

For the first time, one of New England's finest country inns welcomes winter.



GEORGE ROSS

A MIDWINTER NIGHT'S DREAM

ANN FITZPATRICK BROWN WALKS DOWN a long hallway flanked on both sides by some 4,000 bottles of wine. She passes a blazing fire and then settles into a comfortable chair in a room stacked with cross-country skis.

"This," she says, petting one of her two soft-coated wheaten terriers, "has always been my dream."

And, from the reaction of her guests, it is a dream shared by many. That dream: open Blantyre, one of America's truly fine country inns, in the winter.

"Our guests demanded it, and the staff wanted it, too, so we worked all last winter to get it ready," says Ann. In addition to winterizing the entire property, workmen installed a new kitchen line (stoves, ovens, a grill, etc.); created more wine storage, a tasting room, and a flower-arranging room; and added a spa—just the place for a mid-winter sauna or steam or a muscle-relaxing massage after a day of skiing.

Summer's tennis courts have been turned

into winter's skating pond, and groomed ski and snowshoe trails spiderweb over the grounds. There is a snow concierge to assist guests with winter activities, and steaming hot chocolate welcomes returning skiers and skaters.

Such luxury is old hat for guests who have enjoyed the 100-acre Berkshires estate in other seasons. Accommodations are scattered among the 1902 Tudor manor house (built as a summer home by Scottish banker Robert Paterson and, according to his descendants, named for his mother's hometown, near Glasgow), the carriage house (which connects to the spa), and several cottages.

The heavily treed (beech, maple, black locust, oak, chestnut, and pine) grounds are magnificent even in winter—the old, gnarled trunks providing a stark and welcome contrast to the monochromatic snow-covered landscape.

Inside the main house, fires blaze and cast long, flickering shadows over hand-

When You Go

Blantyre, 16 Blantyre Rd., Lenox, MA. Rates: rooms begin at \$450, cottages begin at \$750, including continental breakfast. Fixed-price three-course dinners \$85 per person; five-course tasting menu \$115. 413-637-3556. blantyre.com

carved woodwork, overstuffed furniture, coffered ceilings, wooden floors, and Oriental rugs. Guests can savor a drink before dinner in the main hall, where easy conversation is accompanied by the soft sounds of harp or piano.

Dinner is enjoyed in a magnificent room resplendent with glittering crystal and candlelight. As befits a property affiliated with Relais & Châteaux, dining is an event. Guests are expected to dress appropriately (coat and tie for gentlemen, please); the service is attentive but not fawning. The multicourse meals provide a culinary adventure for even the most jaded palate: foie gras, arctic char, roasted guinea hen—every dish is superbly prepared and presented.



Winter will be part of the lush life at Blantyre for the first time ever because "our guests demanded it, and our staff wanted it, too," says the inn's owner.

Breakfast (do not miss the turkey hash) and lunch (fish cakes are a favorite) are served in the bright and airy conservatory.

The guest rooms, particularly those in the main house, are decorated with 19th-century English and French pieces but meet modern expectations: voluminous bathrooms, high-speed Internet access, multistation televisions, and two-line telephones. Beds envelop you in cozy comfort, and sleep comes easily each night, particularly after a day of skiing and skating, a massage, a meal of memories, and a sip or two of fine wine.

Sleep well, and may all your dreams—like Ann Fitzpatrick Brown's—come true.

— Michael Carlton

I WAS, IN A FORMER LIFE, A GLOBE-TROTTING TRAVEL COLUMNIST. AS SUCH, I TRAVELED the world seeking out the best and the brightest—the finest hotels, inns, restaurants, shops, and adventures. I logged hundreds of thousands of miles and visited every continent but Antarctica (not too many accommodations there) in my personal quest to find the ultimate intimate lodging (I'm averse to huge cookie-cutter accommodations).

After many years of searching, I think I've found it—not in Europe, not in Asia or Africa, not in Australia or South America, but just down the road, about two hours from my home in New Hampshire.

Previously, my favorite country house hotel was Chewton Glen, my friend Martin Skan's magnificent estate on the edge of England's New Forest. But I've discovered a country hotel right here in New England that is at least as good, if not a tiny bit better. Blantyre, in Lenox, Massachusetts, is my new favorite. Its dynamic owner, Ann Fitzpatrick Brown, has brought sense and sensibility to this 100-acre estate, which is remarkable by any standards. See my story about this delicious experience on page 106.



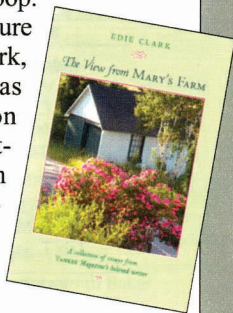
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Blantyre, in Lenox, Massachusetts, now offers guests unparalleled luxury year-round.

to obtain a copy of the 192-page book, visit edieclark.com. The price is \$14.95. It makes for great reading and is a perfect gift for the holidays.

Not so long ago, my neighbor Ron was outside with his two small dogs just as twilight enveloped the woods. He called sharply for one dog who was drifting toward the perimeter when a coyote lunged out of the undergrowth toward the dog. When it saw Ron, it retreated. We don't have many coyote-canine face-offs where I live, fortunately, but coyotes are becoming a serious threat in other areas of New England where dogs and cats are being snatched up for dinner. See page 56 for the scoop.

Finally, it gives me pleasure to announce that Edie Clark, a longtime contributor, has just published a collection of her "Mary's Farm" writings, which appear each month in *YANKEE*. To ob-



Enjoy the season.

Michael Carlton, *Editor*

P.S. In this month of Thanksgiving, our thoughts, prayers, and hearts go out to the many victims of Hurricane Katrina. This catastrophic event has touched us all and will, I suspect, haunt our dreams for a very long time.