

North Shore eateries – the place for apres ski fun

Apres-ski activities can be just as memorable as the time spent on the slopes and North Lake Tahoe is keeping things lively with a fresh influx of eateries and watering holes and longtime favorites, offering even more options for posh cocktails, cold brews and unforgettable flavors.

The area's most anticipated opening is Manzanita at The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe. Located mid-mountain at Northstar-at-Tahoe, Manzanita will be helmed by Traci Des Jardins, the James Beard award-winning chef behind San Francisco's Jardiniere and Mijita Cocina Mexicana. Skiers and snowboarders can end their day with Des Jardins' signature French-inspired cuisine infused with mountain flavors created with organic ingredients and sustainable, locally grown meat and produce. Bound-to-be favorites include Liberty Farms duck meatballs with mission figs and Lucques olives and Dungeness crab sliders. Manzanita opens Dec. 9.

Tahoe City recently got a taste of Thai when Thai Kitchen opened this fall. The city's Cobblestone Center is also home to a new wine bar, Corkscrews Wine & Cheese Bar, with a sleek, modern look, boasting an impressive selection of boutique wine labels and cheese, including Cowgirl Creamery's Mt. Tam goat cheese.

Also new this winter is Squaw Valley's Cornice Cantina. Located in the old Red Dog at Squaw Valley USA, the Cantina serves authentic Mexican food and margaritas till midnight. The Village at Squaw's Twenty-Two Bistro & Bar celebrates its one-year anniversary this December and basks in the glow of KT-22. The eatery serves up small plates of New American cuisine as well as substantial entrees for skied-up appetites. The owner of the Village's Uncorked opened Soupa last year,

which features affordable, house-made comfort foods from organic, sustainable ingredients.

Fat Cat Cafe in Tahoe City re-opened its doors last May after an extensive remodel. Guests can pick their poison from an extensive martini and cocktail menu at the cherry-wood bar and enjoy “share plates” with friends. Popular items include the Alley Cat, a dirty martini with blue cheese-stuffed olives; along with Thai lettuce wraps; and Fat Cat Mac, a four-cheese macaroni and cheese with smoked bacon, crimini mushrooms and truffle oil. Live music is featured Friday and Saturday evenings.

The masterminds behind Moody’s Bistro will also be celebrating the one-year anniversary of Baxter’s Bistro and Lounge in the Village at Northstar. Chef Mark Estee and JJ Morgan welcome hungry skiers and riders with live jazz and comfort food created with farm-to-table ingredients in a hip atmosphere. New this winter is an outdoor patio with fire pit and couches where revelers can keep warm with seasonal cocktails, such as the Naughty Cider.

Incline Village welcomed Bite in December 2007. The lounge-style bar and restaurant boasts a chic and dramatic atmosphere, specializing in small plate and American tapas. The bar creates artisan cocktails from scratch, using premium spirits, house-made infused syrups and fresh herbs and fruit. Locals swear by the Lemon Ginger Zinger and the Lime Basil Gimlet, as well as the Ahi Sliders with Arugula, Pickled Ginger and Wasabi Aioli. Truckee’s FiftyFifty Brewing Company also opened in 2007 and is the place to head for an authentic taste of Sierra-brewed beer. Local favorites include pints of Rockslide IPA, preferably served with huge plates of nachos, Belgian mussels and frites or bourbon-grilled shrimp over sweet potato fries.

Famous fixtures such as the Lone Eagle Grille, Gar Woods Grill and Pier, Moody’s Bistro and Lounge and Big Water Grille still

serve as beacons for post-slope revelers. It's Old Tahoe ambiance overlooking the waters of Lake Tahoe at the Hyatt Regency's Lone Eagle Grille in Incline Village, where winter enthusiasts rest their weary limbs next to stone fireplaces. The food is hearty and includes seared elk chop and rosemary grilled quail. Gar Woods in Carnelian Bay offers expansive lake views and Warm Woodys (the winter counterpart to their renowned slushy Wet Woody, which is available throughout the year). Moody's stylish setting exudes warmth while boasting one of the area's coolest atmospheres and menus. Located in the Truckee Hotel, Moody's is known for live music (including impromptu performances by Sir Paul McCartney), the Aviation Cocktail and the "Big Ass Pork Chop." Big Water Grille provides spectacular, panoramic lake views and a wine list with 200 different wines from around the world.

Winter enthusiasts have also long flocked to PlumpJack Cafe, Sunnyside and Caliente. Situated at the base of Squaw, PlumpJack remains an energetic scene where high-end city folk and local ski bums mingle over Crockett's Cool Breezes. Sunnyside Lodge's location right on the water continues to pique the interest of visitors, but it's the fish tacos and crispy zucchini sticks that keep them coming back. It's always animated at Caliente in Kings Beach, especially at their monthly tequila tastings hosted by distillery representatives.