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Monday, September 8, 2014

### With a farm-fresh take on resort dining, Highball & Harvest opens at The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes

Highball & Harvest ("H&H") at The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes has opened. Blending rustic design elements with contemporary Ritz-Carlton refinement, the signature restaurant features interactive dining (from table-side handcrafted cocktail experiences to bar-side oyster shucking), a novel railroad-inspired design with a substantial bar area, and a playful Southern-inspired menu.



Comprised of The Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott Orlando, Grande Lakes continues its dedication to farm-to-fork dining and authentic, local experiences with the opening of H&H, helmed by the resort's rising young Chef de Cuisine Mark Jeffers who joined The Ritz-Carlton, Orlando in 2007. Having grown up on the water, the Daytona, Florida native pulls his culinary inspiration from his hometown state as well as his extensive travels around the South, from Low Country-infused Charleston to Cajun-spiced New Orleans. Chef Jeffers' dishes are hyper local, infused with Floridian citrus and ingredients from nearby purveyors and the resort's own 7,000-square-foot Whisper Creek Farm, which opened in October 2012 and continues to expand. The thirst-quenching heart of the restaurant will be its hands-on cocktail bar experience.

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Highball & Harvest's most unexpected offerings:

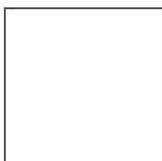
- **Parker House Rolls**, made from Khorasan wheat (Egyptian old-world grains) and served warm and moist with less gluten than typical bread, a complimentary bread presentation made from scratch by the resort's 30-person pastry team.
- **Signature dishes: Pig-n-Potatoes**, an all-day breakfast dish of poached egg, potato hash, and tender pork cheeks with sweet peppers, caramelized onions, H&H Hot Sauce, and hollandaise sauce. **The Southern Spreads**, pimento cheese dip and smoked fish dip served with pickled veggies, benne seed lavash, and grilled sourdough presented in a metal tackle box. **Smoked Lamb Brisket** with boiled peanut "baked beans" and collards.
- **Raw Oyster Bar with signature house-made H&H Hot Sauce.** Chefs shuck oysters by hand and teach diners all-things-oysters.
- **Interactive cocktail table with handcrafted, herb-infused cocktails.** Knowledgeable bar chefs muddle ingredients while curating a personalized cocktail experience. Cocktails are served on the rocks with hand-carved ice, sculpted bar side with a high-end Japanese ice saw and infused with Whisper Creek Farm herbs and fruits. **Signature cocktails:** "The Last Wish" served over an ice sphere with orange peel, the "Doc Holliday" with house ginger beer and blueberry jam, and the "Back 40 Punch", a refreshing take on a bourbon cocktail mixed with sweet tea and lemon.
- **Cask wine.** Central Florida's largest selection of wines from the cask. This method ensures perfect temperature control and freshness, and is eco-friendly by reducing the amount of wine bottles used.

Reflecting the importance of the resort's home at the headwaters to the Florida Everglades, H&H's one-of-a-kind design takes a note from its Central Florida locale, an agricultural industry epicenter. A play on the region's "Iron Harvest" railroad, H&H exudes a casual elegance of rustic sophistication—warm accents of reclaimed pine wood columns, industrial metal, juxtaposed with refined white brick walls and a checkered marble floor at the Market Station where the breakfast buffet is served. Noteworthy artistic elements include a large abstract still-life mural, traditional antique Killim rugs, custom hand-painted dishware, farm tool accessories, an apothecary chest of rare liquors, and linen fabrics. H&H, designed by The Johnson Studio, offers a variety of seating, from communal dining in a lounge area with a horseshoe-shaped bar to casual leather-padded seats, a modern interpretation of a farm chair.

"The dishes we create at Highball & Harvest are designed to give restaurant-goers a sense of nostalgia while enjoying southern classics infused with regional flavors," says Chef Mark Jeffers. "We start with locally sourced products and allow the quality of the ingredients speak for itself."

The opening of Highball & Harvest at The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes marks a series of improvements and renovations to the resort in the coming months. JW Marriott Orlando will open Whisper Creek Farm: The Kitchen in Spring 2015 spotlighting charcuterie, Whisper Creek Farm ingredients, and beer from Whisper Creek Farm: The Brewery opening in September 2014.

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