER IN ASPEN

Winter brings the snow, and with the snow comes skiers, boarders, and snow bunnies. The ski lifts run up and down the mountains throughout the day, filling the hearts of winter athletes with joy, but savvy guests of The Little Nell can book an Aspen Powder Tour. These private tours accommodate 12 people looking for an exclusive experience on the backside of Aspen Mountain.

Tours average 10 to 12 untracked runs of intermediate to expert terrain. After a morning of calorie-burning activity, guests dine on a delicious lunch with wonderfully paired wines from around the world. A massage therapist is on-site to give complimentary chair massages in the wood-stove-heated cabin in the mountains.

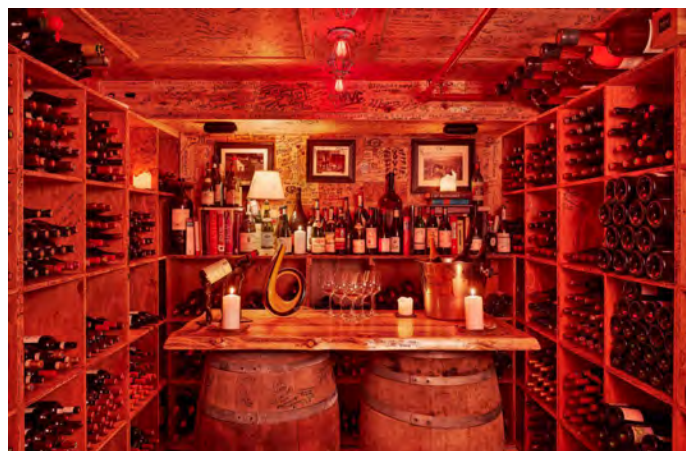
The First Tracks Program, another excellent winter adventure, is available solely to guests of The Little Nell, Residences at The Little Nell, and The Limelight Hotel. Guests must be intermediate to advanced skiers. Participants board Aspen Mountain's Silver Queen Gondola at 8:15 a.m. (before the Mountain officially opens in the morning), and they ski or board through virgin, waist-high powder.

THE LITTLE NELL

In the fall my son Garrett, his wife Victoria, and I stayed for several nights at The Little Nell. The chic lobby featured a fireplace and a well-appointed lounging area. Our expansive room had two queen-sized beds, a lovely sitting area in front of a fireplace, a workspace, and an enormous bathroom.

DECADENT DINING IN ASPEN

Executive Chef Matt Zubrod | As a teenager, Matt Zubrod began working as a dishwasher, and the chef at that restaurant encouraged him to attend culinary school. When Zubrod was in college earning a degree in business, he worked in kitchens and fell in love with the culinary world. His mother prompted him to apply for a job at the Ritz Carlton in Boston. He landed the position as an overnight prep chef. The Ritz Carlton chef promised Zubrod that if he worked hard for six months, he would train him anywhere



in the kitchen. Nine months later, Zubrod began learning each station in the Ritz Carlton kitchen. He slowly moved up the chain and realized this was what he wanted as a career.

A friend in France invited him to come and stay on his couch, and he got him a start at a Michelin-star restaurant. Zubrod worked for free and obtained more training. During my interview with Executive Chef Zubrod, he said, “Before you are labeled chef, you feel like you will never know everything, and then the day you call yourself chef, you have to know the answer for everything.” Chef Zubrod once asked a seasoned chef, “At what point do you become a chef?” He responded, “You are never ready, but at some point you have to start teaching what you know.”

ELEMENT 47

Element 47 is one of two restaurants at The Little Nell, and Chef Zubrod has been the executive chef and culinary director for seven years. The menu at Element 47 highlights Colorado’s contemporary cuisine and features wagyu beef, house-made pasta, and seasonal produce. Diners can enjoy Chef Zubrod’s cuisine paired with wines from The Little Nell’s award-winning wine program.

During our stay at The Little Nell, Garrett, Victoria, and I got dressed and ready for dinner at Element 47. We ordered the burrata with heirloom tomato tart, Palisade peaches, and arugula pesto. Garrett had the wagyu tartar—tender wagyu beef with rye, allium, egg yolk, and fresh horseradish. It was wonderfully seasoned and artistically designed.

Garrett and I ordered the 4 oz Emma Farm’s wagyu beef with thinly sliced stacked potato pave, locally foraged mushrooms, and shishito peppers. The thick slices of wagyu tenderloin had a crispy exterior and a melt-in-your-mouth center. The flavors were incredible. Victoria dined on the Rosen Farm’s lamb with charred leeks, carrots, za’atar, and a pepper condiment.

Victoria and I finished dinner with the cherry cheesecake bar made with mascarpone cheese, hazelnuts, and hibiscus-flavored fruit leather. Garrett ordered the chocolate mousse with acai, blackberry gel, hazelnuts, and a touch of Maldon sea salt. The deep dark chocolate mousse was light, airy, and went amazingly with the hazelnut and berry flavors.

Dinner is not the only meal at Element 47; breakfast is also a treat. The offerings include the classic morning essentials—coffee and tea, juices, eggs, and bacon—but Chef Zubrod puts some yummy twists on the menu. We ordered the light and fluffy lemon soufflé pancakes with raspberry syrup, toasted pine nuts, and fresh raspberries, the ideal combination of sweet and tart. The house-made seasonal pop tart was superior to the ones from the store, and the wagyu enchiladas with eggs, salsa, and cotija cheese were fantastic.

WINE EXPERIENCES AT THE LITTLE NELL

The Little Nell offers guests the opportunity to book private tastings from their celebrated wine cellar. A sommelier will lead guests through an exclusive tasting in the wine cellar. The kids and I participated in one

of these incredible experiences. I loved watching Garrett and Victoria get an education in wine, and it was fun for me to sample several new wines.

AUDI EXPERIENCES AT THE LITTLE NELL

The Little Nell has a unique program where guests can test drive the all-electric Audi E-Tron. Victoria and I took the classy new car with all its bells and whistles for a spin to Maroon Bells. The car ride was exhilarating, but the splendor of the new ride could not compare to the two towering 14,000-foot mountains that appeared before us in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness.

We exited the car and stood stunned at the glorious scene before us. The aspen trees bathed the hillsides in a dazzling golden yellow. We meandered down one of the nature trails to get closer to the magnificent display of fall colors. Most people take a bus to Maroon Bells, so a reservation is needed.

VISIT THE LITTLE NELL

This trip was my first fall visit to Colorado but will not be my last. Garrett and Victoria live in Colorado, so I have visited in winter, summer, and spring several times. To me, fall in Aspen is the most glorious time to visit. The colors are mesmerizing, the weather is delightful, and it is one of the best times to be outside experiencing new adventures. Plan a trip to Aspen and stay at The Little Nell to experience the magical activities offered by the fall and winter seasons. ◆

