

The Old Inn, Gairloch.

Where good food comes naturally

AUTUMN 2009 NEWSLETTER

That was the summer that was!

“Already another summer season is drawing to a close – but what a season it has been!

Whether despite the recession or because of it, this year, right across the Highlands, visitor-numbers have far exceeded those of previous years; and here at The Old Inn together with our sister hotel, Gairloch Highland Lodge, we too have enjoyed one of our busiest ever summers. It's just as well we are planning to have extra rooms available at the Lodge for next year!

Not only have we been especially busy with accommodation but the bigger-than-ever menu we introduced at the beginning of the year (as featured in our February newsletter) has proved a great success both with our guests and those visitors coming to The Old Inn for a meal. Whilst our wider choice of steaks has been really well received, our pier-fresh fish and seafood dishes have continued to be especially popular.

And, looking ahead, not only have we got a couple of unique, Old Inn style special breaks coming up but, of course, there's both Christmas and the New Year - or as we say, *Hogmanay* - looming large on the horizon.

Hopefully we'll be seeing you soon as well!”



Sharon Longley
Manager, The Old Inn

IN THIS ISSUE:

Join us for a special “Festive Fare” weekend and join our chef for some hands-on culinary creation...and start to “sloe” down for Xmas!

...or leave the cooking to us and have yourselves a “very merry Christmas”

Celebrate Hogmanay with us in true Highland style.

Hear from a Highland duo for whom The Old Inn is music to their ears!

RECOMMEND A FRIEND AND WE'LL GIVE THEM A GREAT DEAL!

Recommend The Old Inn to your friends and relatives and, provided they haven't stayed with us before, we'll give them 25% OFF their first night's accommodation. Either give them this voucher or simply ask them to quote “REC25” when they book.



Celebrate with us here at The Old Inn and...

h a v e y o u r s e l v e s a v e r y
m e r r y c h r i s t m a s t i m e



Having settled into your room on Christmas Eve, at 6:30 in the evening you will be served mulled wine and canapés by the fire, followed by dinner from 7:00 onwards in the Restaurant.

Christmas morning is at your leisure, with lunch being served from 12:00. A light bar-snack menu will be available in the evening for those who are feeling peckish!

Breakfast will be served on Boxing morning between 8:45 and 10:00, with the rest of the day yours to spend as you wish.

Dinner will be served in the Restaurant from 6:00pm.

To give our guests the flexibility to enjoy their stay as they please, our special Christmas break is priced at a bed and breakfast rate of £69.00 per room per night*.

To join us for what promises to be a very merry Christmas, book today either by calling us free on 0800 542 5444 or e-mailing sharon@theoldinn.net

* Based on two people sharing three nights' accommodation. Price includes a glass of mulled wine and canapés on the first evening but excludes all other meals, except breakfasts. Christmas Lunch is priced at £25 per person, all other meals are as per menu prices.



News from Beinn Eighe

It's been a busy year so far on Beinn Eighe.

The wildlife film "HighlandHaven", part of the BBC Natural World series, is to be screened on Thursday 26th November on BBC2 and will feature stunning footage of some of the wildlife on Beinn Eighe and Loch Maree, including sea eagles and blackthroated divers.

We are also running a consultation exercise on our management proposals for the Reserve for the next 6 years and are keen to get people's views. You can see the proposals on the web, as well as lots of other information on Beinn Eighe by going to www.nnr-scotland.org.uk. The consultation runs until November 13th.

We have also expanded our events programme this year, which included a new event "Mushroom Meander". This was very popular, as was our guided walk "Rutting and Roaring" to see and hear Beinn Eighe's red deer stags in action. Look out next year for these and other events



A Festive Fare and Wine Tasting Weekend

Friday 13th To Sunday 15th November

Here's a great weekend of dining, wining and hands-on Christmas fare!

After your arrival on Friday, the weekend will get under way with a glass of mulled wine and canapés by the fire, followed by a special three course dinner, served in the Restaurant.

After breakfast on the Saturday, the rest of the morning will be free for you to do as you please. Then, in the afternoon, those of you who are keen to roll up your sleeves and get cooking can join our head chef, Christopher Bentley, to make your own mincemeat and get some useful tips and ideas for Christmas dishes.

That's not all. We have already been out "berry-picking" so you will have the makings of your own sloe gin!

Later that evening there will be an exclusive tasting hosted by wine expert Peter Henderson, who will be on hand to suggest a range of wines for you to enjoy over the festive period. This will be followed by a special three-course dinner, again served in the Restaurant

After breakfast on the Sunday morning, prior to departure, you will be able to collect your mincemeat, together with a souvenir recipe booklet with our compliments - and not forgetting your sloe gin - the perfect finale to a fantastic weekend of festive fare!

This special weekend is available at the fully inclusive price of just £60 per person, per night. So make a date to join us right now. Simply call us free on 0800 542 5444 or e-mail sharon@theoldinn.net



NB Participants in the wine tasting must be aged 18 or over

see in the New Year *Highland Style*



Join us at The Old Inn
for a Hogmanay to remember !



Following your arrival on Wednesday 30 December, the festivities will get underway with a special, 4-Course Dinner Menu served in both the Restaurant and the Bistro from 7.30 pm.

Breakfast will be served in the Restaurant from 8.00 – 9.30 on the Thursday morning, the rest of the day then being yours to do as you wish.

Then, in the evening, a Gala Buffet, including a rib roast carvery, will be served in the Restaurant and Bistro between 8.30 and 10.00 and there will be live music in the bar from 10.00 onwards, "seeing in the bells" with Auld Lang Syne at midnight.

A late brunch will be served in the Restaurant and Bistro on New Year's Day from 11.00 am – 2.00 pm. And, in the evening, our standard Restaurant Menu will be available from 6.00 pm

Prior to departure on the morning of Saturday 2 January, breakfast will be served in the Restaurant and Bistro between 8.00 – 9.30.

The all-inclusive price for this celebratory 3-day programme, including dinner bed and breakfast at The Old Inn is just £75.00 per person per night. Alternatively, rooms are available at our sister hotel, Gairloch Highland Lodge, at £75 per room, bed and breakfast only, plus £25 per person for the Gala Buffet and entertainment on New Year's Eve.
Both rates are based on two people sharing a twin/double room.

another "whale" of a summer!



It's been another super season for whale and dolphin watching with marine wildlife expert Nick Davies aboard "Orca".

So far this year, sightings have been:

Northern Minke Whale	277
Long Finned Pilot Whale	1
Humpback Whale	1 definite and 1 possible
Short-Beaked Common Dolphin	2319
Bottlenose Dolphins	80

There have also been several sightings of Killer Whale in the area.

Thoughts From The Kitchen.

Head Chef Christopher Bentley reflects on the changing season and looks back on some notable achievements.

Autumn is my favourite time of the year, perhaps it reflects upon my time of life, but more I suspect it is the strong flavours and colour reflected in the season's produce. The bright orange of the pumpkin contrasting with dark green Savoy cabbage or the rich taste of pheasant, hare and venison bring back memories of comfort eating.

New dishes will be featured on our autumn menu reflecting this change of season; terrine of wild mountain hare, venison shank braised in plum wine, butternut squash and chickpea roast with a tomato salsa.

Autumn affects not only the land. Our local fishing boats venture into deeper waters and we often find halibut, brill and squid in the baskets we purchase.

This year has also seen the advancement of two more members of our kitchen brigade, both attaining Scottish Vocational Qualifications in cooking. But the crowning glory was Cath gaining second place in the World Cloutie Dumpling Championship!

Finally I have included a light desert recipe ideal for dinner parties or cold evenings after a big roast dinner, it ticks all the boxes to make it every ones special pudding: White Chocolate and Drambuie Crème with Raspberries.

I hope you enjoy this lovely time of year and look forward to seeing you again in the future.

Best regards
Christopher



Christopher with a pumpkin - and sous-chef Max!

Christopher's Seasonal Recipe

Drambuie and White Chocolate Crème with Raspberries

This is a lovely light desert after a big Christmas dinner. It's easy to make and serve, and, if you haven't room, it will wait until later when you start to feel hungry again!

Serves 2

250ml full cream milk
100g white chocolate, broken into small pieces
1 egg
1 egg yolk
1 tbsp caster sugar
½ tsp vanilla essence
6 tbsp Drambuie
1/2 packet frozen raspberries

You will also need 2 ramekins or ovenproof teacups, or use 1 small pudding bowl (for 2 to share), about 400ml capacity

Preheat the oven to 150C/300F/gas mark 2. Boil the kettle for a bain-marie. Heat the milk and white chocolate gently in a small saucepan, stirring occasionally until the chocolate is melted. Take care not to let it boil.

Beat together the whole egg, egg yolk and sugar and slowly stir in the milk and chocolate mixture. Add the vanilla essence and 2 tbsp Drambuie and pour through a fine sieve into the ramekins or pudding bowl.

Set the ramekins or bowl into a small roasting tin and half-fill with boiling water. Bake for 20-25 minutes (or slightly longer for a larger bowl) until the custard has set but is still wobbly. Cool completely then chill in the fridge.

Defrost the half packet of raspberries and sprinkle with a little sugar then pour over the rest of the Drambuie and leave to sit

To serve, carefully run a small knife around the edge of the ramekins or bowl, turn out onto dessert plates and give it a quick jerk to fully loosen the bottom. Spoon the raspberry and Drambuie mix around the edge and serve with a shortbread finger.

A Corner of Jurassic Park now Alive and Well in Inverewe!

In the last Old Inn newsletter we reported that we were about to plant the world's most northerly group of Wollemi pines, the dinosaurs of the plant kingdom. This was completed in April and has attracted a lot of interest.



The original pines were found in the Blue Mountains in the Wollemi National Park in NZ – hence the name. The Wollemi belongs to the 200 million year old *Araucariaceae* family, the same as the Monkey Puzzle tree. The striking, dark green 'Jurassic-like' mature leaves, not unlike the spines on a stegosaur's back, contrast with young frond-like, apple-green growth. Its peculiar, black, bubbly-looking bark gives it a strange appearance. It is also naturally multi-stemmed, which is unusual for a pine.

Eventually long male cones and round female ones will

develop on the same tree but on the tips of separate branches. The Wollemi tolerates temperatures down to -5°C and needs acid soil but we have had to choose a site sheltered from the worst of the winds. These trees should grow quite quickly, perhaps reaching 100 feet (30 metres).



Photograph courtesy of Australian National Botanic Gardens

Our jewel, the Walled Garden has enjoyed another magnificent year, alive with colour and scent. It is now rich in an abundant fruit and vegetable crop which we leave on display for visitors to see the end product - or where their food comes from!

The dry warm spring and early summer caused a number of our water loving plants distress and as a consequence they increased productivity. Large crops of berries are hanging on many trees and flower buds for next season's Rhododendron suggest we shall have a fantastic showing from next April onwards.

Meconopsis, the Himalayan blue poppy, flourishes here and the Head Gardener has created a Meconopsis Trail. Plantings have been placed all around the garden, different varieties in each area, with a guiding map to help you find and identify them. We are in year two of this development. Next year, year three, should be spectacular. These gems flower in June when our late spring blooms are nearly over and our summer showing just beginning; they act as a wonderful reminder of what has been, and a promise of what is to come. Amazingly they are not all blue either! We have both white, deep reddish purple and light blue, mid blue, dark blue, French navy blue, sky blue, duck egg blue.....NEVER ask if we have blue flowers!!

One of the wonders of Inverewe is that it is truly a 'garden for all seasons'. Not only do lots of ever-green plants and trees ensure year-round interest but also the amazing colours of the bark, from the rich red or luminescent grey of some species of rhododendron to the thick knobby and warm-feeling cork-like bark of the redwood. There's always something to see here which is spectacularly set off by our position on the edge of Loch Ewe, with the soon to be snow-capped Torridon Mountains as a distant backdrop.

Roy Dowsett
Inverewe Gardens

Beauty, Comfort and Music - Western Heaven in Gairloch!

What could be more perfect than good food, great accommodation, superb scenery and caring, attentive staff who work hard to please? Add to all this the company of a soulmate, partner and musical colleague, and it all makes for an unforgettable experience of rural scenic idyll.

This idyll was never more to the fore in the minds of myself and my accordion-playing wife Seòidin (Gaelic for Sadie) than earlier this year when we were fortunate enough to find ourselves playing our particular brand of Highland Music at the Old Inn. One often hears of poor and indifferent service in the Highlands, but those establishments that have won awards for excellence are always a good bet - and when the atmosphere and conditions combine to promise the best of everything, how can one possibly go wrong?

This feeling persisted throughout the evening as we firstly consumed our first-class meal (washed down by some fine imbibements, of course!) and secondly, played for the lively and appreciative audience in the small and friendly bar. The Old Inn is a music pub, of course - and this comes as no surprise.

So there you have it - and one cannot forget the roads which lead to this idyllic situation on the West Coast of the Scottish Highlands... reason alone to take that trip and be inspired to sing and play and live life to the full.

Which leaves us both making the following dedication to everyone concerned, and in the native tongue... "Mòran taing dhuibh uile".

Niall and Seòidin Gàrdan
Biorachan Beag ("Little Squirrel")



Gairloch Highland Lodge: Yours for the Taking!

If you are looking for the perfect place for your family and friends to get together, Gairloch Highland Lodge could not be better. Comfortably accommodating up to 45 people, Gairloch Highland Lodge, the sister hotel to The Old Inn, can be booked out from October to March on a self-catering basis for private functions such as weddings, birthday parties, holiday groups and celebrations of all kinds. For further information, simply contact us at The Old Inn on 0800 542 5444 or e-mail: sharon@theoldinn.net.



Here's an Inn-spirational Gift Idea!

Whether as a Christmas, birthday or anniversary present – or just to say "thank you" - an Old Inn Voucher makes the ideal gift for your family and friends. Available in any amount from £10 to £100, even more if you wish, the voucher is redeemable against either the cost of a stay at The Old Inn or simply a meal in the Restaurant. To find out more, call us free on 0800 542 5444 or e-mail sharon@theoldinn.net



The Home of Highland Hospitality

The Old Inn

Gairloch • Wester Ross

Northwest Highlands • IV21 2BD

01445 712006

Freephone 0800 542 5444

E-mail: enquiries@theoldinn.net

Website: www.theoldinn.net