



Proprietor Mara Mehlman with executive chef Jevgenija Saromova.



By Amanda Yates  
Photos by Lynn Bohannon

**M**ara Mehlman, owner of the Lincoln Inn and Restaurant at the Covered Bridge, with her partner and Executive Chef Jevgenija Saromova, are passionate about creating an experience where locals and visitors to Woodstock can enjoy a unique meal, a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere, and time to enjoy their surroundings and the company of other visitors of the inn. »

# The *Lincoln* *Inn* and *Restaurant* at the Covered Bridge

Enjoy  
fine food  
and good  
company

1. Inn sign. 2. A dinner starter. 3. A guest room. 4. An amuse-bouche. 5. Chef Jevgenija at work preparing a main course. 6. Main course. 7. Tavern.





1. Owner Mara Mehlman. 2. Guest room. 3. Dining Room. 4. Chef Jevgenija plating a main course. 5. A dinner starter.

Mara brings a variety of experience in the service industry to the Lincoln Inn. In her former role as the founder of Student Chefs Abroad, Mara was able to work with many skilled chefs across Europe. But her vision of owning a New England inn continued to grow until she decided it was time to start looking for the inn she had long held as a dream. Mara toured a few properties, but it wasn't until she visited Woodstock with a friend that she came across the historic Lincoln Inn. Once Mara saw the inn and surrounding grounds, she knew she had found her new home.

Mara closed on the property in April 2014 and opened the inn in July. Chef Jevgenija Saromova arrived September 11 and two weeks later opened the restaurant. Since that time, Mara and Chef Jevgenija have worked to share their passion for fine dining with locals and visitors. Common in Europe is the experience of restaurants with rooms, a dining experience where guests travel to share in the creations of a master chef, and stay in the adjoining inn so they can truly enjoy their evening out. This concept of structuring service around high-end cuisine is one that Mara and Jevgenija are sharing with the Woodstock community.

#### AN EXPERIENCE TO SAVOR

Chef Jevgenija Saromova, who began cooking with her grandmother in Latvia and then took

her talents across Europe and into the kitchens of many Michelin Star-rated restaurants, believes that “dinner is something to celebrate.” This is evident in the elaborately constructed bites she prepares for guests. As part of her family’s Russian culture, Jevgenija learned early the pleasure of sharing fine food and company at the end of a long day. This belief that dinner is different from other meals of the day, that it is the moment when we can take leave of our busy lives and enjoy our food together, is the moment that Jevgenija and Mara are trying to share with their visitors.

Dinner at the Lincoln Inn is a moment to savor. And with a fixed-price, five-course menu, Jevgenija invites guests to take their time moving through the dishes she prepares while enjoying the companionship of fellow diners. All guests are served at the same time so that everyone is engaged in a shared experience. As you sample tantalizing tastes—from the pomegranate and orange sorbet in the first course to the white onion and apple veloute that appears to bubble and dissolve on your tongue as your mouth is filled with the warm sensation of, as my dining companion remarked, “my mother’s Thanksgiving”—you may find yourself pausing your conversation to reflect on the pure joy of sharing just such a moment. This creative and skillful construction of service allows guests to further relax into the community atmosphere that Mara and Jevgenija have cultivated. »





Another of the inn's inviting guest rooms.

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In addition to the elaborately constructed five-course meal and a menu that changes daily with one seating per night (reservations are required), Jevgenija's versatile talents in the kitchen are on display with her approaches to a small-bites tavern menu. You'll find yourself enjoying dishes including a pub tradition, French fries, but you can be sure Jevgenija's attention to using the best ingredients and innovative techniques will transform these traditional dishes into new favorites.

#### CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

Although new to the area, Mara and Jevgenija feel at home in Woodstock and are finding ways they can share their talents with the local community. Creating a place for locals and visitors alike to enjoy great food and conversation is just a piece of their story. Mara and Jevgenija are exploring ways to break down some of the barriers that exist in traditional kitchens. As such, they are exploring incorporating a chef's table in the kitchen for those diners who would enjoy the experience of watching Jevgenija as she creates her inspired dishes. Chatting with Mara and Jevgenija, you soon realize their passion for service and that all of their decisions at the inn are influenced by their belief in creating an



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Chef Jevgenija at work.

atmosphere that allows their guests to find those moments of true connection and community.

A visit to the Lincoln Inn and Restaurant is an experience that invites guests to shed the habits and structures of their daily lives. The inn sits on six acres of riverfront property that has access to trails and a beautiful landscape. Upstairs you will find six en suite guest rooms in this quintessential, floor-squeaking Vermont farmhouse. After dining in the restaurant, you might find yourself drawn to the library, where it would be easy to curl up with a good book, or maybe you'll linger at the bar with another glass of the wine that Mara recommended. At the end of the night, a short walk up the stairs feels as natural and inviting as an overnight stay at a dear friend's house. With Mara's gentle guidance and Jevgenija's inviting food, it is easy to see that you might just feel right at home. ☺

**■ The Lincoln Inn & Restaurant at the Covered Bridge**

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