

Local/Regional

New Owner, Chef Take Over At Lincoln Inn

By Virginia Dean
Standard Correspondent

WEST WOODSTOCK — Los Angeles native Mara Mehlman knew that someday she would move to this bucolic area — she just didn't know how or when. Last month, her premonition was realized when she had the chance to buy the newly named Lincoln Inn and Restaurant At The Covered Bridge.

"My declaration came true," Mehlman said. "I had harbored the dream of experiencing the autumn foliage of New England for as long as I could remember, but life always seemed to get in the way."

But seven years ago, Mehlman and her cousin signed up for a bike tour with Bike Vermont and fell in love with the state, especially Woodstock. It was during this sojourn that Mehlman vowed to return.

As fate would have it, a timely online ad announcing the sale of the Lincoln Inn caught her eye and, after ensuing negotiations over an asking price of \$695,000 and an eventual sales transaction, Mehlman said she has found her home.

"Driving by the Woodstock village Green, I was overcome with a sense of déjà vu," said Mehlman. "It was then that I realized this was the exact spot where I had had my revelation about my future home, and here I was again."

Now, Mehlman, along with her partner Jevgenija Saromova, an award-winning chef from England but Latvian by birth, plans to refurbish the inn by making it a gourmet foodie destination.

Saromova has had over 20 years experience as a professional chef. "Cooking is her passion, and like all artists, she looks to create beauty out of what the earth provides," said Mehlman. "Her food compositions aren't just for satisfying the hunger of the body, but also to satiate the deeper soul. She has a one-of-a-kind flair for culinary innovation and will take the Vermont food culture to a whole new level."

Even though she wants to keep many of the food concoctions a secret, what Mehlman will reveal is that the cuisine will be a gourmet fusion of everything Saromova has learned working in Michelin star restaurants in Italy, France, and England.

"She combines flavors and textures masterfully," said Mehlman. "It will be infused with New England cuisine using locally sourced meats, produce and dairy."

The third soul arriving to support the opening and establishment of the inn is Prince Alfred, resident racer and hunter — and whippet/ greyhound mix — a type of English dog known as a Lurcher or Romany word for "thief."

Mehlman said part of her immediate goal is to reopen the six existing guest rooms. One has a king size bed, four have queen size, and one has a queen and a double. All have private bathrooms with showers en

suite. One of the queen rooms has a shower/bath combination.

"The Inn will be classic comfort, simple elegance," said Mehlman. "The guests should expect warm hospitality. I want it to be locally focused and a destination spot for tourists. It should be a place to relax and to engage, whether it be planned tours, sporting activities, or educational events. We have a lot of exciting things in store!"

The 5.5-plus acre property includes not only an inn and restaurant but also a private residence that lies adjacent to the main building. It is bordered by the historic Lincoln Covered Bridge and the Ottauquechee River.

Aside from her many years of experience in the area of hospitality, Mehlman is the founder of Student Chefs Abroad, a company whose mission is to unite American culinary students with internship opportunities in the United Kingdom.

In England, where she has been living for the last three years, Mehlman has worked alongside renowned chefs in award-winning restaurants and boutique hotels. She has also studied French culture and wine appreciation at the Universite de Dijon in Dijon, France.

In addition to the guest rooms and two restaurant dining rooms, there are three fireplaces, a library and a tavern. The 7,783 square foot building complex (main building is 2,770-plus sq.ft.) was built in 1875 and was last renovated in 2012. It was once a farmhouse owned by President Abraham Lincoln's cousin, according to Mehlman, and has 1,000 feet of river frontage.

Outside, there is a stone fireplace, gazebo and stone-walled pergola and terrace designed for dining and corporate and wedding markets.

"I want to give my guests a wonderful experience, one that they will remember fondly," said Mehlman.

Guests can expect to pay \$145 per night Sunday-Thursday; \$160 per night Friday-Saturday (weekend rate applies on Sundays of three-day holiday weekends); and \$205 per night during peak seasons that include Presidents Weekend, Dartmouth Graduation, Foliage (mid-Sept to mid-Oct), Christmas/ New Year's week. Room rates are based on double occupancy with a charge of \$30 per night for each additional guest (\$50 from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15).

A full gourmet breakfast is included in the price. Dinner is also available with a bar menu served in the Tavern. The restaurant will be open for lunch for advance bookings of parties of 10 or more. Sunday brunch will be offered once a month and each week during foliage. Monthly special events will be held and posted on the Inn's website, email list, Facebook, and Twitter accounts.

For reservations or further information, please contact www.lincolnnn.com.



1. Mara Mehlman is the new owner of the Lincoln Inn. 2. Prince Alfred, a whippet/greyhound mix, is the third owner at the Inn. 3. Jevgenija Saromova, an award-winning chef from England, plans to make the inn into a gourmet foodie destination. 4. The Lincoln Inn.

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