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## UNH's Acorns Restaurant named to Phantom Gourmet 100

### Establishment was popular critic's write-in favorite

By [Lori Gula](#)  
UNH News Bureau

April 12, 2002

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Acorns Restaurant on the campus of the University of New Hampshire has been named one of the top 100 restaurants in New England by Boston's popular television restaurant critic, the Phantom Gourmet.

Acorns was one of only six New Hampshire restaurants to make the Phantom Gourmet 100. After reviewing thousands of restaurants, Phantom selected his favorite 100 in New England. An anonymous restaurant critic, the Phantom Gourmet dines in disguise, never revealing his identity and always paying his own bills.

According to the Phantom Gourmet 100 review, "Acorns easily out-paced all other write-in votes for the Phantom 100. The restaurant has floor-to-ceiling windows that bring the surrounding woodlands inside. The staff is primarily comprised of culinary students whose youthful exuberance translates into attentive and friendly service. Acorns serves Sunday brunch with a constantly changing menu."

The Phantom was "particularly delighted" by Acorns breakfast items, including waffles and made-to-order omelets, and lunch menu items chicken florentine, baked sole, steak calabrese and honey ham.

"The staff of Acorns Restaurant, Cafe and Lounge and myself are excited and honored to be mentioned among the finest restaurants in New England," says Jeff MacDonald, food and beverage manager at Acorns Restaurant. "We were selected not only because of our

dining excellence, but also because we received overwhelming e-mail and mail-in support from our customers."

MacDonald credits much of the restaurant's success to executive chef Rick Smith, who designed the menus and runs the back-of-the-house operation, and restaurant manager Desiree Leavitt. "They have committed themselves and their staffs to providing exceptional food and service quality. They are able to meet our high standards with a staff that despite its youth is talented, energetic, hardworking and dedicated," he says.

In January 2000, the Phantom issued a Restaurant Report Card for Acorns, awarding it a score of 88 (out of 100) and rating it "Gourmet Greatness." The Phantom evaluated the restaurant on food and drink, appetizers, menu, portions, service, atmosphere, cleanliness, desserts, location and parking and value. Acorns scored a perfect 10 on portion sizes, with the Phantom noting, "Limitless buffet portions are very appealing to an anonymous restaurant critic with a limitless gut."

The Phantom considered the baked sole the "best bet."

Acorns is a learning laboratory for the Whittemore School of Business and Economics' Hospitality Program, exposing students to the practical aspects of the restaurant business. "It has been a relationship that has been beneficial to both parties. It has allowed Acorns Restaurant and the New England Center to contribute to the university's mission while at the same time giving the hospitality students the unique experience of learning in a professional environment," MacDonald says.

First broadcast in 1993 on New England Cable News, the Phantom Gourmet is the most recognized name in the region for restaurant reviews and information.

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