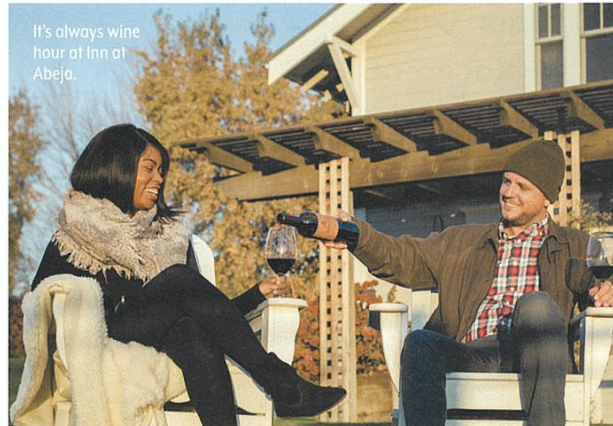


Seattle Met



6pm: A Toast in Walla Walla

I Every room at the Inn at Abeja, each tucked into a converted farm building outside Walla Walla, boasts a patio or balcony, ideally suited for cracking open the wine waiting in the room. The tiny carafes of Abeja Winery's chardonnay or the Beekeeper's Blend red, about the size of a generous glass, are portioned for a pre-dinner drink in the Eastern Washington sun.

About five miles outside Walla Walla, Abeja manages to surround itself with only empty, rolling fields, the Blue Mountains visible in the far distance. The homestead here was settled in the late-nineteenth century, erecting a home in 1903 that still stands at one end of the property. Today the building, along with bunkhouse, chicken coop, and hayloft, have been converted into hotel rooms, reflecting a French farmhouse aesthetic inside and out. Abeja vineyards unfold on one side, burbling Mill Creek on the other, with the winery operating out of barn-style buildings across the lawn.

Under the hayloft, the small tasting room transforms into the Kitchen at Abeja for dinner, no more than a dozen tables filled with hotel guests and a few customers come down the road from Walla Walla. With just two tasting menus, five- and seven-course, the eatery reflects the inn's smaller-is-better ethos.

Dishes highlight the agricultural bounty of the region but don't twist the ingredients into anything too puzzling; it's a dinner where delicate garlic flowers have been tweezered onto the plate, but the entree underneath is a recognizable tender steak or rich sous vide snapper. Wine pairings are all Abeja, which can mean trying several similar chardonnays in a row—as much a wine tasting as a meal.

Even as Walla Walla grows up and out, this farm inn retains a patrician air, like an orderly country garden—it's named for the Spanish word for “bee,” after all. More than a place to just buy wine, Abeja is a place to sit down, take in the pastoral view, and drink it. abeja.net

WINTER 2022