

Tucked Away

A few countryside outposts just south of DC have become hotbeds of hot beds. Check in to check out some of the area's coziest coves | *By Karen Sommer Shalett | Photography by Ron Blunt* |



THAT INNER GLOW Clockwise from top left: Charlene and David Scibal turned this 1778 estate into an urbane outpost, complete with Vintage restaurant and intimate suites with deluxe decor, such as the Master.



Southern hospitality—cultivated during her childhood on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans—to her adopted town.

When an inn that was designed and built by Dolley Madison's land surveyor for Montpelier came on the market in 2009, the couple snatched it up, re-envisioning it with the intimacy of a bed and breakfast, the swank of a boutique hotel and an artisanal restaurant that would soar no matter where it was plunked down. Ensnconced at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the mansion's six suites and five cottages (three more will be added in 2011) are bedecked in linens by Anichini and mattresses by Natura. Each features a luxe loo loaded with L'Occitane, a gracious soaking tub and heated floors. Expect additional indulgences when the one-room spa opens in early 2011. It's just one of the outbuildings; others offer indoor and outdoor spots for seasonal celebrations.

At 5PM, guests are invited to snack in the salon on quail eggs, short rib or whatever amuse-bouche Executive Chef Jason Daniels cooks up in the kitchen at Vintage restaurant below. The intimate eatery is worth the trip alone. An innovative, seasonal menu based on farm-to-table principles (look out your suite window to see the cows being fed on the hill) is ambitious at its lowest points and outstanding at its highest. Daniels trained under famed New Orleanian Susan Spicer before building restaurants both grand and small throughout the South. The main dining room of this sophisticated 50-seater was once the property's stonewall kitchen. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served to guests; though locals join the conviviality for lunch and dinner throughout the week. You could dine for days without tiring of the cuisine.

That a gracious innkeeper can be found in Virginia is hardly surprising. That one who offers of-the-moment fare and Fifth Avenue urbanity has taken up residence here lends this hidden gem a brilliant shine. ■

Locals consider Orange, Virginia, the skydiving capital of the state, which makes it a fitting burg for David and Charlene Scibal to take a flying leap of their own. After pouring millions into a shuttered hotel, the couple has recently opened the **Inn at Willow Grove** (\$295-\$695 nightly, inmatwillowgrove.com), transforming a 37-acre plantation-style estate dating back to 1778 into a juxtaposition of cutting-edge hospitality and high-hitting grace notes from another era altogether.

The Scibals met at an insurance convention some 20 years ago, married and took up residence in stunning homes oceanside, city-center and now on a horse farm in this hamlet, 45 minutes north of Charlottesville. Having been a chef, gallery owner and interior designer, Charlene's personal aesthetic—a rich mix of Hollywood glamour, modern art and French colonialism—dominated the couple's manses. But she wanted to offer her signature

What's Inn This Season

CLIFTON INN The prodigal chef returns. Charlottesville's Relais & Châteaux-awarded 18-room hotel welcomes back executive chef Tucker Yoder, after he won plaudits from *The Wall Street Journal* and *New York Post* for starting up The Red Hen in Lexington, Virginia. From \$195, cliftoninn.net.

THE HOPE AND GLORY INN An 1890s schoolhouse, its quirky-chic seven rooms and 10 cottages make up this deluxe sleep spot in Irvington. Go for the whimsical décor and Detention bar. The Recess spa is coming in 2011. From \$195, hopeandglory.com.

THE ASHBY INN Although the address says Paris (Virginia, that is), you are more likely to feel like you're in Provençal. Local vineyards and farms cater to this renowned restaurant in an inn dating back to 1829. From \$165, ashbyinn.com.