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Pétanque Tournament Rolls Through Montauk

A variation on bocce, this annual game is a chance for Hamptons' restaurant people to take a break



The courts were built the morning of the annual pétanque tournament, hosted by Steven Jauffrineau.

PHOTO: ARNAUD LECAMUS

By Marshall Heyman

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MONTAUK, N.Y.—To cash in on the summer months, restaurant people in the Hamptons spend a lot more time working, often encountering snotty customers.

But there's one afternoon many take off from the grind, and they do it to participate in an annual pétanque tournament, hosted by Steven Jauffrineau.

"People in the business need a day off," said Mr. Jauffrineau. "We're all so stretched out, but we know that one day we make the effort to show up."



Pétanque balls during the match.

PHOTO: ARNAUD LECAMUS

Mr. Jauffrineau, who was born and raised south of Brittany in France and was once the Bachelor on the French version of that show, started the pétanque tournament while working at Sunset Beach. When he went to help [Apollo Global Management](#)'s Marc Rowan operate the restaurants Duryea's and Arbor here in Montauk, he moved the game as well.

Two pétanque courts were built in the backyard at Arbor the morning of the tournament, which involved rolling and watering crushed blue stone.

One of the good things about pétanque, Mr. Jauffrineau said, is "you don't need to know how to play. You can get beginner's luck."

The quick version of pétanque is that players use a metal ball to get as close as possible to a smaller ball, called the cochonnet. At this tourney, participants would be going home with a pétanque set featuring the Arbor logo. The winning team would also get bottles of Whispering Angel pink wine.



Steven Jauffrineau, Guillaume Touton and Eric Ripert.

PHOTO: ARNAUD LECAMUS

Three-person teams included repeat offenders with French connections, like those hosted by Francois Payard, LT Burger in Sag Harbor, Pierre Restaurant and Felix on West Broadway in the city (which hosts its own pétanque day), but because of the relatively easy entry point, there were a few newbies, namely Montauk businesses.

“I’ve played bocce and this is a variation,” said Jon Krasner, a real-estate developer who owns the Saltbox and Shagwong restaurants. “The first game was an adjustment, but after the second one I was ready to take everyone else down.”

That said, midway through the tournament, Arden Gardell, a co-owner of 668 The Gig Shack, said he had “no clue” how to play pétanque. “But I know how to drink wine. In the wine drinking, I’ve been doing fantastic.”

Chef Eric Ripert’s team included two of his employees from Le Bernardin.

“The idea is to have fun and spend a good afternoon,” he said. “Maybe you get a big bottle of rosé, but it’s not something you do for the prize. It’s for the glory.”

Most of the participants agreed that drinking is key to the game.

“If I’m sober, I don’t play well,” said Pierre Weber, who owns Pierre’s restaurant in Bridgehampton.

“It helps to have Whispering Angel,” said the chef Laurent Tourondel, who plays pétanque every weekend in East Hampton.

Would he describe himself as a good pétanque player?

“I’m not good, I’m excellent.”

There were some clever ways to victory.

Francois Payard said doing so involved “focusing on the ball and learning the group” you’re playing with. “And you have to watch as the ball rolls. Every ground is different.”

“It’s not just throwing the ball. It’s getting under people’s skin,” said Peter Vanderbruggen, a private equity investor who lives in Miami.

But, he added, “the winning team is usually the team that can hold its liquor the best.”

It’s not a surprise, then, that he and Mr. Jauffrineau came out on top. After all, the third member of their squad was Mr. Vanderbruggen’s 10-year-old son.



Mr. Jauffrineau, Peter Vanderbruggen and his son Nicholas.
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