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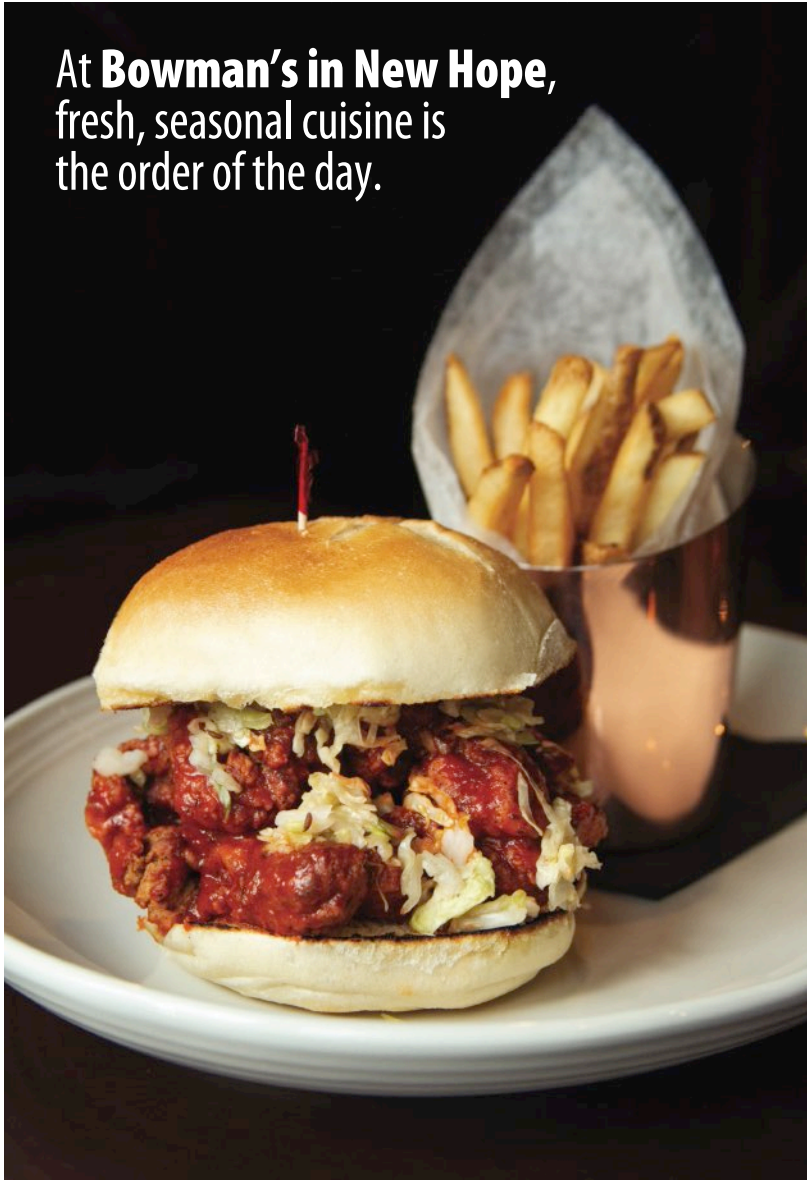
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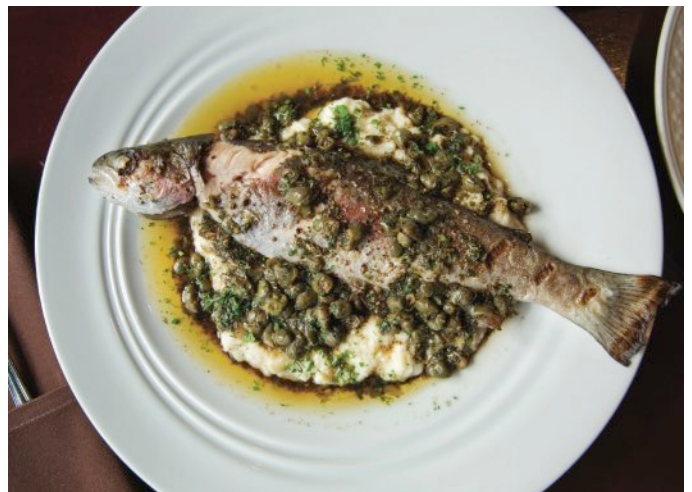
At **Bowman's in New Hope**, fresh, seasonal cuisine is the order of the day.



A MEAL FOR EVERY SEASON

// **'ve always focused on farm to table,"** says Matt Brakoniecki, Executive Chef at Bowman's in New Hope. "When building a menu, I look to source products locally first and to build relationships with local purveyors and farmers, whether it's a cheesemaker or a farmer I may only purchase lettuce from.

"I'm not opposed to having a multitude of different farmers and vendors that I buy from," he continues. "I think supporting local agriculture and farming is necessary, especially with how quickly things are changing in the economy. I think if we lose those farmers, it would be a detriment to our industry and especially to the guests we serve daily."



Brakoniecki's philosophy aligns perfectly with the foundation upon which Bowman's has built its reputation—namely, a tavern and restaurant offering the best in fresh, seasonal cuisine and cocktails.

"We currently bring in trout from a hatchery in the Lehigh Valley," he says. "We get a lot of organic produce from Lancaster, and there are quite a few orchards in the New Hope area that supply us with apples weekly. We also have a guy who supplies the restaurant with local cheese and eggs from Lancaster County once a week. When we can use a product that's local, or local-ish, we're going to do that."

Brakoniecki strives to "follow the seasons." In the spring and summer months, Bowman's utilizes produce and herbs grown right on site, including jalapeños and hot peppers. In the winter, the menu and roster of ingredients shifts to heartier stock.

"I use whatever is available to me," Brakoniecki says. "In the fall and winter, that's heartier lettuces, root vegetables, and apples and pears into December. I let the seasons dictate what I'm going to use, then I try to be as creative as possible with what's being offered."

Coming up for the holidays, diners should be on the lookout for substantial meat dishes such as braised lamb or pork shank or a rib roast—"something more warm, more hearty," as Brakoniecki puts it, with specials that change from week to week.

The freedom to explore new recipes is one of Brakoniecki's favorite things about the job. A self-taught chef, Brakoniecki has worked in well-known Philadelphia-area establishments but says Bowman's owner James Seward's approach to creativity in the kitchen is wholly unique.

"I get along really well with [Seward], and he's the best owner I've ever worked for," Brakoniecki says. "You can see how he treats employees and how he cares for them. It's kind of rare to see in this industry. He gives me the freedom to cook what I want to cook, and that's something I've sought after in this industry. Whatever we're feeling in the moment—myself and the other chefs in the kitchen—we have that freedom to explore and use different products as they become available to us."

Brakoniecki describes his style as modern American, which matches perfectly with the menu offerings at Bowman's.

"I like to take influences from different cultures and make something new out of it," he says. "I'm interested in a little bit from all different cuisines. My background



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—Matt Brakoniecki,
Executive Chef at Bowman's

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is in Italian cooking, but my inspiration comes from all over the place."

In line with his commitment to local, sustainable cuisine, Brakoniecki likes to embrace dishes that employ all parts of a product. In the case of animal proteins, this means incorporating often unutilized cuts and offal meats.

"What I hope to bring here is that dynamic, and some dishes people have never seen or products people have never eaten before," he adds. "I look for that adventurous eater. I think if you're going to kill an animal and eat from it, you should use all parts of it. I would love to introduce some of these animal parts to people and cook them in a delicious way so that people will say, 'Hey, I never thought I'd like chicken hearts, but

Bowman's has them and they're great."

More traditional proteins at Bowman's abound, of course, but still reflect this commitment to freshness and sustainability. One such current menu favorite is a whole local trout.

"We get a great product from Green-Walk Trout Hatchery, about an hour north of New Hope, at the foothills of the Poconos, but they deliver here directly," Brakoniecki shares. "The trout is as fresh as can be, and it's delicious. I don't do much to it—I let the product speak for itself—I season it with fresh herbs, sea salt, and quality olive oil, and then grill it whole. It's so delicate and fresh that the meat basically falls off the bone. I've had people say it's the best dish they've ever had, and it warms my heart to hear that."

Another house favorite is the New Hope Hot Chicken, which features myriad flavors from around the globe.

"For the New Hope Hot Chicken, I take inspiration from the southern Nashville Hot Chicken sandwich, we make a Korean-inspired hot sauce and top it with a German-style coleslaw," he says. "New Hope, to me, is a place that is accepting of different cultures. I wanted to bring that in a sandwich by melding those influences and ingredients."

A gourd-based dish sure to please features burrata atop tempura-fried acorn squash accented by Benton's country ham, candied hazelnuts, and spiced Pennsylvania maple syrup.

"I'm always researching my craft—new techniques, new ways to do things," Brakoniecki says. "People who are regulars here, they're going to see that. They can expect something new every time they visit, and they're going to get that. I'm excited to do that here, and I'm excited to see what comes next." ■



→ **Bowman's**
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