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David Sinclair, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School

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The isolation of Portugal's Douro River valley, home to famed Port estates and top table-wine producers, has meant a paucity of tourist-oriented facilities. That's beginning to change thanks to the recent openings of two luxurious resorts and the growing reputation of D.O.C. restaurant, helmed by homegrown chef Rui Paula.

At the pinnacle of luxury is Quinta da Romaneira ([www.quintadaromaneira.pt](http://www.quintadaromaneira.pt)), which occupies an exquisitely refurbished former Port lodge on a vertiginous vineyard slope overlooking the Douro. Meals can be taken al-fresco almost anywhere on the 1,000-acre property, which also offers a pool



Quinta da Romaneira was once a Port lodge.

housed in a former cellar and an outdoor infinity pool. The seclusion is a draw here; guests are picked up by hotel staff at the rim of the Douro canyon and driven down a series of switchbacks. Prices for an all-inclusive overnight stay in one of the 19 rooms or suites, each uniquely decorated in colonial period art from Portugal, Brazil or England, begin at \$1,400.

A bit more accessible is Aquapura ([www.aquapurahotels.com](http://www.aquapurahotels.com)), near the crossroads town of Peso da Régua. The resort is situated in an 18th-century manor house amid vine-

yards that stretch gently to the Douro. Complete spa treatments are the focus. The property also features two bars and three restaurants. Room rates start at \$320 per night; vineyard villas are also offered.

D.O.C. ([www.restaurantedoc.com](http://www.restaurantedoc.com)), which opened two years ago, lies downriver from Romaneira, in the village of Folgosa. Chef Paula puts a modern twist on traditional Portuguese fare and the wine list emphasizes the Douro's best. Built on a platform above the river, D.O.C. is sleekly designed, with large picture windows that look out to the flowing waters of the Douro. Prices are moderate, with main courses starting at \$23.

—Kim Marcus

**A**lto ([www.altorestaurant.com](http://www.altorestaurant.com)), a Midtown Manhattan Italian restaurant that holds a *Wine Spectator* Grand Award for its stellar list of almost 2,400 selections, is making a whopper of an offer through September: no corkage. That's right, BYOB and the restaurant will waive their usual \$60 surcharge for glassware, service, lost sales and, of course, real estate. You'll still have to pay for chef Michael White's stellar food, but that's more than fair.



Aspen's Little Nell offers value this summer.

**A**nother Grand Award winner, **Montagna at the Little Nell**, in Aspen, Colo., proceeds apace with chef Ryan Hardy and new sommelier Jonathan Pullis. News there is twofold: First, the Nell has bought, renovated and reopened local favorite Ajax Tavern, where they are offering refined comfort food and picnic baskets to go. Second, the Nell has a couple of deals coming up. From mid-May to mid-June, the third night is free; and families visiting from June to September get a second room for half the price, plus a fourth night free for stretching out that long weekend. Check the Web site ([www.thelittlenell.com](http://www.thelittlenell.com)) for exact dates.

**E**ven if you can't make it to the Nantucket Wine Festival (May 13-17), you might still want to consider a visit to the area. Grand Award-winning **Topper's at the Wauwinet** has a 1,450-selection wine list that's worth a detour, and to sweeten the deal, rooms there and at sister properties such as the White Elephant are being discounted through a Hot Dates, Cool Rates promotion. On certain dates from May through October, rooms at the Wauwinet can be had for as little as \$225 a night, down from a summer baseline price of \$680. Visit the Web site ([www.nantucketislandresorts.com](http://www.nantucketislandresorts.com)) for more details.

—Owen Dugan

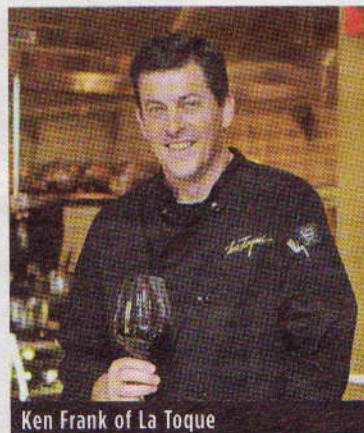
## LA TOQUE IN THE WESTIN VERASA NAPA

Wine lured chef Ken Frank to Napa Valley and wine is what's keeping him there. Frank's La Toque ([www.latoque.com](http://www.latoque.com)) has relocated from its cozy setting in Rutherford to downtown Napa, in the new Westin Verasa. The new restaurant is more upscale, and entirely modern in decor. Everything was built to the chef's specifications.

A recent visit revealed the fresh perspective, from the ambience and service to the cuisine. Wine, however, remains central. The

creative, French-tweaked menu is accompanied by compelling wine options—some 550 labels as well as a diverse and changing selection of wines by the glass. On my visit, glass offerings included De Ladoucette Pouilly-Fumé 2005 (\$14) and Paradigm Oakville 2004 (\$18). Napa wines are the strength, but the cellar also holds Bordeaux, Burgundy and more.

The menu is seasonal; winter starters included Boston bluefin tuna sashimi with pickles and fresh



Ken Frank of La Toque

wasabi root, and Florida frog legs with fried green tomato and sweet garlic puree. Entrées ranged from ricotta-porcini ravioli in Parmesan-wild mushroom broth (shaved truffle optional), to rib eye with cheddar-pearl tapioca and Rutherford red-wine sauce, to lamb loin with duck and refried cannellini beans.

—James Laube

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