

THE CONNOISSEUR UP NORTH

Spring into dining

*Menus come alive
with season's
fresh ingredients*

Ahh, spring! When chefs and food lovers come alive! It's amazing what spring does for the spirit after four months of snow cover. We can't help noting rising inflections of seasonal excitement among chefs. It's a time of year when food lovers' hopes and thoughts just tumble out and roll around. Take Rich Travis at Bay Harbor's Latitude.

"Spring!" he exclaimed. "Spring just comes alive! Fiddleheads! Morels! Ramps!"

Ramps, indeed! Any day now, we'll stop on the road by our favorite wild leek patch and dig some up, then hurry home to wash and trim them and make up a big, pungent pot of potato-leek soup. In May, we'll all be poking around the forest floor for morels, and anticipating all the earthy dishes they'll make.

Chefs and restaurants in northern Lower Michigan are coming alive themselves, and taking time before summer's rush to share the delights of spring with us. Here's a sampler of the excitement we found



**BY SHERRI &
GRAYDON
DECAMP**

Local columnists

surrounding spring menus and food events Up North.

At Tapawingo, this is a special spring: the restaurant's 20th anniversary. Chef Pete Peterson tells us he'll celebrate that milestone over 10 days, May 6-16, with a menu of "the most often requested dishes served in the past 20 years." This will include a special "tasting menu" of Chef Pete's own favorites, each matched with its own wine.

Since it's May, you can count on finding morels on the celebration menu. The next month, Tapawingo will repeat its annual "Circle Herb Farm Lunches" on June 8, 9 and 10, featuring dishes prepared with herbs from this Charlevoix County farm near east Jordan. (Tapawingo, Ellsworth, 588-

7971; www.tapawingo.net)

Travis' new menu at Latitude reflects what he calls the season's "new life" with those ramps, fiddleheads and morels. He has a team of local pickers poised for spring and summer mushrooms, and you can watch for a morel cassoulet on his menu, as well as white morels stuffed with wild rice, ham and pecans. Travis also looks ahead to the fresh goods that will soon be showing up at Bill's Farm Market near Petoskey, where he says he buys 60 percent of his produce. Latitude's new menu will also have an "Asian tasting" section and new shellfish items with lobster and clams. (Latitude, Bay Harbor Marina, 439-2750; www.latituderestaurant.com)

The Rowe Inn's own annual Morel Festival, May 13-16, will feature morel mushrooms throughout a six-course, \$60-a-person dinner. The Rowe will also offer 25-item Sunday brunches on Mother's Day (May 9), Memorial Day (May 30) and Father's Day (June 20). (The Rowe Inn, Ellsworth, 588-7351; roweinn.com)

Beulah's Timmerin restaurant at the Beulah Beach Inn ends a brief hibernation with a Mother's Day brunch. Chef Tim White said his spring menu will feature



Record-Eagle/Lara Neel

Jim Milliman presents two "Morel Mushroom Weekends" at Hattie's in Suttons Bay during the month of May.

seasonal young asparagus in a puree of asparagus soup with white asparagus, sautéed mushrooms and pancetta with crème fraiche. May also brings roasted rack of spring lamb to Timmerin, where it's served with fresh peas, spinach and mint pesto. (Timmerin, Beulah, 882-5523; www.beulah-

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