

MaineHospitalityReport

monthly e-letter from Maine Restaurant and Innkeepers Associations
December 2017

Solstice salutations!

Happy holidays to members old and new. We are busy in our hospitality workshop moving forward with our important unification agenda.

As we hit the road this fall we encountered eager enthusiasm for our new Maine hospitality vision. A gleaming example is our newest member, Your Maine Concierge. Read below about this travel startup service that embraces both restaurants and inns.

As Maine's booming restaurant scene proliferates, our Annual Awards Banquet next March promises to be better than ever. Thank you for your nominations. We are sorting through the pile of candidates, and awardees will be announced with the new year.

Sit back, pour a hot cup and enjoy our December newsletter.

Kathleen Pierce
Director of Member Experience

Member Spotlight: Your Maine Concierge



Your Maine Concierge owner Vanessa Santarelli on the streets of Rockland.

What is the concept behind Your Maine Concierge?

I have three main goals: eliminate the stress and overwhelming feeling people have sifting through conflicting travel review sites; support and strengthen Maine's hospitality industry; and give customers a memorable Maine experience.

How did you come up with this clever service?

Your Maine Concierge is the only statewide, personalized concierge and vacation planning service in Maine. I was born and raised here, and have traveled extensively throughout the state. This enabled me to build considerable knowledge and experience about unique places to stay, dine, shop, hike, kayak, and much more. Over the years, family, friends, colleagues, and even complete strangers asked me to create an itinerary for their vacations or "stay-cations." After receiving much positive feedback and encouragement, I decided to take the leap

and start my business.

How does it work? I learn customers' likes, dislikes and travel goals through a brief online or phone consultation. On that basis I tailor recommendations for lodging, dining and activities to my customers' specific interests, needs and desires. This enhances their experience, and maximizes their impressions of Maine. Rather than the "one-vacation-fits-all" approach, I give them their very own, special experience.

How has business been so far?

I launched in November and the response has been very positive. Especially exciting are my partnerships with hotels, inns, and B&Bs throughout Maine. I give discounted rates on services to guests of the properties who I'm partnered with. This extra benefit has been well-received, especially for guests who travel to multiple destinations.

How has membership with the Maine Innkeepers Association

helped? Being a member has helped significantly. The Maine Hospitality Summit was a great event, and gave me the opportunity to network with other business leaders in the hospitality industry. Additionally, Your Maine Concierge was also recently featured in a Maine Innkeepers Association's [Facebook Live video](#) which has had over 1,000 views! I am so appreciative of the support I've received from the Association.

Watch here!



www.yourmaineconcierge.com

September Performance Index Statewide

Restaurant Revenue: \$272,932,000 - up 1.2%

Lodging Revenue: \$136,081,000 - flat.

September restaurant year to date - \$ 2.140 billion - up 3.3%

September lodging year to date - \$861 million - up 6.9%

Source: [Maine Office of Tax Policy Research](#)

Legislative Lowdown



Greg Dugal on the government affairs desk keeps a close watch on rules and regs that affect the hospitality industry. On deck this month:

The H2B and J-1 visa sagas continue

J-1 is under scrutiny by the Department of Homeland Security. No final assessment or outcome has been put forth. We are encouraged by a new amendment

to a funding bill that would require the administration to notify the public and stakeholders if there are changes proposed to the J-1 program. Our hope is that the program will remain intact for 2018 and beyond.

The Maine delegation seeks a Returning Worker provision attached to a budget bill going forward. The current budget continuing resolution is in effect until December 8. It could extend until December 22 if a budget deal is not reached.

Our fervent hope is that H2B visa relief is included with this funding legislation. Extensive groundwork by our congressional delegation should keep H2B alive.

Portland Paid Sick leave

Portland City Councils' Health and Human Services committee considered the paid sick leave proposal on November 14. Proponents, including the Maine Women's Lobby and the Southern Maine Workers' Center, presented the proposal.

A handful of City Councilors were thorough in their review of the proposed ordinance. At least one public hearing will be held early next year. Another hearing could follow. The final version is not expected to reach the full council for a vote until mid-2018. We are staying vigilant.

Maine Transient Rental Platforms legislation returns

On Nov. 30, the Legislative Council unanimously approved LR 2490, An Act To Require Transient Rental Platforms To Register To Collect and Report Sales Taxes, as an emergency bill in the upcoming short session. It passed by a 10-0 vote. The city of Portland is a test case for this Airbnb-dominated fast-growing sector.

This proposed legislation was integral to Governor Paul LePage's original January 2017 budget. It received unanimous support from the Taxation Committee, but in the throes of a possible government shutdown last July 4, the provision disappeared from the final budget.

Other legislation we are following

- * Streamlining state/federal service charge statute.**
- * Minimum wage ramp up**
- * Training wages**
- * Conforming the definition of exempt employees to Federal law. Currently**

pay scales in State statute differ.

Email greg@maineinns.com for more.

Holiday decor tips from Christopher Papagni of [CP Consulting](#), a Portland-based hospitality and small business consultancy.



Tastefully make your restaurant or inn more cheerful and festive with white lights and candles. A soft glow makes a room look beautiful instantly.

People look to the holidays to brighten up their lives. Cheerful music is preferable. There is enough saccharine Christmas music in the malls and on the radio.

Be frugal and use the same decorations each year. Most guests won't remember your decorations one year to the next. Unless your decorations are tacky, *that* they will remember. Don't spend more than a couple hundred dollars.

Understated is the word in holiday design this year. With so much pain and suffering in the world right now, most people are just hoping for something bright. We are not going to be taking electricity for granted this year either.

MediaWatch

- * **Sweet ride.** Scott Cowger, co-owner of Maple Hill Farm Inn and Conference Center in Hallowell, made [the Portland Press Herald for starting an Uber service](#) in his sleek Tesla.
- * Michelle and Steve Corry of Five Fifty Five and Petite Jacqueline share their stunning Scarborough abode in [this Yankee Magazine spread](#).
- * The Maine Hospitality Summit made [the Maine Sunday Telegram's party page](#) last weekend. Check out the pix.

Industry Trends

As waters warm and regulations tighten, a [Maine shrimp shortage](#) strikes restaurateurs for the fifth year in a row. Some chefs are prepared to 86 shrimp rather than order from abroad, the Portland Press Herald reports.

New year [food and drink predictions](#) from the American Culinary Federation are in. It's going to be a veg-forward, ethnic-tinged dining scene in 2018. Chefs will be mixing up more cocktails too.

The American Hotel and Lodging Association teams up with the Better Business Bureau to [fight online booking scams](#).

Membership Meter ... See who joined us in November!



Stacey and Christopher Shaw of The Black and Tan Pub in Augusta.

Please Welcome

The Black and Tan Pub	Linda Kate Lobster and Seafood
Urban Dwellings	DBMaine
Higher Grounds	Photography
Oaks and Maple Cafe	Your Maine Concierge
The Crooked Hook Tavern	IDS-Homage
Ashwood Consulting	In Good Company

Upcoming events

Tuesday, January 16, 2018 - Westbrook
Tuesday, January 23, 2018 - Augusta
Tuesday, March 27, 2018 - Westbrook
Wednesday, March 28, 2018 - Augusta

Maine ProStart Invitational

February 17, Holiday Inn By the Bay, Portland

Restaurant Association Annual Awards Banquet

What: Our celebration of the industry

When: Tuesday, March 27, 2018

Where: Holiday Inn by the Bay, Portland

Maine Restaurant & Lodging Expo 2018

What: The biggest statewide hospitality trade show

When: Wednesday, March 28, 2018, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: Cross Insurance Arena, Portland

Store up energy for this winter with these allied offers

Special membership group pricing on propane and heating oil from Irving Energy!

Make sure your rooms are cozy, your restaurant is warm and your water is steaming with a special group price on propane and heating oil.

- **Sign-up by December 31, 2017, to receive a \$150 credit**
- **Sign-up by May 31, 2018, to receive a \$100 credit**

Contact Nelson Hansen Nelson.Hansen@irvingoil.com or call 1.855.202.7260.

Tap into low natural gas prices at At Sprague

"With the warmer weather now, natural gas prices are down. They are the lowest of the year so it's a great time to buy," said Claude Peyrot, Sprague's director of mid-market sales.

Sprague can provide energy solutions for your business, lock in your 2018 and '19 rates now by calling 1- 855-GO-NATGAS or email NERA@spragueenergy.com.



| send feedback, tips, and suggestions to kathleen@mainerestaurant.com |

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