

cville

Local seen

The Clifton's facelift includes a renewed focus on the food

By Jenny Gardiner
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The Clifton Inn is undergoing a season of renewal—and a name change to **The Clifton**. New owners the Westmont Capital Group brought in the coveted design team from Tennessee's posh Blackberry Farm to put a fresh face on the property, and capped it off by hiring Michelin-starred executive chef Matthew Bousquet, who owned and ran the acclaimed Mirepoix in northern California with his wife, Bryan. With a large cultivated garden at his disposal, as well as wild herbs, fruits and vegetables on the 100-acre Keswick property, the place is a foraging haven for chefs. And Bousquet and his staff take full advantage of what nature has yielded when planning the menu for 1799, the dining spaces that include the newly renovated library, the spruced up veranda, and the terrace, gazebo, wine cellar and chef's table, which seats six and provides diners with an up-close-and-personal view of the kitchen staff's creative process. The Copper Bar, which abuts the various dining spaces, has also been given a facelift.

"Seasonality is really strong in my cooking," Bousquet says. "And the local food here is probably the best I've seen. You have a lot of young people starting farms and doing something fascinating, and it's all really good quality. There's a lot of experimentation and they're all interested in trying it."

Bousquet incorporates his classical French training while working with local Virginia products, as well as taking into account that his audience is not only locals, but visitors to the inn who come from all over the world.

"Hopefully our guests experience as much as we can get out of the garden, as much really great quality local super fresh stuff that is as seasonal as possible," Bous-



TOM MCGOVERN

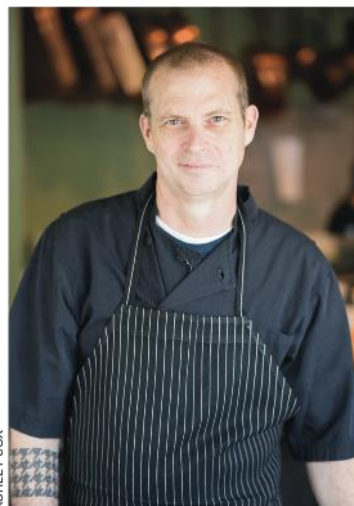
quet says. "Foraging on grounds is unique to here—one of my sous chefs is really good at it—and it's a great property for it. There are things in every little corner."

And he's enjoying working with items from local purveyors like Free Union Grass Farm's duck.

"It's by far the best duck I've ever worked with," he says. "We got a batch of cherries in, and we put a super light pickle on them to preserve them and serve the duck with them."

After moving to Charlottesville, Bousquet worked for a few years filling in as a chef in restaurants around town and raising his now-10-year-old daughter when his wife took over the front of house at Keswick Hall.

"Charlottesville is terrific. We just love the community—it's been great," Bousquet says. "You have a lot of different communities and cultures in the area through the university—that was very important to us because we were looking for that exposure to all aspects of community life."



ASHLEY COX

Clifton chef Matthew Bousquet says the bounty of local produce and products is the best he's ever worked with, such as Free Union Grass Farm's duck, in the dish above.

He adds that his daughter teases him that he's got that one Michelin star, and one day she's going to go for two. In the meantime, he's happy to be manning the kitchen at Clifton.

"I wake up every day and I want to start cooking," Bousquet says. "And I want to just cook good food and really keep developing it."

The 1799 bar and restaurant is open to the public for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Betting on this

MarieBette Café & Bakery plans to open a second location this fall on Water Street, next to Roxie Daisy, according to Charlottesville 29 blogger and C-VILLE columnist Simon Davidson. "The offshoot will serve MarieBette's bread and pastries, with an increased emphasis on coffee, to fuel downtown workers and residents. Unlike MarieBette, itself, there will not be restaurant table service at the offshoot, but there will still be seating, as well as breakfast and lunch items, which customers may eat-in or take-to-go," according to the post.

Coming home

Asado Wing & Taco Company is aiming for a mid-August opening in the former Café Caturra location on the Corner.

Charlottesville native Ian Anderson, who with several partners, including a UVA grad, opened their first location near VCU a few years ago, says the group is excited to return home with their restaurant, which specializes in wings and tacos, natch.

"We decided to open in Charlottesville because we have ties to the city," Anderson says. "So when the decision to expand came up, it was the first place we looked, because we know it's a cool little town with a great college to support it." ©