



An American Original

The Village Pub's Mark Sullivan

Webster's Dictionary defines a "pub" as a "tavern where ale is sold." But The Village Pub in Woodside is much more. The universal image of a dingy, damaged corner bar is thrown aside after entering this "tavern" where ruby velvet booths delineate the space and artfully stacked vegetables (in silver goblets, no less) embellish it. Take one glance at the menu, peppered with dishes like "Country Pâté in Port-Soaked Cherries" and "North African Spiced Guinea Hen with Warm Bulgar Salad," and you know you're not in Kansas anymore. But despite the seemingly aristocratic décor, Chef Mark Sullivan insists that The Village Pub truly aims to be just a local hangout. "I want to make a restaurant where people can eat 4–5 times a week," he says. "A place with regulars."

Four years ago, the restaurant entered a period of bankruptcy and it looked like things might go under. But rather than fold, devoted owner Tim Standard elected to hire a new chef to improve, not overhaul, the restaurant locals had learned to love. He chose to gamble on Sullivan—a gamble most would say has more than paid off. Chef Sullivan, in the spirit of saloons across this country, centers his menu around classic American cuisine. So while any patron would call the experience at The Village Pub high dining, Sullivan prefers the expression "pub fare with a twist." One delectable dish involves a hamburger with Swiss cheese, aioli, and English muffins for buns (made in-house). It's pub food—just better than before. Despite his extensive culinary training—Sullivan has worked in the highly regarded kitchens of Bradley Ogden's Lark Creek Inn and San Francisco's 42 Degrees—the Chef always finds a way of returning to the basics. He's traveled around the world, developing his

craft from the towns of France to the Kymen Islands of Spain, but still cites "holding an ingredient" as his biggest source of inspiration. Chef Sullivan's eyes light up when discussing recipes, and his hands move about wildly to paint cooking steps in the air, celebrating food not for its airs but for its simple magnificence. And in the end it's clear that Chef Sullivan, a man who talks about the "visceral high" of handling food, was the perfect guy for the job. And he did get those regulars he wanted.