Let's do a quick rundown on things you should consider before heading to the ski shop to make your purchase. For the average intermediate skier, an all-mountain ski would be the place to start. The shape of a ski is determined by the width of its shovel (the front end), the waist (under where the boot is mounted) and the tail, or rear end. Holding the ski up, a more hourglass type shape provides for better carving and short radius turns, while a wider, less-curved ski is better in powder and heavy late-season snow. For skiing in the Northeast, a more "parabolic" shape would be preferred because you will likely be skiing quite often on hard pack or icy conditions.

Two other technical terms will come into the decision-making process. One is "camber," which is the springiness of a ski. More camber means more edge grip. The other is the opposite of camber and is called "rocker" – this refers to the ski looking more like the legs of a rocking chair and is good for powder skiing, conditions that are less typical in the Northeast.

Now, you're ready to combine the above-technical characteristics of a ski with your physique and skiing ability. Taller, heavier and more

of the season. Winter storm Inga proved to be the biggest snowmaker so far this season, dumping from six to almost 10 inches of light powdery snow onto the region's slopes and it was a windless snowfall so it actually landed on the trails instead of in the woods.

Ski-resort operators continued to blast out the man-made stuff as well, building base depths for skiing and riding into late March and early April. Some new trails were also seeing the guns blowing snow for the first time this winter as resorts expanded to nearly 100 percent of their terrain. The extra snow is also allowing ski areas to build their terrain parks for cross skiers and boarders, and to bump up some trails with moguls for those who like knee-knocking runs.

I skied at Hunter Mountain last Thursday, after Inga deposited around eight inches of perfect powder on the slopes. It was a bluebird day and even under a full sun temps stayed in the teens, so the snow surfaces were slow and squeaky. Hunter's management had the guns going on Racer's Edge, Eisenhower, Gun Hill Road and Belt Parkway to build up base depths with the hope of keeping these runs open well into April.

The mainline run down the center of the mountain already

in three hours, which you can only do if you have no wait on the chairlift. That's not to say that Holiday was empty – the tubing hill was packed and the learning area was humming. The Holiday children's ski club, which has about 60 members, was out on the Roman Candle slope racing but the slopes were quiet and most of the chairs were going up without anyone on them.

On my way to the lodge for a break, a mother who was watching her children practicing in the beginner's area asked me if Holiday Mountain was always this empty and I told her that has been my experience each time I went on a weekend. She was from Poughkeepsie and said this is the best-kept secret in local skiing and snowboarding. Better yet, it's also a sweet deal. Holiday has an online coupon that can be redeemed for a ticket and a rental for $42, which is the all-day ticket rate, or for two lift tickets.

Think more of Mother Nature's finest, and happy skiing and riding!

—Woodstock resident Al Neubert is an expert skier and has been writing professionally about snow sports for more than 30 years. His ski column runs on Thursdays. He can be reached at asneubert@aol.com.

Sat: 8:30a-10p; Sun: 8:30a-4p;

MASSACHUSETTS

Bousquet — Wed 6:26 am MG machine groomed 10 - 22 base 16 of 23 trails, 70% open
3 of 5 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-9p; Sat 9a-9p, Sun 9a-4p; Jan 24: 3p-9p;
Catamount — Wed 7:05 am MG machine groomed 14 - 30 base 25 of 36 trails
70% open, 8 miles, 115 acres, 5 of 7 lifts, Mon/Tue: 9a-4p; Wed: 9a-8p
Thu: 9a-4p; Fri: 9a-10p; Sat: 8:30a-10p; Sun: 8:30a-4p;
Jiminy Peak — Wed 7:12 am frozen granular machine groomed 14 - 47 base 26 of 45 trails
58% open, 2 miles, 102 acres, 5 of 9 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-10p
Sat/Sun: 8:30a-10p;
Ski Butternut — Wed 8:41 am MG machine groomed 24 - 32 base 22 of 22 trails
100% open, 14 miles, 110 acres, 6 of 11 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p
Sat/Sun: 8a-4p;

NEW JERSEY

Mountain Creek — Wed 6:41 am MG machine groomed 36 - 56 base 44 of 46 trails
96% open, 160 acres, 8 of 10 lifts, Mon-Thu: 9a-9p; Fri: 9a-10p
Sat: 9a-10p; Sun: 9a-9p;

NEW YORK

Belleayre — Wed 3:13 pm MG machine groomed 18 - 34 base 34 of 51 trails
67% open, 115 acres, 4 of 8 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 9a-4p;
Gore Mountain — Wed 9:23 am 1 new MG machine groomed 6 - 18 base 37 of 110 trails, 63% open, 18 miles, 224 acres, 7 of 14 lifts, sm Mon-Fri: 8:30a-4p
Sat/Sun: 8:30a-8p;
Holiday Mountain — Sat Reopen 0½4 MG machine groomed 29 - 43 base 6 of 9 trails, 67% open, 2 of 4 lifts, Tue-Thu: 3p-8p; Fri: 12p-9p; Sat: 9a-9p
Sun: 9a-5p; Open Tue-Sun;
Mount Peter — Tue 7:57 pm MG machine groomed 20 - 48 base 11 of 12 trails
92% open, 2 of 6 lifts, Mon: 10a-5p; Tue-Thu:10a-8:30p; Fri: 10a-9p
Sat: 8:30a-9p; Sun: 8:30a-5p;
Plattekill — Wed Reopen 0½6 MG machine groomed 18 - 36 base 17 of 38 trails
45% open, 3 of 4 lifts, Fri: 8:45a-4:15p; Sat/Sun 8:45a-4:15p
Open Fri-Sun;
Thunder Ridge — Tue 7:01 pm packed powder machine groomed 20 - 38 base 9 of 22 trails
41% open, 3 of 6 lifts, Mon-Fri: 10a-9p; Sat: 9a-9p; Sun: 9a-5p;
West Mountain — Wed 3:58 pm MG machine groomed 6 - 36 base 14 of 30 trails
47% open, 4 of 5 lifts, sm Mon/Tue: 3p-9p, Wed-Fri: 10a-9p; Sat: 8:30a-9p
Sun: 8:30a-4:30p; Jan 24: 3p-9p;
Whiteface — Wed 11:28 am 1 new frozen granular groomed 16 - 36 base 35 of 54 trails
65% open, 201 acres, 4 of 12 lifts, Mon-Thu: 9a-4p; Fri: 9a-8p; Sat: 8a-8p
Sun: 8a-4p;

PENNSYLVANIA

Camelback — Tue 1:06 am MG machine groomed 12 - 48 base 37 of 37 trails
94% open, 162 acres, 9 of 16 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-9p; Sat/Sun: 8:30a-9p;
Elk Mountain — Wed 8:25 am MG machine groomed 30 - 36 base 20 of 27 trails
74% open, 4 of 7 lifts, sm Mon-Fri: 8:30a-10p; Sat/Sun: 8:30a-10p;
Hidden Valley — Wed 6:46 am loose granular machine groomed 30 - 36 base 26 of 26 trails
100% open, 5 of 9 lifts, Mon-Tue: 10a-4:30p; Wed-Thu: 10a-9p
Fri: 9a-9:30p; Sat: 9a-9:30p; Sun: 9a-7p;
Montage Mountain — Tue 11:05 am wet granular 12 - 24 base 21 of 26 trails, 81% open, 7 of 7 lifts, Mon-Thu: 9a-9p; Fri: 9a-10p; Sat: 8:30a-10p
Sun: 8:30a-9p; Jan 23: 3p-9p;
Shawnee Mountain — Wed 8:21 am MG machine groomed 24 - 48 base 23 of 23 trails
100% open, 125 acres, 6 of 11 lifts, Mon-Thu: 9a-9p; Fri: 9a-10p
Sat: 8a-10p; Sun: 8a-9p;
Ski Big Bear — Mon 4:12 pm MG machine groomed 18 - 36 base 18 of 18 trails
100% open, 6 of 6 lifts, Mon: 9a-4:30p; Thr/Fri: 9a-9p; Sat: 8a-9p
Sun: 9a-7p;

VERMONT

Bromley Mountain — Wed 8:20 am MG machine groomed 12 - 30 base 23 of 47 trails
49% open, 108 acres, 5 of 8 lifts, sm Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat-Sun: 8:30a-4p;
Killington — Wed 6:06 am MG machine groomed 15 - 24 base 96 of 155 trails
62% open, 41 miles, 497 acres, 13 of 22 lifts, sm Mon-Fri: 9a-4p
Sat/Sun: 8a-4p;
Mount Snow — Wed 6:43 am MG machine groomed 26 - 30 base 50 of 86 trails
53% open, 23 miles, 323 acres, 11 of 20 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p
Sat/Sun: 8a-4p;
Okemo Mountain — Wed 6:57 am MG machine groomed 32 - 42 base 87 of 121 trails
72% open, 34 miles, 522 acres, 11 of 20 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p
Sat/Sun: 8a-4p;
Pico — Tue Reopen 0½5 packed powder machine groomed 12 - 18 base 39 of 57 trails
68% open, 14 miles, 221 acres, 5 of 7 lifts, sm Mon, Thu/Fri: 9a-4p
Sat/Sun: 8:30a-4p; Open Thu-Mon;
Stratton Mountain — Wed 6:44 am MG machine groomed 24 - 24 base 73 of 97 trails
75% open, 463 acres, 8 of 11 lifts, Mon-Fri: 9a-4p; Sat/Sun: 8:30a-4p;