

Old-world charm at Christie's Mill

By Michele Lawson

If Christie's Mill Inn & Spa exudes an old-world charm, it comes by it honestly.

German-owned for most of the last 30 years, the 90-year-old building was renovated at the turn of the millennium by a Dr. Bouhon. It was under the doctor's leadership the conference rooms were added and the property moved into the couples and corporate market.

A touch of nobility was added when the inn was purchased by German Count Graf Von Goertz in 2002. Within two years, a Count's Wing had been added with 15 new deluxe suites, ranging in size from 300 square feet to 1,100 square feet. The Count's Suite also is decorated with his private furniture dating back to 1830.

The addition also brought the 7,000 square foot Avalon Spa and Wellness Centre, an indoor saltwater pool and the Severn Room meeting space.

"The draw here is the location and environment – it's very tranquil," says sales executive Steven Ollershaw. "It just provides a really unique environment."

Nestled on the shore of Gloucester Pool near Port Severn, the Inn provides dockage for water-bound guests making their way through the Trent-Severn Waterway System – many of whom stop for a meal in the Waterfront Dining Room, which features a casual fine dining menu.



"Depending on how backed up they are on the lock, sometimes they will come in to eat while they wait," he says noting the proximity to the waterway's Lock 45. "The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner."

In the colder months, snowmobilers are welcome to sled and dine.

Chef David Schoffield and his team incorporate many local and seasonal ingredients in their creations and regularly serve up new feature dishes. On Mar. 20, they will prepare a special buffet dinner of German-style cuisine as the inn celebrates Martoberfest. Entertainment will be provided by George Kash and the Oktoberfest Express.



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The Georgian-Muskoka Room of Christie's Mill Inn & Spa offers corporate meeting facilities in a retreat setting. The inn dates back almost a century but recent renovations and expansions by German owners combine with French country décor to provide Christie's Mill Inn & Spa with the charm of a luxurious European villa.

A week later, the kitchen will reflect the very Canadian going on at the Wye Marsh's Sweetwater Festival by preparing a maple-enhanced menu for dinners on March 26 and 27.

Corporate event planners can also take advantage of the season by reserving a date in March or April and receiving a complimentary incentive for their delegates. Included in the options are a complimentary 30-minute wine and cheese welcome reception, welcome gift bag in each guest room, 20-per-cent off select spa services and a bring-your-partner add-on for \$40, which includes daily breakfast and dinner.

When staying over, guests can choose from rooms with a queen or king-size bed and a fireplace, some with a patio or balcony and whirlpool bath; and deluxe suite with two queen-size beds – all appointed with French country décor. Amenities include individual waffle-weave robes, coffee service, iron and ironing board, hair dryer, complimentary toiletries and internet access.

Specialty accommodations include the spa suite, with a private outdoor hot tub; the honeymoon suite, with a king-sized bed, double-sided fireplace, elevated soaker tub and walk-in shower; and the Count's large luxury suite with antique furnishings and a large private balcony overlooking the water.

A three-bedroom cottage, sometimes used as a corporate hospitality suite, is a final option. It also features a barbecue, full kitchen, and washer and dryer.

For working guests, as many as 100 people can be accommodated for a reception in the Georgian-Muskoka room, which features a cathedral ceiling and dividing wall to split the space in half. More often, groups of approximately 40 enjoy the natural light and lake view. The Severn Boardroom offers a more intimate space for groups up to 20 and can be used on its own or as a breakout room.

White boards, flip charts, tripod screens and podiums are all available in-house, as are audio-visual equipment like televisions, VCR and DVD players and an LCD projector. Stationery and water stations are provided. Group packages are available.

All meeting rooms are equipped with blackout curtains for presentations.

The inn promises "a wide range of services may be added to your corporate retreat to help ensure team building / management synergy." Group activities offered range from wine tasting and cookery classes, to a camp fire or photo scavenger hunt.

"Something that was really popular last year when we got it, was the pontoon boat," says Ollershaw. "We can take small groups of up to 10 people on a two-hour tour."

Tennis courts (racquets and balls provided), an outdoor hot tub, and a private beach also enhance the on-site recreational opportunities.

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