



An Eastern feast of terrain, and the Gite's dining hall below. Photos by Berne Broudy



Mt. Shuksan. Photo by Grant Gunderson

CHIC-CHOCs, QC

Le Gite du Mont Albert

As the only dining establishment within an hour's drive, Le Gite du Mont Albert could do whatever it pleases with its food and its prices. But regardless of scarce competition, skiers and riders in the Chic-Choc Mountains of Quebec have found year after year that there's no finer way to end a backcountry day than at Le Gite.

Simply put, there's little reason to slave droopy-eyed over a pot of beans on a campstove after a full day of earning turns in the Chic-Chocs, when you can just plunk down for a five-star, five-course meal at the Gite. The beans will be there tomorrow. The Gite is calling, so go ahead, splurge.

Relax in the comfort of a spectacular dining room, sampling an impeccable selection of beer and wine under dusky views of a couple couloirs. Order up the Nunavut Caribou Medallions for your main course. (Though the park was created to shelter the last remaining herd of woodland caribou south of the St. Lawrence, the largest herd in all of Canada is on the other side of the River, allowing you to sample the Canadian game with a mostly clear conscience.) The seafood offerings are superb too—the ocean is only an hour away, after all—or the famed Wild Mushroom Ravioli. And above all, save some room for dessert.

Undoubtedly, the best way to experience the whole thing is to get a room in the Gite and sign up for the meal plan (or add the meal plan to one of the ski cabins behind the lodge).



Even with the Canadian dollar gaining on US funds, it's worth it to save on dinner and make the short walk back down the hall to a restful night's sleep.

—John Atkinson

Specialty: Though the menu changes, the Nunavut Caribou Medallions are always in demand. So tender...

Location: Located on Route 299 in Parc National de la Gaspésie.

GLACIER, WA

Milano's

Unlike most access points where wood-fired pizza masquerades as haute cuisine, the tiny hamlet of Glacier hosts a fine dining departure far from brewpub fare. Here, 20 highway minutes from the quick-hit Mt. Baker backcountry, the hungry who hike for turns are treated to a culinary experience spiced with Italian flair at Milano's.

Home to an open atmosphere and authentic menu, this inviting stop next to the Glacier Ski Shop has been exuding garlic, serving fresh *al dente* pasta and pouring fine Italian wine for 15 seasons. Chef Tom Debari—a transplanted skier with Long Island heritage—opened the doors in 1990 with his wife Jeannie as a way to spice up the local culinary landscape and escape chronic underemployment in Glacier. The eatery evolved from a deli to a dinner spot, but has retained its informal character and unpretentious décor, a mix that makes it a dinner-hour favorite for everyone from hoodie-clad huckers to soft-shelled city folk.

The traditional menu—with entrees ranging from 10 to 20 bucks—combines classic Italian pastas, seasonal weekly specials,



fresh-baked focaccia, signature risottos and an all-Italian wine list. The meals are served up by a 14-strong staff of snowboarders and skiers—including Tom's regular touring partner Jimmy Breitenstein—who are just as likely to talk conditions and sample the stellar local backcountry as the clientele. Serving as a first-class neighborhood eatery but also nourishing the on-hill community with a homestyle dynamic, the Debari dining room has earned lasting affection for bringing the faithful together to celebrate after every deep day at Baker.

—Dan Kostrzewski

Specialty: Pasta Tuscano or seafood linguine with a bottle of Nebbiolo.

Location: On Route 542 next to Glacier Ski Shop.