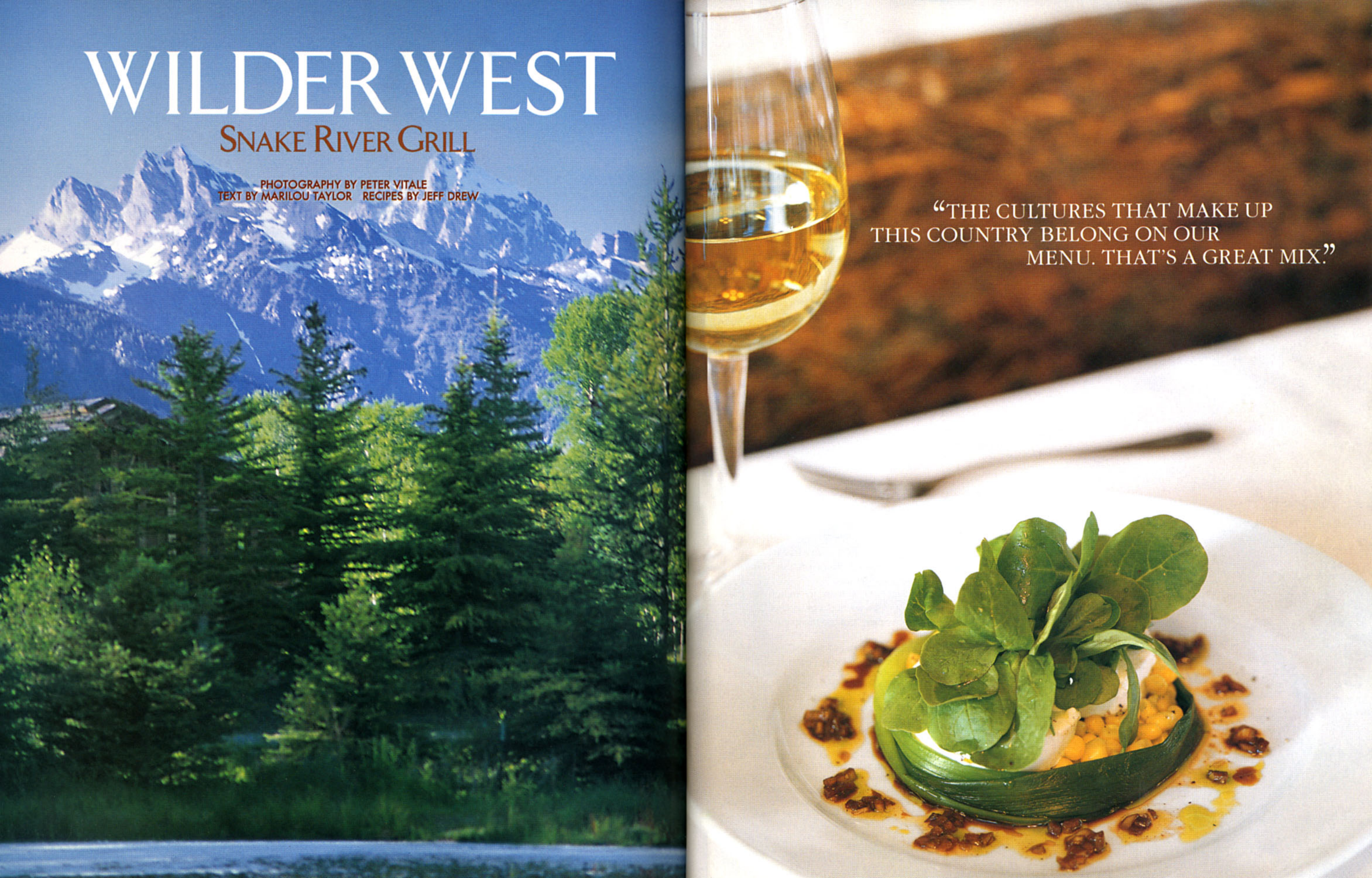


WILDER WEST

SNAKE RIVER GRILL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER VITALE
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“THE CULTURES THAT MAKE UP
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Jeff Drew, executive chef of the Snake River Grill in Jackson, Wyoming, chose this scenic mountain region as his home for its quality of life. "Before I moved here, I was chef de cuisine at the Coyote Café in Santa Fe, so I know what the words 'quality of life' mean about a place," Drew says. "I wanted to go where I'd be challenged in my work but also where my family and I could live in great surroundings."

That is the perfect description for where and what Chef Drew chose. The town of Jackson sits at the southern end of Jackson Hole, a valley sixty miles long and twenty miles wide with hiking and fishing on the Snake River in summer and snow sports in winter. The road heading north out of town leads to two national parks: Grand Teton and Yellowstone.

Drew found the other half of his equation—work—at the Snake River Grill. Though the restaurant uses icons of American West interior design, such as chinked lodgepole walls, the atmosphere is as eclectic and sophisticated as Drew's cooking style.

"This is an American grill," explains August Spier, co-owner with Alan Hirschfield of the twelve-year-old restaurant. "The cultures that make up this country belong on our menu. That's a great mix."

Drew is a man to match their vision. "We wanted a great chef," continues Spier, "but too many great chefs

OPENING PAGES: Grand Teton National Park offers magnificent panoramas as viewed from Jackson, Wyoming. Summer Corn Salad with Fresh Mozzarella and Mâche, among the frontier flavors at the Snake River Grill, is as quick to fix as it is attractive. LEFT: A mica and metal sconce is mounted on the lodgepole pine wall of a cozy upholstered booth, its table topped with a platter of Mini Ahi Tuna Tacos with Salsa Fresca. OPPOSITE: The grill's initials decorate a punched-metal lamp illuminating a signature entrée: Prime New York Steak with Coffee-Bourbon Glaze, Tobacco Onion Rings and Green Bean Salad.





see only the kitchen. They have no understanding of the front of the restaurant—the dining room—with its problems about seating, pacing, wine, service. Because of Jeff's training and focus, he understands both the front and back of the house."

And Drew's credentials are faultless. In his early teens, he worked for a caterer who was a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America. His mentor convinced him to spend two years studying at the prestigious institute in Hyde Park, New York.

"The program and teaching staff are just amazing," Drew explains. "Various specialties are offered, and wine was the one that interested me most. The time I spent tasting wine refined my palate. I learned to match food and wine so that one doesn't overwhelm the other. That's important, because wine-tasting dinners with six courses and just the right wines are a serious deal at the Snake River Grill."

His sophistication in both areas received further refinement when he was chosen from hundreds of professional chefs for a fellowship at the School for American Chefs in Napa Valley, California. Sponsored by Beringer Vineyards, the late, great school was directed by Madeleine Kamman, a culinary teacher of teachers. "There were about a dozen of us who came from different parts of the country and brought diverse cooking styles. Madeleine was a master of food science and chemistry. She thought that many celebrity chefs did not understand these fundamentals of cooking, so she wanted to teach people like us—people she believed could lead the next generation of chefs. It was a fascinating experience. Now, of course, we see many chefs exploring chemistry, new techniques and tex-

OPPOSITE: A rugged fireplace of moss rock frames Snake River Grill Bittersweet Chocolate Fondue with dipping treats such as strawberries, marshmallows and chunks of toasted fruit bread. RIGHT: An antique wooden bench with whimsical wagon-wheel arms sits on the deck below the restaurant.

