Four Column's wall of fame.
The cozy dining room at Four Columns.
room Four Columns, which preserves the antique in a contemporary setting. The old chicken coop is now the former spa where Gina and Fausto stayed. (“You can tell everyone your sister slept in Mick Jagger’s bedroom,” Tony offered.) It contained a bath complete with steam room and a bed that, like the bath, was the size of most hotel rooms. My room was equally generous, with bedding as soft as a baby’s skin and a sitting area, offset by Doric columns, that overlooked a deck, a pond and a swimming pool. I turned it into a little yoga sanctuary for my stay.

But, as the French say, the more things change, the more they stay the same. No doubt Chardain would’ve approved of what executive chef Kieffer has done with the menus. Vermont embraced farm-to-table long before it became fashionable, my foodie sister noted. Our superb meals featured a cheese board with locally sourced sheep’s milk cheeses, berries, figs and a drizzle of maple syrup; an irresistible herb bread; divinely textured goat-cheese salads and butternut squash and sweet potato soups; Florentine-stuffed flounder; a succulent Berkshire pork chop with Vermont Bourbon-mashed yams, roasted rutabaga, parsnip and ginger glaze; and a light, luscious apple-filled puff pastry worthy of the gods. “That is too good,” Gina said.

No need to worry about dietary restrictions. The excellent wait staff happily accommodated my sister’s food allergies. Brunch was equally sumptuous, but we decided to forgo it for the complimentary light breakfast that fueled our explorations on foot with Fausto and by car. On our way up to Vermont on Interstate 91, we had stopped for spicy Indonesian butternut squash soup and a roasted broccoli one at the vegetarian Haymarket Café in Northampton, Mass., home of Smith College. (If you have the time, visit the college’s Museum of Art, whose fine collection includes the frolicking nudes painted all over the restrooms, right down to the toilet bowls.)

Once in Vermont, we drove 22 miles north to Chester, whose storybook downtown includes Davallia Artful Living, Misty Valley Books, the Polish Pottery Gift Shop, Sage Jewelry, Vintage Vermont and the Moon Dog Café, home of sublime salads, soups and pastries, including one heck of a pumpkin cake with cream cheese frosting.

On getaway day, we stopped in neighboring Townshend for goat-milk caramels at Big Picture Farm’s warehouse before heading south to buy syrup, red pepper relish and sheep’s milk cheeses at the Grafton Village Cheese Co. in Brattleboro and some of the creamiest chocolates you’ll ever have at Tavernier Chocolates in nearby Guilford, Vermont’s Cotton Mill artisan complex.

Gina and I agreed we’d love to go back, not just to see Big Picture Farm during spring’s kidding season but to spend more time at Four Columns. It’s a place where you can savor the quiet, ever-changing beauty of nature alone or chat up the locals and other guests — whatever Mick might do. For more, visit fourcolumnsvt.com or call 802-365-7713.