

SUCCESS

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Stories

The Manor On Glen Lake

McDonald's founder Ray Kroc used to say he had ketchup in his veins. The restaurant industry is definitely in Nancy Wright's blood. Wright owned and operated Le Bear Restaurant on the shores of Lake Michigan in Glen Arbor, Mich., with Janet Niewold for 12 years. When she sold the restaurant in 2003 to a group developing a major resort on the property, customers were sad to see it go.

Wright, like many people in the business, quickly got the itch to open a new restaurant. Fortunately, there was a restaurant available just down the road. Even better, the place was already in the family. The only problem was that the facility had been closed for a while and was in disrepair. But those are small challenges to overcome for someone born into the foodservice business.

On the south shore of Glen Lake, less than three miles from her former restaurant, lies The Manor on Glen Lake. Built by lumberman John Biddleman as a summer resort hotel in 1906, The Manor was originally known as The Cold Spring Inn. At the time, tourism in that area of northern Michigan flourished, and the inn was a success.

The resort first changed hands when Biddleman's manager purchased the inn and renamed it "Ockers Inn." Wright's grandparents, who had acquired land in the area from Glen

Arbor pioneer D.H. Day, purchased the property in 1954 and changed the name once again to Glen Lake Manor. Family operated ever since, first by Wright's grandparents and then her parents, the historic inn is the only remaining resort on Glen Lake.

When Wright stepped in, the resort not only showed its age, but wasn't even close to being up to code. The main building contained dining and public rooms on the first floor, and 15 guest rooms upstairs. Over the years, the family added three guest cottages to the property.

During her first phase of reconstruction, Wright refurbished the dining area, the patios and private dining rooms. In the second phase, she concentrated on updating the kitchen and bringing the building up to code, adding handicap access and ramps, rebuilding porches, and more.

After three years of construction and remodeling, Wright opened the doors of the new restaurant—The Manor on Glen Lake—on June 30, 2006. Open year-round, unlike the old resort's restaurant, The Manor caters to both tourists and locals alike.

While it was a resort, The Manor operated on the "European plan," including meals in with the price of rooms. Wright kept the concept alive in the new restaurant, offering prix fixe or fix-priced four-course meals at lunch and dinner. With The Manor, though, she's taken a step back in time and a step upscale from her former Le Bear Restaurant.

The Manor is classic in style, serving meals on gold-rimmed china in a dining room that features white-linen covered tables, Italian chairs and old-fashioned woven carpets. The menu itself features American cuisine with ethnic influences. Wright's staff uses local ingredients whenever possible, and the menu changes daily depending on what's in season and what the chef feels like making.

At dinner, Wright tries to feature fish, poultry, beef and usually a vegetarian item on every menu, so menus typically feature from three to five items. Guests start with an appetizer, with choices like a soup du jour, salad such as fresh fruit and mint on mixed greens, or small plate such as portabella mushroom stuffed with three cheeses and lump crab. Sorbets are served between the appetizer and entrée courses.



*Pictured left to right:
Nancy Wright, Owner, The Manor on Glen Lake;
Eliza Keating, President, Keating of Chicago, Inc.;
Eliza Ann Keating, Keating of Chicago, Inc.*

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Beef dishes usually are hand-cut steaks ranging from pan-seared New York strip stuffed with lobster and shrimp and served with shiitake and morel mushroom sauce to simple and elegant filet mignon or a marinated rib-eye, with prime rib served ever now and then. A typical poultry item is scalloped turkey breast with Michigan dried cherry, walnut and broccoli stuffing served with cranberry jus. Fish dishes vary based on availability. One recent menu featured a two-fish platter of pan-seared swordfish and salmon en croute with lime-chardonnay cream.

But patrons—at least the regulars—know they also can get Wright's famous Parmesan Whitefish anytime, even if it's not featured on the menu. The local favorite is made with parmesan-crust Lake Michigan whitefish deep-fried to a golden crunch on the outside and moist flaky fish on the inside.

Dinner isn't complete without one of Wright's decadent desserts. Again, menus change daily, but customers usually have three or four choices from



The Keating Instant Recovery® fryer works great for the restaurant's signature dish "Parmesan Whitefish".

• items like turtle fudge
 • cheesecake with white
 • chocolate sauce, key
 • lime pie with mango
 • sauce, and a
 • "Decadence" layer
 • cake/cheesecake
 • combination, with
 • whipped cream frosting
 • and a chocolate glaze.

• Lunches may be a little
 • simpler, but no less
 • delicious, and specialties
 • include items like The
 • Manor's famous Cherry
 • Chicken Salad, crab
 • cakes, smoked whitefish
 • dip appetizer, and salads
 • all made from scratch. A
 • Sunday champagne
 • brunch also is a big hit
 • with customers.

• Restored to its former elegance as a
 • resort, The Manor now makes a terrific
 • venue for private parties, weddings,
 • showers and other special events. In the
 • short time she's been reopened, Wright
 • already has more than a dozen local
 • clubs and businesses signed up for
 • holiday parties every year.

• To mix things up and continue to offer
 • the kind of fine white-tablecloth dining
 • the area lacks, Wright offers occasional
 • wine dinners featuring presentations by
 • experts along with special wines with
 • each course, and formal teas.

• The Manor now is also run by family of
 • a different sort. Even after the three-year
 • hiatus between her old restaurant Le
 • Bear and opening the new one,
 • Wright was able to entice most of
 • her old staff back to work.

• "Almost everybody on staff is
 • from Le Bear," she says, "so I've
 • worked with everyone here at The
 • Manor for a long time. Some of
 • the waitresses here were kids
 • bussing tables at Le Bear when
 • they were younger."

• The Manor has family
 • connections of another sort, too.
 • Keating family members were
 • long-time patrons of Le Bear
 • Restaurant, so when it came time
 • to refurbish the kitchen at The
 • Manor, Wright chose a Keating
 • fryer and a Keating Miraclean®
 • griddle as part of the
 • equipment package.



The Manor on Glen Lake reopened as a restaurant in 2006. The Manor was originally known as a summer resort hotel named "The Cold Resort Inn".

• "The kitchen staff likes the griddle
 • because it's so easy to clean," says
 • Wright. "They don't have to scrub it
 • down with a brick or one of those
 • abrasive blocks."

• And the fryer is perfect for the
 • restaurant's signature Parmesan
 • Whitefish, she says. "An equipment rep
 • tried to talk me out of buying the
 • Keating equipment and sell me
 • something less expensive, but it's really
 • high quality."

• Like most small family-owned
 • restaurants, The Manor doesn't sell
 • billions of anything like a McDonald's.
 • Instead, it's a labor of love. And for that,
 • her customers are grateful.

• "People were pretty upset they closed
 • down my old place," she says, "but
 • they're very happy I've opened a
 • new place."

• *Michael W. Sherer writes frequently about food and
 • the foodservice industry.*



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