

BIG SKY JOURNAL

FLY FISHING 2016

LIFESTYLE IN THE NORTHERN ROCKIES



A LOVE LETTER TO THE MIGHTY MO

FISH TALES FROM DAVID ABRAMS, BRYCE ANDREWS AND MALCOLM BROOKS

THE SPORTING ART OF OTT JONES

PHOTO ESSAY: THE COLOR OF THE SPAWN





Triple Creek Ranch

In Montana's Bitterroot Valley, chef Jacob Leatherman combines wildness and sophistication

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY TRIPLE CREEK RANCH

ASIDE FROM THE SPOTLESS, starched chef whites, it's not a stretch to imagine Jacob Leatherman as a mountain man, or to picture him opening raw oysters with his teeth. He likes to spend as much time in cold rivers as he does in the kitchen, and when he cooks over an open fire — as he prefers to do with everything from the aforementioned oysters to Montana Wagyu beef and perfectly marbled, hazelnut-fed pork — Leatherman uses his fingers instead of tongs, as if he were altogether unafraid of fire.

ABOVE: A pan-roasted snapper entree showcases chef Jake's simple, elegant presentation. **BELOW:** Executive chef Jacob "Jake" Leatherman has been at Triple Creek Ranch for more than a decade.



PAM VOTH



"I like it rustic," he says of the process, the tools and the food itself. Leatherman, executive chef at the tony Triple Creek Ranch outside of Darby, Montana, is big on understatement.

But there is a tender side to this mountain man too. In a cooking class with several ranch guests — Triple Creek offers cooking school getaways over long weekends in late January and early February — he talks to the food as he prepares it, dishing out whispered compliments like small prayers of thanks for the way things look and smell and feel in his able hands. He teaches us how herbs can be bruised when chopped the wrong way. It's worth noting that he has a degree in English literature from Ohio State University, and another from the French Culinary Institute (now the International Culinary Center). It's also worth noting that while he tells fishing stories and touts the merits of an 8-year-old vinegar he pours with practiced abandon from a Coors Banquet bottle (that he likes for the way it fits his hand), I watch two women gnaw on the bones of pork chops he's just cooked.

As is true of the best meals, the best stories, the best lives, really, Leatherman is a study in contrast.

So, too, is the Triple Creek Ranch. Owned and very much overseen by Craig and Barbara Barrett (he is the former CEO of Intel, and she's the former U.S. Ambassador to Finland and the current chairwoman of the Aerospace Corporation), Triple Creek is small and

ABOVE: Triple Creek Ranch guests enjoy three hearty meals a day in the dining room as part of the all-inclusive nightly rate. **BELOW:** Chef Jake takes a break from teaching a cooking class to make a few graceful casts in the Triple Creek trout pond.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Chef Jake fires up the guests during his hands-on cooking classes. Everyone leaves smarter, and full. • Chef Jake puts the finishing touches on a scallop starter. • Elegant dinner service in a relaxed ranch setting is a hallmark of the Triple Creek Ranch experience. • The orchards and gardens provide a bounty of fresh produce for the table, including apples, plums, cherries and pears along with berries of every kind, beets, peas, squash and a wide variety of greens.

It is a place where luxury and adventure coexist as naturally as mountain and sky, land and water.

remote. There are just 25 log cabins set in the rugged Bitterroots, but it topped the list of the “World’s Best Boutique Hotels” as voted by readers of *Travel & Leisure* in 2015.

It is a place where luxury and adventure coexist as naturally as mountain and sky, land and water. Guests at this adults-only property can spend their days on horseback, in drift boats or rafts, on bikes, snowmobiles or dogsleds. The idea is to get yourself as tired and hungry as possible. Then settle in for a decadent recovery process.

Back at the ranch, chef Jake, as he is known, makes every meal an adventure and a reward for any effort. The menu changes daily and, because Leatherman likes spontaneity, sometimes the paper it is printed on is still warm. He relies on a team of 15 in the kitchen, in addition to sommelier Jeremy White, under whose tenure Triple Creek has earned the *Wine Spectator* “Best of Award of Excellence” each year

since 2012. “It’s fun to figure out what we can do with what we can get,” Leatherman says. “Sure it’s stressful, but I love it.”

From grilled diver scallops with polenta, lamb bacon, arugula and onion dressing to pan-seared duck breast with wasabi mashed potatoes, caramelized squash and snap peas from the Triple Creek garden, Leatherman and his team prioritize fresh and regional ingredients. In addition to the Triple Creek garden, where everything from herbs to vegetables grow, the Barretts’ adjacent 26,000-acre CB Ranch has an orchard from which Leatherman harvests apples, plums, cherries, pears and numerous types of berries. Keeping with the



PAM VOTH

regional theme, White — who plans extravagant vintner weekends at the ranch throughout the year — pairs Leatherman’s creations with wines from the expansive cellar, much of which skews toward the best Northwest offerings.

“For me, at Triple Creek, the food can be wide open,” Leatherman says. “I like to have

fun with the classics. Yesterday I smoked a brisket. Today I *sous vide* a celtuce.” Without a word from me, Leatherman reads the look on my face. “It’s just a fancy way of poaching,” he says. And celtuce, it turns out, is an Asian variety of stem lettuce that looks like a miniature palm tree with lettuce for leaves.

From his Midwest origins, Leatherman

FROM LEFT: Ranch guests often gather in the rooftop lounge to socialize with cocktails before dinner each evening. • Big Sky is one of Triple Creek’s one-bedroom luxury cabins nestled in the forested setting. It boasts a king bed, wood-burning fireplace and a private hot tub.

MOR FISH. FLOAT. FUND.



TWO FLY
MUSEUM OF THE ROCKIES
6TH ANNUAL TWOFLY BENEFIT EVENT

Friday – Saturday, September 9 & 10, 2016

With 35 boats participating in 2015, Museum of the Rockies’ TwoFly has become the premier fly fishing benefit event in Southwest Montana. Register early to make sure you’re part of this year’s TwoFly as we float the blue-ribbon rivers and streams in and around Bozeman – all to benefit MOR.

For event details and for Participant and Guide registration, call 406.994.6054 or email events@montana.edu.

Presented by: **WELLS FARGO**

MUSEUM OF THE ROCKIES

1+1=1 GALLERY

Representing Montana & Regional Artists



"Sit By a River," by Tim J. Carney



434 N LAST CHANCE GULCH . HELENA . MT . 59601

1plus1is1.com

Bison Falafel with Tzatziki

TRIPLE CREEK RANCH | CHEF JAKE LEATHERMAN



PAM VOTH

TZATZIKI

- 1 cucumber, chopped
- 10 garlic cloves, smashed and finely chopped
- 1 cup distilled white vinegar
- 4 shallots, minced
- 1 small cup fresh dill
- 2 ½ cups Greek yogurt
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and let set at least an hour.

BISON FALAFEL

- 5 cups chickpeas, cooked
- ½ cup parsley, chopped
- 1 onion, minced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 2 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 fresh jalapeño
- 2 cups ground bison, browned and cooked
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- Vegetable oil for frying
- Salt and pepper to taste

Run the chickpeas, parsley, onions and garlic through a food processor until there are no big chunks. Add mixture to a large bowl. Add coriander, cumin, salt and pepper, jalapeño and cooked ground bison. Mix well and refrigerate for at least one hour. Remove from fridge, then add baking soda and salt and pepper to taste. Form into walnut-sized balls. Heat oil and fry balls until browned and cooked through. Remove with a slotted spoon onto dry paper towels.

Serve hot with Tzatziki sauce and dill to garnish.

The River of No Return

Every fall, owner Craig Barrett invites Triple Creek guests on a four-day fly-fishing adventure for steelhead on Idaho's fabled Salmon River. In addition to guided fishing and gourmet meals to make every good fish story even better, the long weekend includes plenty of time for other activities, including trap and five-stand shooting. For fishermen and foodies, this is paradise. The 2016 dates for this event are Nov. 3 to 7.

worked in New York, Colorado and Idaho before coming to Montana and Triple Creek in 2005. Aside from the fishing — he spends as much time as he can in the Bitterroot, East and West Fork creeks, and a variety of lakes and reservoirs where he can ice fish in winter — Leatherman appreciates the lack of pretension at Triple Creek, in the food and the guests too. "I love Triple Creek because no one is wearing a suit or tie. I have people who come to the kitchen in their socks. I love that."

For Leatherman, Triple Creek Ranch is the last best place, and he knows he has it good. "When it's busy and everyone's on their game, it's flowing and you know. You just know," Leatherman says. "Like fishing." ▲

Carter G. Walker is at work on the third edition of Moon Montana & Wyoming, which will be released in April 2017.



The Rooftop Lounge houses the elegant glass-encased cellar where guests can admire wine director Jeremy White's award-winning collection.



EVERYTHING YOUR HEART DESIRES FOR THE RIVERS!

Come see our new river concept showroom

FULL RENTALS

Full fishing ready set-ups!
CANOES • KAYAKS • RAFTS • SUP's



Montana's
Largest
Selection



83 Rowland Rd behind Menholt Honda