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# What's new, Aspen/Snowmass? Lodging, dining, shopping establishments make upgrades, but stay familiar

## Businesses walk a fine line between upgrading to the latest amenities and keeping the traditional feel

By Kyle Wagner  
The Denver Post

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(Hyoung Chang, Denver Post file)

For fans of the Roaring Fork Valley, a winter visit is a little like watching a top-level snowboarding competition. Every season, new restaurants, shops and art galleries pop up hopefully like 'boarders airing out of a halfpipe, each one hoping to impress with his or her tricks.

The best part is that most of the newbies have the moves already because they're so often run by veterans of the business — such as [New Belgium's Ranger Station](#) or retailers such as [Kate Spade](#) opening outposts from admired designers — looking to make their mark.

Lodging properties also have long known that it's change or die



— visitors to this part of Colorado have many options, and they will move on if rooms become too dated or don't offer the latest amenities.

There's a fine line between a little change and too much, however. For Aspen's Hotel Jerome, for instance, preserving

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Would you support letting individual school districts in Colorado make their own decisions on whether to allow teachers and other staff to carry concealed weapons?

Yes. Something must be done to protect students from the increasing threat of gun violence.

No. More guns in schools is the wrong answer.

Unsure. I can see both sides.

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The former Silvertree Hotel and Conference Center is now the Westin Snowmass Resort, and like the Westin in Beaver Creek, **this slope-side site could not have a better location** — here it's strap on your boards at the super-friendly and efficient ski valet, walk out the door and choose your lift.

**Snowmass Kitchen on the below-level floor sends out contemporary American fare** along with Colorado microbrews, but you can also eat or have a drink at the Vue bar area (check out the fresh-crab cakes and the burger).

As we've come to expect from the brand, **the rooms feature the Heavenly Beds**, the Kids Club with its well-thought-out activities, and a pretty spa. The pool and hot-tub area is small but nicely tucked away. Overall, **this is a good choice for families**. Rates start at \$299 per night.

*100 Elbert Lane, Snowmass Village, 970-923-8200, [westinsnowmass.com](http://westinsnowmass.com)*

### **The Wildwood Snowmass**

Another good option for families as well as **people who don't go to bed at 9 p.m.**, the Westin's groovy sister property next door, the Wildwood Snowmass, is slightly cheaper and **sports a hipper feel** ( [columnist Kara Williams reviewed it more in-depth in the Dec. 11 OutWest](#) ). The rooms look like they were **designed by a minimalist Nordic teenager**, in a good way.

The Wildwood Snowmass is packed with cool spots for hanging out. **The Bar is like an underground beer hall**, where New Belgium brews flow and the communal tables encourage meet-ups. The **lobby lounge is made for games**, with colorful cube cushions that can be moved around and board games galore. **Play pinball and video games in the Arcade Room**, and have a **buffet breakfast in the casual Canteen**. Rates start at \$199 per night.

*40 Elbert Lane, Snowmass Village, 970-923-8200, 888-625-4988, [starwoodhotels.com](http://starwoodhotels.com)*

*Kyle Wagner*

## **DINING**

### **Element 47 at The Little Nell**

Let's face it, Montagna was tired. The prix fixe menu has been going the way of Big Gulps and tank tops, and the dining-room design just wasn't working for patrons who wanted to be in on the action. Enter Bentel & Bentel, who did the magnificent redesign on New York's Le Bernardin in 2011, hired to make Element 47 — the name refers to silver on the periodic table — just as **elegantly hip yet not a turn-off to the local regulars**.

Done and done.

"They asked us for our input," says Csaba "Chubby" Oveges, Element 47's manager. "The employees were consulted for thoughts on flow, comforts, things that could make guests' experiences better. I think that has made all the difference."

The entrance is a long, narrow lounge area with bar and seating nooks, all of which leads into the main dining area, awash with cappuccino, cobalt and charcoal colors offset by red retro glassware. Where there had been separate, isolated seating areas are levels that offer **a view and a modicum of intimacy** — you see who comes and goes, but once they're seated, there's a sense of privacy. The mod banquettes are comfortable and feature unique fold-down arms at the ends.

Where Montagna never failed, though, and Element 47 still shines, is in the kitchen and its service. Chef Robert McCormick makes **multitextured, semi-structural dishes that are tiny works of art and dynamically flavorful**. Nantucket Bay scallops crafted into a ceviche with pickled onions, for instance, pitted sweet seafood against tart pomegranates and even tangier pickled onions, while tortellini filled with sweet-tart Anjou pears played against the umami of tender slips of Wagyu bresaola and pickled chanterelles. The dishes are broken into small, medium and large plates, so **you control your portions**.