

Topper's rated tops in island, N.E. dining

Recipient of *Wine Spectator* Grand Award for 22 years



Photo by Nicole Harnishfeger

Craig Hanna, wine director of Topper's for 27 years, manages a 20,000-bottle wine cellar with an extensive list of half-bottles.



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Chef Kyle Zachary, at the restaurant for seven years, creates one of the composed plates for which Topper's is known.

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Ten minutes from the Milestone Rotary is what critics consider the best restaurant in New England.

They're not wrong.

Reachable by land or by sea, Topper's at the Wauwinet is a spectacular dining destination on the northeast end of the island that has achieved the highest overall rating by Zagat, a highly-respected guide to restaurants where ratings are compiled by diners on food, service and ambiance.

It was also the recipient of *Wine Spectator's* Grand Award for the 22nd year for its 20,000-bottle wine cellar and nearly 50-page wine list.

A visit to Topper's on two separate occasions to see for ourselves confirmed the critics' findings.

Topper's is a one-of-a-kind Nantucket experience, combining a unique location with fine food and top-notch service with one of the best wine lists in New England.

Khaled Hashem, managing director for Nantucket Island Resorts, which owns the property, credited the high ratings to the consistency of long-serving, top-of-the line staff in key positions, a strong emphasis on training and an ethic of continuous improvement.

Wine director Craig Hanna has been at Topper's for 27 seasons. He has assembled the 20,000-bottle cellar that features strong selections from Burgundy, California and Italy.

Chef Kyle Zachary has been at

Topper's for seven years. In the kitchen there have only been four chefs in the 30-year history of Topper's under the ownership of Jill and Steve Karp. Peter Wallace, who later went on to open Òran Mór, was chef at Topper's for nine years, followed by Chris Freeman, who eventually left to buy Òran Mór from Wallace and then David Daniels for a short time before Zachary took over.

Zachary has created menus that are served from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week from late April to the end of October. All dining options are open to the public.

The big misconception of the average islander is that Topper's is too high-falutin and expensive for the regular person. It is a treat, to be sure, but in line with other top restaurants on-island, and in some cases with better price points and value. The service is unmatched.

Sit outside on the deck and gaze across the hydrangea bushes and expanse of green lawn leading to the harbor where a sliver of blue defines the sands of Coatue beyond and you feel transported to an oasis of calm.

This is the place designed for the two-hour lunch, lingering over local oysters, harvested within sight of the restaurant, and a glass of champagne.

Or have some bluefish paté served with pickled Bermuda onions, thinly-sliced radishes and crisp curry crackers for another taste of Nantucket.

Zachary focuses on local ingredi-

ents as much as possible, getting his produce from a handful of island farms, shellfish from local and New England waters and meats from sustainable sources in New England.

The menu reflects the seasons with August featuring summer salads of Bartlett's Farm tomatoes, organic greens and thinly-shaved vegetables, all lightly dressed.

The clambake is a popular taste of the island that features clam chowder, littlenecks and mussels, Portuguese linguça, new potatoes, corn on the cob and lobster, best eaten with a crisp Burgundy or a cold glass of beer on the deck overlooking the harbor, but also available in the dining room for a more refined dining experience.

While one can sit on the deck and order a fried chicken sandwich or a Wagyu beef burger with the best fries I've had since my last trip to Amsterdam, the composed plates served in the main dining room are also available on the deck.

While the food is excellent at Topper's, it is really the setting at the northeast end of the island and flawless service that distinguish this restaurant from others here and in New England. Topper's was rated not only best Nantucket restaurant by Zagat, but also tops in all of New England.



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Topper's food and beverage director Jen Hudson and general manager Eric Landt, who has been with the property for 15 years, in the gardens in front of Topper's deck.