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# Golf Inc.™

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# GOLF'S BEST

## RESTAURANTS



We honor the best new restaurants and the most improved dining facilities in our second annual **Golden Fork Awards**





# Top of the class



Casual, rustic, local and beloved: This year's best new and most improved F&B facilities are pulling in golfers and non-golfers alike for experiential dining.

BY JACK CRITTENDEN

Causal elegance in a lively atmosphere: That phrase sums up most of Golf Inc.'s 2017 Golden Fork honorees.

Whether at a private club or a public course, diners today want casual settings, defined by high-quality décor, rustic ambiance and local food offerings. Several of this year's honorees combine those features with outdoor seating, which provides unparalleled views of the golf course and, in a few cases, of nearby city skylines.

For example, Granite Links Golf Club in Quincy, Mass., offers members and non-members great views of downtown Boston,

as well as views of the golf course. The private club transformed a turn shack into an outdoor grill and pub, which is open to the public.

Granite Links is not the only private club that built a restaurant for the public. Atlantic City Country Club and Centurion Club in the U.K. did the same, allowing them to bring in more revenue and better dining options for members.

What they all have in common is that they go beyond basic seating and menus to offer experiential dining — that is, an experience that involves food.

Golf Inc.'s second annual Golden Fork

awards recognize 12 golf facilities for either new and most improved dining options.

Editors assessed entries based on improvements in revenue, traffic, guest satisfaction, aesthetics, service, menus and capital improvements. Nominees were divided into four categories: most improved public and private facilities and new public and private facilities. To fall under public, the dining facility must be open to the public, even if the course is only open to members.

We honor 12 facilities that are huge financial successes and are moving dining to the next level at golf courses and clubs.

## NEW PRIVATE



### FIRST PLACE

**Restaurant:** The Cabin  
**Golf Course:** The Cliffs at Mountain Park  
**Location:** Travelers Rest, S.C.

The Cliffs at Mountain Park opened its Gary Player Signature course in 2013 to rave reviews. But its restaurant, The Cabin, has been even better received.

The 4,508-square-foot dining facility is the busiest restaurant in The Cliffs portfolio of seven luxury mountain and lake clubs in the southern Blue Ridge Mountains. It booked 32,308 covers in its first year of operation and averaged 32 percent more than other Cliffs venues in 2016.

“We did not want it to be like your father’s country club,” said David Sawyer, managing partner for clubhouses at The Cliffs. “We wanted it to be casual, and to embrace the mountains and the setting.”

It’s a restaurant where members can wear jeans and bring their families.

“That’s what people want now,” Sawyer said. “We are going in that direction with our other facilities, removing tablecloths in favor of more casual settings, and removing carpeting in favor of wood floors.”

Sawyer also focused on high-quality food and hired chefs from acclaimed restaurants. Executive Chef Kevin Furmanek and Sous Chef Scott Denomme are award-winning chefs, and the staff includes 12 certified sommeliers.



The menu is designed to provide club classics for those who want something traditional while also providing variety. About half of the menu changes on a weekly basis.

Entrees include hazelnut-encrusted Carolina mountain trout, southern seafood cioppino and grass-fed beef tenderloin. Starters include the Low Country jumbo lump crab dip, crispy Brussels sprouts and

hickory-smoked pork belly. Sawyer says a favorite is the fig and prosciutto flatbread.

The Cabin also has a party barn adjacent to it. It is actually the cart barn, but the club moves the golf cars elsewhere when it is reserved for a wedding or other event. It makes for a rustic setting that has proved to be a popular attraction. They booked 18 weddings in the past year, some with as many as 350 guests.

### SECOND PLACE

**Restaurant:** The Lodge at Country Club East  
**Golf Course:** Lakewood Ranch Golf & Country Club  
**Location:** Lakewood Ranch, Fla.

Lakewood Ranch Golf & Country Club opened its Lodge at Country Club East in April 2016 to rave reviews from members, and the new facility has provided a boost to membership sales. The club sought to create a casual restaurant and bar atmosphere while providing outdoor amenities that take inspiration from the history and natural setting of Lakewood Ranch.

The main dining room was designed with exposed heavy timbers to create a rustic theme, and with panoramic views of the surrounding golf course. A covered



outdoor patio uses natural stone and heavy timber.

An open kitchen allows interaction between diners and chefs as meals are prepared in full view.

