

CHARLIE Palmer



CHEF CHARLIE PALMER BRINGS CULINARY-DRIVEN HOSPITALITY BRAND APPELLATION TO LODI

BY KATE LOWETH



Lodi's deep farming roots and Mediterranean climate yield a rich bounty of local produce—from cherries and asparagus to wine grapes and walnuts—that chefs across the region are excited to showcase. At Guantonio's Wood Fired, you might catch a springtime pizza topped with spring onions, asparagus, and green garlic, while The Exchange 1874 is serving up whipped burrata with a ginger apricot compote, almonds, and flatbread.

Spotting the region's potential, Michelin-starred chef and James Beard Award winner Charlie Palmer, along with luxury hospitality veteran Christopher Hunsberger, are planting roots here by expanding their culinary-driven hospitality brand, Appellation. The pair is partnering with longtime Wine & Roses owners Russ and Kathryn

Munson to launch Appellation Lodi – Wine & Roses Resort and Spa, a thoughtfully reimagined property designed to celebrate the Central Valley's agricultural heritage and its vibrant community of growers, winemakers, and culinary talent.

Chef Palmer said he was immediately drawn to Lodi's authenticity and promise.

"When I moved my family to Healdsburg, people thought I was crazy," he recalled. "Back then, Healdsburg wasn't the culinary destination it is today—but I saw something special in that town, and I knew it had all the right ingredients to grow into something remarkable. I feel that same pull with Lodi."



“There’s a deep-rooted sense of community here,” Palmer continued, “and an agricultural richness that rivals anywhere in the country. With over 60 wineries in the region and an undeniable passion for food, wine, and farming, Lodi feels like the right place to build something lasting, something meaningful. That’s why we chose it for Appellation.”

CULINARY FOCUS AT APPELLATION LODI WINE & ROSES RESORT AND SPA

Guests entering the reimagined property are welcomed by Maison Lodi, a relaxed yet refined café and market offering spit-roasted whole chickens and fresh-baked French pastries. With its sunny patio and prime location next to the Lodi Winegrape Commission’s tasting room, it’s sure to become a local favorite for wine country picnics and casual gatherings.

For a deeper dive into the region’s flavors, diners can head to Americana House, a new restaurant replacing Towne House that will showcase Chef Palmer’s signature progressive American cuisine. The ever-changing menu will put local produce center stage, embracing seasonality and creativity in equal measure.

Americana House will feature a custom cheese aging cabinet, showcasing the restaurant’s house-made cheese curds and ricotta, as well as select offerings from Lodi and throughout Northern California. A dedicated wine decanting station adds an element of theater, inviting guests to explore seasonal offerings in a more immersive and engaging way. Those looking to indulge in live-shucked Hog Island oysters will have their choice of three house-made hot sauces, served in sleek eye droppers for added flavor and flair. And, you won’t want to miss the restaurant’s impressive butter display, reminiscent of those found at Parisian cafés. Picture a large mound of Straus European-style butter, scooped to order with Hog Island sea salt and best enjoyed smeared on a fresh-from-the-oven baguette.

Appellation Lodi isn’t just about serving great meals—it’s about creating meaningful experiences. Palmer envisions the resort as a place where guests can truly engage with the



Americana House ▶

region’s culinary roots: “We’ll be offering crafted classes that bring people into the process—whether that’s baking bread, making pasta, or learning about wine.” Guests can stroll the property’s expanded culinary garden, where herbs and seasonal produce will be grown for use on-property.

Palmer is also keen to highlight the region’s talent through regular winemaker dinners and producer spotlights. “This isn’t just about opening a restaurant or a hotel—it’s about building relationships,” he shared.



A CULINARY TWIST ON WELLNESS
at the APPELLATION LODI -
WINE & ROSES RESORT & SPA

The indulgence continues at the on-site Wine & Roses Spa, where signature treatments are infused with herbs from the property's gardens and locally sourced products from the Lodi region. "Our signature wrap is a wine wrap," explains spa director Rob Willis. "It begins with a dry brush exfoliation, followed by a body mask made of crushed grape mud blended with champagne and rose oil." For something equally indulgent, the Silky Skin Body Polish features a cranberry scrub finished with a whipped citrus body soufflé.



LODI'S CULINARY FUTURE

As for what's next, Palmer sees big things on the horizon. "I believe Lodi is poised to become one of the country's premier culinary destinations. The foundation is already here—world-class wine, extraordinary agriculture, and a community that's passionate and proud," he said. "My hope is that we can help elevate what's already happening and bring more people into the fold to experience the creativity, hospitality, and abundance that define Lodi."

And with Appellation in the mix, it's safe to say that Lodi isn't just up and coming—it's officially on the menu. ●

Q&A WITH CHEF
CHARLIE PALMER

DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE SPOTS IN LODI?

A: Absolutely. I've been lucky enough to explore quite a bit, and a few places really stand out. Ruby's Bakery is producing world-class breads and pastries—their laminated doughs are exceptional, their baguettes are spot on, and their egg sandwich is one of the best I've had anywhere. I'm also a big fan of Guantonio's Wood Fired; the team there is doing fantastic things with seasonal ingredients. I still think about the green tomato and corn pizza I had there last summer—it was the kind of dish that captures a moment in time.

WAS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT LODI'S FOOD AND WINE SCENE THAT SURPRISED YOU?

A: What really blew me away was the farmers market. I visited for the first time last June with Kathryn, and we were both genuinely impressed by the scale and quality of what was on offer. It was vibrant, full of energy, and overflowing with local character. I had the chance to connect with so many growers and purveyors, and that experience really cemented my excitement for what we can build here.

ARE THERE ANY LOCAL INGREDIENTS OR PRODUCTS YOU'RE ESPECIALLY EXCITED TO HIGHLIGHT AT AMERICANA HOUSE?

A: We're incredibly fortunate to have access to so many exceptional local producers. Honest Acres is growing beautiful lettuces, radishes, baby kale, and Brussels sprouts—we're already building seasonal dishes around those. Spenser Farm makes a fantastic goat cheese that's going to be a staple on our menu, and Chinchiole Farms produces outstanding honey and jams. These are the kinds of ingredients that define a restaurant's sense of place, and we're proud to showcase them.