The Gourmet Way to Losing Weight

By Bob Matthews

Spas have been around since the days of the ancients, and most are dedicated to exercise, relaxation and diet. But the Grand Lake Spa goes one step further — it also concentrates on gourmet food.

Not only that, if one follows the program as outlined, the spa guarantees that you will lose about 10 pounds in a single week, plus totally enjoy the food served.

Sounded almost too good to be true, so off to Lebanon, Connecticut we went to check things out for Dawn Magazine readers. Getting there by auto is fairly simple, it's about a 2½ hour drive from New York City.

On arrival, you are given rundown on what is available, and the list is impressive. There is an Olympic-sized outdoor swimming pool, an indoor pool, sauna, steam bath, hot tub, hiking paths, massage and exercise rooms, plus available lessons in yoga, a beauty salon, and a program designed for stress management.

Of course, there are many spas which cater to weight loss and exercise programs — but most are completely out of the range of the middle-income bracket. Grand Lake bridges the gap in cost, and by spa standards — is quite reasonable.

But, the major focus and difference as we see it, is the wonderful food available at the resort. On entrance, you must designate how much weight you would like to lose, and which calorie program you want.

Available are programs which include a daily calorie intake of either 650, 900 or 1200 per day. We opted for the largest amount, which is miniscule to an overweight travel writer. But, once announced, you are committed to this amount.

The staff at the spa adheres strictly to the theme which says: "Our staff is here to please you, pamper your every whim, and assist you in every way possible . . ."

But this does not mean that they will help you cheat — they won't, and 1,200 calories is all you get. There is herb tea or decaffeinated coffee available 24 hours a day — but nothing with calories . . . sigh!

A typical day's menu goes like this:

Breakfast:	
½ cup tomato juice	(25)
Mushroom egg-white omelette	(53)
2 bagel thins	(21)
Lunch:	
Green garden salad	(35)
Calzone de Roma (1 pita pocket, with mozzerella cheese, ricotta cheese, and tomato sauce)	(177)
Stewed rhubarb	(20)
Dinner:	
½ cup Waldof salad (chopped apples, celery, pineapples, raisins tossed with plain lowfat yogurt and herbs)	(45)
Poached salmon (4-oz. fresh salmon poached in light wine	(201)
Sliced zucchini	(20)
Mixed fruit compote (assorted fresh fruit)	(30)

Glen L. Sands (Master Chef)

We couldn't believe it. This food bore no resemblance to what we had considered diet food; this was delicious. 'Course, there wasn't much of it, but then, we were committed to the 1,200 per day caloric intake.

Naturally, had to find out who was responsible for such diet delights. Discovered that the head chef was Glen L. Sands, from New York City, although he was originally from the Grand Bahamas in the Caribbean.

One of 9 children, Glen grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., served a stint in the military, and wound up as a cook at a delicatessen which specialized in kosher foods.

He was introduced to dietary menus, and nutritional values, while serving as a cook at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York.

He has been at the Grand Lakes Spa for over two years, and according to Natalie Skolnik, nutritionist and owner of the spa, he is one of the hidden assets which has brought fame and rave reviews over the food served at the spa.

Although he now lives in Connecticut, near the spa, he gets away occasionally to Brooklyn, where he gets to spend sometime with his 15-year-old son. He is extremely proud of this son, who is a student at the Oakdale Military Academy in New York State.

Pressed Glen about the problems of preparing such succulent delights, and discovered that he sometimes spends as much as 5 hours preparing a single dish. Add to this, most of the ingredients used are fresh.

There is a great emphasis on herbs, which are used in place of salt, which is verboten at the spa. There are no salt shakers on the tables, neither is there sugar, although non-calorie sweeteners such as Sweet and Low or Equal is available.

Here are some of the recipes as served at the Grand Lakes Spa. They are designed to be nutritious, as well as low in calories:

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

¼ cup Cocoa
¼ cup All-Purpose Flour
1 Whole Egg
1 White of an Egg
¾ cup Water
1¼ cup Evaporated Skimmed Milk
***(Reserve ½ cup)**
1 tsp. Vanilla Extract
2½ tsp. Low Calorie Sweetner (Equal)
***(Reserve ½ tsp.)**

Combine cocoa, and flour in a saucepan and stir to remove the lumps. Mix in a separate bowl, egg, egg white, water, and ¾ cup evaporated skimmed milk. Mix until well blended. (Breaking egg yolk) Place saucepan with the cocoa mixture on medium high heat and gradually add egg mixture to the cocoa mixture, stirring constantly until the mixture comes to a boil. (About 1 minute).

Remove from the heat and add 2 tsp. of low calorie sweetner and vanilla. Stir until blended and let cool. (About 20 minutes).

"While cocoa mixture is cooling, whip in an electric mixer at high speed the *(Reserved) ½ cup evaporated skimmed milk until frothy, (Bubbly) gradually add the *(Reserved) ½ tsp. sweetner and continue whipping until stiff peaks form. (This takes about 1 minute). Fold whipped milk into cooled cocoa mixture until well blended. Pour into serving dishes and refrigerate until ready to serve.

10 servings
(52) calories per serving

Going over the day's menu is chef Sands, with spa owner and nutritionist, Natalie Skolnik.

"SPINACH SALAD WITH BLEU CHEESE DRESSING

1 cup fresh spinach
2 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
2 large white mushrooms, sliced
1 tbsp. Bleu Cheese Dressing

Stem and tear spinach leaves, soak inc old water to remove all sand. Remove from water and pat dry. Lay on salad plate. Arrange cherry tomato halves and mushroom slices on spinach leaves. Dress with 2 tablespoons of Bleu Cheese Dressing.

1 serving
36 calories (With Dressing)

BLEU CHEESE DRESSING

1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
½ cup skim milk
¼ cup crumbled bleu cheese
4 tbsp. red wine vinegar
1/8 tsp. white pepper
1/8 tsp. garlic powder

Combine all the ingredients into a blender container, process until smooth. Chill thoroughly, spoon over salad. (If too thick after refrigeration, thin with skim milk.)

CORNISH HEN WITH APPLE GLAZE

4- 18 oz. cornish hens
12 ozs. fresh apple juice, pulp removed
1 tbsp. arrowroot
¼ tsp. ground cinnamon

Remove giblets from hens. Rinse hens with cold water and pat dry. Split hens lengthwise, remove skin and place hens cavity side up on rack in shallow roaster.

Ladle 4 ozs. of apple juice over hens and place in 350° oven for 40-45 minutes. Remove from oven and turn hens breast side up.

Combine remaining apple juice, cornstarch and cinnamon in small saucepan, mixing well. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until thickened. Brush hens and place back in oven for 15 minutes, or until done.

(Keep remaining sauce hot and brush hens again just before serving.)

Yields 8 servings
***(214 calories per serving)**

Main building of the Grand Lakes Spa Hotel, where rates start at a low $110 daily. Call (203) 642-6696 for further details.