

VIRGINIA SPORTSMAN

Restaurant Guide

The Red Stag at the Grand Bohemia Hotel
European Comfort Food in the Mountains of North Carolina

As you enter the Grand Bohemia Hotel in Asheville, North Carolina, you feel like you have been transported to the estate of a 19th-century Austrian aristocrat. You can also imagine George Vanderbilt himself as one of its guests before his Biltmore was completed. The hotel is owned and operated by the Kessler Collection, and it has spared no attention to detail to adorn the lobby, hallways and guest rooms with fine antiques and artwork from around the world. The hotel's art gallery, as well as every floor, is filled with works by local and internationally acclaimed artists. On the second floor, Stefano Cecchini's wildlife paintings are so vivid that the animals watch as you walk by.

The Grand Bohemia is home to the Red Stag Grill, which offers Asheville's finest gastronomic choices in a casual atmosphere where everyone feels warm, welcome and at ease. Every detail for the guest has been thought out. Even the menus are backlit to make for easier reading. The decor emanates an Old-World ambience with hand-hewn ceiling beams, walnut wood flooring, chain-mail curtains and intimate lighting. The restaurant also includes a dramatic lounge for socializing while enjoying brilliantly prepared libations on a bar top fashioned from petrified wood. The Red Stag Grill's menu includes a masterful blend of game and traditional favorites, which change seasonally, with an emphasis on the freshest local ingredients available at the time, and complemented by an extensive wine list and specialty beers such as Chimay on tap.

Executive Chef Adam Hayes leads



Sunburst mountain trout with seasonal vegetable ragout

The lobby at the Grand Bohemia Hotel



the professional culinary team that features contemporary European comfort food. His use of local ingredients makes for menu items that are creative, flavorful, fresh and

seasonal.

Chef Hayes produced tasting portions from the menu. My meal started with a duo of appetizers—fried green

the/**zimmerman**/agency

(continued)

tomatoes with creamy smoked jalapeno sauce, goat cheese, and heirloom tomatoes. The fried green tomatoes would make any Southern grandmother proud to call them her own! Next came the house salad with smoked chicken, mixed tender greens, avocado, tomatoes, almonds, dates, goat cheese and croutons with creamy smoked jalapeño dressing. Everything in this salad is perfectly paired in texture and taste and could have been a perfect lunch in itself. Then came a Sunburst Mountain trout with seasonal vegetable ragout, roasted potatoes, warm mint and pea vinaigrette. This trout dish was awarded Best Dish of North Carolina in the official restaurant competition of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in 2010.

The outdoorsman in me leans toward wild game dishes, and Chef Hayes prepared for me the Mountain River elk tenderloin with chestnut mashed potatoes, seasonal greens, and wild berry demi glace. The elk is so tender that it melts in your

mouth and leaves you wanting more. Finally, the dessert offers the sugar lover a rush of excitement. From Black Forest lava cake to blackberry creme brulee and a classic cheese board, the menu has something for everyone. My North Carolina peach tart with vanilla bean ice cream and local berries was a perfect end to a perfect meal. Specialties from Chef Hayes' kitchen are a feast for all your senses. His plate presentations are works of art on china.

For an event or wedding, check out the Grand Ballroom on the fourth floor. It has been designed in the tradition of Salzburger country manors, as well as the palaces of Vienna. The Grand Ballroom is resplendent with antiqued glass mirrors, ornate gold leafing, crystal chandeliers, sconces, and ornamental finials. The Bösendorfer Piano is located in the Bösendorfer Salon before the ballroom. If you are a piano connoisseur, this is a Ferrari with ivory keys. The Kessler family crest on the ceiling finishes off the details in this magnificent ballroom.

If you are in the Asheville area, the Grand Bohemia Hotel and Red Stag Grill are not to be missed.

Sean Finley is a master's degree graduate of the Texas Tech School of Hospitality. He currently owns The Outdoor Travel Advisor, a company that specializes in luxury outdoor travel and hospitality for the distinguished sportsperson. He can be reached at (317)441-0483 or finleysd2871@gmail.com.