

# PLANET JACKSON HOLE

## THE FOODIE FILES: Off-Season Indulgence

By *Annie Fenn, MD* on November 3, 2015

Jackson, WY – When I moved to Jackson 21 years ago, Shades Café was the only place in town to get a decent cup of coffee. LeJay's Sportsmen's Café was the only late-night eatery — the place I ducked into after working late at the hospital for a plate of eggs accompanied by bad coffee and great people watching. Town was deserted, like an actual ghost town, from October to December, and there was no such thing as a two-for-one special. In fact, most of the restaurants closed for the offseason.

Now some say town is busy all the time, that we no longer have an off-season. But there is a delicious upside to this year-round popularity: Our little mountain town has grown into a celebrated foodie destination. Last year, *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* named Jackson Hole one of its top five “new foodie cities” — the only ski town on the list.

Our food scene is exploding with innovative chefs putting their own spin on high country cuisine. For those of us who don't leave town come November, it's a great time to try a new restaurant, book a table at an old favorite and discover what our chefs are up to in the kitchen.

Fine Dining Restaurant Group is to be applauded for making the offseason two-for-one special part of the local culture, as well as for raising the bar on the diversity and quality of dining options available. Believe me, when Gavin Fine and Chef Roger Freedman opened Rendezvous Bistro in 2001, it was a big deal for foodies. Since 2011, Fine Dining's Jackson restaurants (Rendezvous Bistro, Il Villagio Osteria, Q Roadhouse and Brewing Co., Bin22) have offered an ingenious two-for-two special: buy one entrée at the regular price, get a second entrée of equal or lesser value for \$2 donated back to the featured nonprofit organization of the week. At Fine Dining's The Kitchen, plates are specially priced in the offseason at \$12, with a \$1 donation per guest going to nonprofits.

To date, Fine Dining Restaurant Group has donated more than \$100,000 to nonprofit organizations in Teton County. “We love that the community rallies behind the off-season special and helps us give back,” said Kendra Alessandro, Fine Dining's communications director. “Some nonprofits even hold their board meetings here during the off-season.” Bin22, our small scale, local version of the Italian emporium Eataly, is my favorite place for an in town lunch, especially when the two-for-two special is in effect.