



Pretzel-crusted chicken tenders: Crushed Pennsylvania-made Snyder's of Hanover pretzels elevate the chicken finger.

REAP THE HARVEST

► BY STEPHANIE ANDERSON WITMER

Since 1905, Hershey has been synonymous with one food: chocolate. But with last year's opening of Harvest at The Hotel Hershey, visitors now have more local fare to sink their teeth into than just candy.

Agriculture is Pennsylvania's top industry, and Harvest takes full advantage of the Commonwealth's bounty. Following a "farm-to-fork" principle, Harvest gets most of its ingredients from within a 100-mile radius of Hershey.

Dinner at Harvest starts with a basket of warm, fresh bread. Dishes on the menu, which changes seasonally, are made from homegrown vegetables, cheeses, meats, chicken and other poultry. Appetizers include "the works" fingerling potatoes – local spuds piled with bacon, pickled jalapeños, local cheeses, organic sour cream and scallions. Entrées

include sugar-cured smoked pork chops and pappardelle with braised beef short ribs. While the seafood dishes don't hail from Pennsylvania, they do feature sustainable choices, such as Rhode Island calamari and Nantucket scallops.

And chocoholics needn't worry – there are plenty of ways to satisfy that sweet tooth at Harvest, from chocolate martinis to chocolate dessert "shooters" – even dark chocolate-braised pork shanks.

The dining room and bar at Harvest feature exposed wooden beams, a stone fireplace, stained-glass accents and a multitude of windows, creating an atmosphere that is both sophisticated and relaxed. During warmer months, guests can sip top-notch American wines (many of which are organic or sustainable), microbrews or cocktails around the large fire pit on the patio outside.

Harvest has an uncommon approach to dining – and eating. Buying local foods may be trickier and more involved than one-stop supermarket shopping, but it helps to decrease one's carbon footprint by not purchasing food shipped from all over the world. And it's good for the local economy, too.

Chef de cuisine Mark Neumeister has spent much of the past year doing extensive



Food images/Jason Varney

◀ **SOUPED UP:** Chicken noodle soup served over Amish egg noodles.

research to find local farms to provide his kitchen with ingredients – and

inspiration. Though he graduated from the Culinary Institute of America and cooked at Craftsteak in Las Vegas before moving to Hershey, Neumeister says that the bulk of his “local” cooking has been done at Harvest.

Using regional, seasonal products almost exclusively is challenging and requires careful planning, he says, “but it’s rewarding. It keeps us on our toes. We always have something new.”

Neumeister works closely with the Lancaster Farm Fresh Cooperative and Tuscarora Organic Growers to find farmers to supply Harvest’s needs. In addition, Harvest is a member of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Slow Food USA. Herbs and flowers for garnishing come from the Hershey Gardens next door or from the hotel’s own herb garden. Some veggies even come from student-run gardens at the nearby Milton Hershey School.

Harvest’s commitment to the environment extends beyond the food it serves. To uphold Hershey’s burgeoning commitment to “green living,” the restaurant was constructed with recycled roofing materials, native stone and geothermal heating and cooling systems. Recycling bins are used in the kitchen. Frozen products are thawed without running water over them. To-go containers and paper products are made from biodegradable or recycled materials.

In Milton S. Hershey’s day, there was no concept of “green living,” but the entrepreneur and compassionate humanitarian set out to build more



HARVEST'S SIGNATURE DISH:

Grilled Hanger Steak with Birch-Beer Reduction, Roasted Mushrooms and Whipped Scallion-Bacon Potatoes

One entree reigns supreme at Harvest: the grilled hanger steak. Some nights, this one dish accounts for 40 percent of the restaurant’s sales.

What’s the secret to its success? The reduction – a sweet, savory combination of Pennsylvania Dutch birch beer, veal sauce and herbs that takes all day to make.

Dark Chocolate–Braised Pork Shanks

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:

2 Tbsp. Hershey’s cocoa powder	2 stalks celery, roughly chopped
2 Tbsp. ancho chili powder	4 cloves garlic
¼ c. kosher salt	2 Tbsp. tomato paste
1 tsp. ground pepper	1 c. port or red wine
4 pork shanks (16–20 oz.)	2 bay leaves
3 Tbsp. canola oil	4 sprigs thyme
2 carrots, peeled & roughly chopped	1 gallon pork or veal stock
2 yellow onions, roughly chopped	¼ c. dark chocolate, chopped

METHOD:

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Combine cocoa powder, chili powder, salt and pepper. Season pork shanks with cocoa mixture. Heat Dutch oven or large roasting pan on stove over medium heat. Add oil, and cook pork until deep golden brown. Remove pork; set aside. Add vegetables and garlic; sauté until well caramelized. Turn down heat to low, add tomato paste and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add wine; cook 2-3 minutes more. Add remaining ingredients and pork; bring to a light simmer. (Make sure pork is fully submerged in stock.) Cover and cook in oven for 3-4 hours until fork-tender. Remove half of braising liquid and strain, then reduce on stove by half. Season stock and serve over pork.

Tip: Pork can be served over mashed potatoes with crispy fried onions.

MORE >>> Hungry for homemade, homegrown cuisine? Visit Harvest at The Hotel Hershey, 100 Hotel Rd., Hershey, 717.534.8800; thehotelhershey.com.

than a successful company. His aim was to create a town that provided for its community’s welfare. And his legacy lives on at Harvest.