

# Forbes

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## A Hamptons Culinary Retreat Just In Time For Spring



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Travel

*I cover luxury travel and style.*



A cauliflower taco dish from Shou Sugi Ban House COURTESY OF FREDRIKA

STJARNE FOR SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE

A traditional Japanese technique, *shou sugi ban* (or “charred cedar board”) refers to a preservation process that uses fire to burn wood, blacken it, and render the timber both fireproof and reusable. Paradoxical, using fire to fight fire, yes. But such is the mysterious, poetic way of nature.

Inspired by this concept, Amy Cherry-Abitbol and Kathleen Kapnick co-founded the Water Mill wellness darling [Shou Sugi Ban House](#) under the same principles of strength, rejuvenation, and submission to the ways of nature. And just after Earth Day, the hotel is hosting a three-day retreat from April 23-25 where the focus is largely on the relationship between nature and food—and how everything, including us, is interconnected.



A guest room at Shou Sugi Ban House. COURTESY OF FREDRIKA STJARNE FOR SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE

“Food and nature go hand-in-hand and are at their best when they are in harmony,” Noma co-founder and Michelin Star chef Mads Refslund who’s leading the retreat, “I believe that good food represents the sum of natural forces—soil condition, sun, wind, and rain —and their impact and expression upon the agricultural products of a specific region can connect us to the soul of a location.”



A baked dish incorporating local dayboat fish. COURTESY OF FREDRIKA  
STJARNE FOR SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE

On Long Island, this looks like mounds of organic, biodynamic produce and vegetables, and of course, local seafood and shellfish. And specific to the retreat, Nordic-inspired and Japanese-influenced dishes like slow-cooked beets with pomegranate umeboshi and yuzu vinaigrette, grilled salmon belly with ginger and flowers from the garden, and nut milk panna cotta.



A locally-sourced beet dish. COURTESY OF FREDRIKA STJARNE FOR SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE

“The culinary team also forages on the grounds of the property for wild ingredients, such as young spruce tips, cattail shoots and stalks, and birch tree sap,” says Refslund, which is an activity guests of the retreat can partake in, too. Other experiences involve cooking demonstrations, culinary workshops, hydrotherapy spa treatments, wellness barn accommodations, and more.



A green seaweed and vegetable plate COURTESY OF FREDRIKA STJARNE FOR SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE

For Refslund, he hopes that the guests leave the retreat with “a new perspective and approach to experiencing their food. I also enjoy sharing the abundance and quality of what we have access to on Long Island – I personally find it inspiring to bring the guests to our partner farms, to see the source, touch the soil, and meet the farmers.”

If anything can provide this degree of enlightenment over a few days, nature (as it’s shown us before) certainly can.