

Michael Bruno's Sloatsburg complex has two new dining options; spa coming

[Jeanne Muchnick](#), The Journal News Published 11:24 a.m. ET Feb. 25, 2020

The [Valley Rock Inn & Mountain Club](#) in Sloatsburg has finally opened its much-anticipated farm-to-table restaurant, the Lodge, along with its market and café called Mountain Market Café & Provisions.

The two, which opened in mid-January, are a reflection of owner/entrepreneur Michael Bruno's lifestyle — which means he wants readily available good and healthy food available between rushing to meetings and/or fitness classes or hiking the trails of Harriman State Park.



The Valley Rock Mountain Market in Sloatsburg on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. (Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)

Bruno particularly wanted the new café to cater to people's busy lives by serving all-day options so there's a hot and cold buffet filled with steel-cut oats and granola, grass-fed beef stew, kale Caesar salad and a rainbow carrot medley. There are also a host of coffees and pastries, fruits and vegetables for sale along with snacks and other household necessities like detergent, paper towels, frozen soups, ice cream and plant-based meatless sausage. The café, meant to appeal to locals as well as guests staying at the inn, is open daily from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Stocking up on lunch at The Mountain Market Cafe & Provisions, part of The Valley Rock Inn, in Sloatsburg on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. (Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)

The Lodge is open (for now) from 4 to 10 p.m. Thursday to Sunday, with Sunday brunch from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Both spaces have a mountain lodge-like vibe with high ceilings, repurposed wood and lots of history. The café is housed in Sloatsburg's old hardware store that dates to the early 19th century (it was originally built as a meeting house). It is located next to the inn's two-story 24-hour 7,000-square-foot fitness center, in what had been the former village post office.

The Lodge provides a more elegant, yet still rustic, vibe, with three wood-burning fireplaces — one is in the valet parking entryway — beamed ceilings and large chandeliers made from naturally shed antlers.

Like its café counterpart, the Lodge has been meticulously renovated from its former life; it had been an 1840s hook and ladder firehouse.

As for food, the menu features local, seasonal fare including Seared Brook Trout, Local Stout Braised Short Rib, Pasture-Raised Chicken and Vegan Vandouvan Stew. Bruno emphasized the importance of vegan and vegetarian options on the menu, too. In fact, he's working with Ana Hito, who's had experience working at Goop, Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle company, to create nutritionally focused menus for the inn's fitness and wellness retreats, as well as the property's dining options.

If this is not enough to satisfy your appetite, there's also the Cantina, the resort's outdoor restaurant made popular last year with its après-ski lunches, which manifested as a solution to construction delays and took off in popularity thanks to its array of giant heat lamps, comfy blankets and its novel approach to dining alfresco (the boozy hot chocolate and spiced rum apple cider helped!).

He's got a master plan

The new restaurants are part of Bruno's master plan to create an attraction for locals and a destination for day-trippers and out-of-towners, many of whom come from Manhattan and beyond.



Owner Michael Bruno photographed in the lobby area of The Valley Rock Inn in Sloatsburg on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. (Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)

The entrepreneur, who made a fortune by connecting antique dealers in Paris with collectors around the world via the internet, has been committed to revitalizing the village since he moved to the area eight years ago (he lives in Tuxedo Park).

He has purchased 25 buildings along the Route 17 corridor from Sloatsburg to Tuxedo with the ultimate goal to renovate and reimagine the area as a gateway.

What's amazing about Sloatsburg, he said, is its unique position as a small village amid 70,000 acres of forever wild parkland (between Harriman, Sterling Forest and Bear Mountain) located 30 miles from the George Washington Bridge and with great public transportation.

"It's almost like you couldn't get a more perfect storm of a place," he said. "We didn't realize when we were developing the inn how many folks we'd attract from northern New Jersey, which is great and allows us to keep expanding and have an additional customer base."

Bruno is well on the way to completing his goals. Along with the long-awaited spa (for guests only) set to open later this spring and a screening room/lecture hall, also on a late spring timetable, Bruno is adding 10 more guest rooms, mainly one- and two-bedrooms, in repurposed 19th century buildings, by the end of the year.



The bar area of The Lodge at The Valley Rock Inn in Sloatsburg, photographed Feb. 18, 2020. *(Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)*

Currently, the Valley Rock Inn, has four guesthouses consisting of 17 bedrooms and 16 baths spread among what are known as "the Waldron Houses," which date to the mid-1800s. According to the inn's website, each room features a spacious living room with a 60-inch-connected to Pandora TV, a wet bar, Frette linens, down pillows and comforters. Guests have access to an entire refurbished home with smart technology and, in most cases, a covered porch with room to entertain (or just relax).



The Valley Rock Inn Fitness Center in Sloatsburg is housed in the village's former post office. Photographed on Tuesday, February 18, 2020. *(Photo: John Meore/The Journal News)*

Along with hiking, biking, kayaking programs, the fitness-focused property — it features an array of classes and a boot camp along with a 75-foot pool —is popular for weddings and corporate retreats.

Much of Bruno's staff wear multiple hats, leading a spin class in the morning, then working in the Lodge in the evening, or helping with an art show at the property's art gallery. Valley Rock also features an antiques store and Tuxedo Hudson Realty, Bruno's other business.

"We're always mixing it up," he said, "which I think adds an element of surprise and fun."



The entrance to The Lodge at The Valley Rock Inn in Sloatsburg; photographed Feb. 18, 2020. (Photo: John Meore/*The Journal News*)

If you go

Address: 27 Mill St., Sloatsburg, 845-618-9123, valleyrockinn.com

The Lodge: Open 4 to 10 p.m. Thursday to Sunday and Sunday brunch from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Mountain Market Café & Provision: Open seven days a week from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Look for: The Spa, set to open in May. Treatments will be for guests only, though Bruno may extend that to day visits. Also opening by late spring: the screening room lecture hall, which will accommodate 150-plus, but will be set up with leather sofas for about 50 to 60. Again, this may be a guest-only amenity; decisions are still being made on that, said Bruno.