

## Travel

Section 5

## VERMONT'S AUTUMN PATCHWORK

WHERE TO EAT  
LIKE A VERMONTER

By ERIC ASIMOV

VERMONT'S gentle beauty reveals itself modestly as you thread your way by car over the rolling hills and streams, past white churches, village greens and town gazebos. Unlike the magnificence of a Pacific seascape, or the reverence inspired by the Rockies, this landscape offers tranquility.

And so it is with food. Vermont has no shortage of pretentious inns and restaurants, generally clustered around ski resorts and promising epicurean delights at New York prices. Their allegiance is not to durable, purposeful Vermont but to a tourist trade that wants to travel without leaving home. No, the soul of Vermont is better tasted in a dish as unpretentious as the landscape: pancakes.

Pancake houses appear from one end of Vermont to the other, as much a part of the vista as dirt roads and pickup trucks. Why pancakes? Obviously, nothing else goes quite so well with maple syrup, the state's lifeblood. But there are more elemental reasons. Long before marathoners used the term "carbo-loading," Vermonters knew that a filling pancake breakfast was just the thing to fuel a day battling the snow of winter and mud of spring. Pancakes meant energy.

That remains true, though many people simply enjoy pancakes for no greater reason than their taste. These pancakes are grainy, irregular and occasionally lumpy, with a real batter tang rather than an airy or greasy taste. Here are four restaurants where you can find this true taste of Vermont.

ERIC ASIMOV writes the \$25 and Under dining column for The New York Times.

The Wayside Restaurant  
And Bakery

The last thing you'd expect to find in bucolic Vermont is a typical suburban strip littered with fast-food joints and auto parts stores, but Route 302 just southeast of Montpelier, the capital, rivals any other strip in the country as a purveyor of generic clutter. Given that, the last thing you'd expect to find there is a restaurant as distinctively regional as the Wayside.

This homey, friendly place fits the marketer's concept of a roadside family restaurant, with matronly waitresses, silly place mats, crayons and special children's menus. But the menu always offers Vermont specials, like salt pork and milk gravy, or chicken pie. And, of course, pancakes.

My heart sank when my pancakes arrived with little plastic cups of syrup on the plate, usually a sure sign of bland griddle uniformity. But a closer look at the labels revealed that the cups contained real maple syrup, sweet and pure.

The Wayside's pancakes are simply superb, light and buttermilk fresh, wonderful on their own or with blueberries stirred into the batter. This time of year, blackberry pancakes are available, too. "Folks give up when the bears starts chasing them," was one explanation for the short blackberry-picking season.

Pancakes are available from 6:30 A.M. to 4 P.M., an important consideration to those who also want to sample desserts, but are constitutionally unable to before noon. These are wonderful local specialties like maple cream pie, tasting richly of maple sugar; blackberry shortcake, thick with blackberries and fresh whipped cream, and homemade doughnuts.

And as I was told, "If a person has a hankering for pie with breakfast, we won't stop them."

