

# Enjoying the forest's bounty in comfort

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE NOVEMBER 25, 2010



À la Table des Jardins Sauvages in Lanaudière specializes in fine cuisine with rare wild ingredients, some from its own land.

**Photograph by:** Courtesy of Les Ateliers EpyNord

They met over mushrooms and opened a country restaurant that is the magical mystery tour of Quebec's culinary scene.

Nancy Hinton, an accomplished chef, and François Brouillard, a master forager of wild mushrooms and herbs, operate À la Table des Jardins Sauvages, an epicurean experience about an hour northeast of Montreal. They call it cuisine forestière, cuisine of the forest, a fusion of her disciplined, contemporary style and his rare, earthy ingredients that grow wild on his property and in swamps and woods.

It's an adventure finding this captivating, out-of-the-way cottage, especially after dark. It is situated well off a two-lane road, comfortably settled on the banks of a rushing river. A swaying footbridge, twinkling with lights, is a beacon in the night.

Indoors, Jardins Sauvages is an intimate jumble with two cozy dining spaces sheltered by low-slung pine ceiling beams. True to the theme, the walls are decorated with posters, photographs and botanical prints of mushrooms and herbs. Not to mention a hall of fame with press clippings, including a recent two-page spread in the New York Times Magazine and a piece by Gazette writer David Johnston, who called Jardins Sauvages' mix of intriguing dining, wild environment, mythology and creativity "as fine an example of contemporary Canadiana as I've seen."

Hinton's menu changes constantly, but it always is built around Brouillard's hand-picked treasures, from the salad of chanterelles to the chocolate mousse made with wild mushrooms. It is a long, languorous meal, with your choice of wine on a bring-your-own basis.

A dedicated locavore who uses ingredients from some of Quebec's best food producers, Hinton once worked at l'Eau à la Bouche with chef Anne Desjardins. Hinton bakes her mushroom bread with stone-ground buckwheat flour from a neighbour's mill, the Moulin Bleu, and she serves cheese from La Suisse Normande, a goat farm down the road. A recent menu featured duck from Ferme Morgan in the lower Laurentians and lamb from l'Agno et Le Lapin in Ste. Julienne, with micro-greens from Jardiniers

