



Tom Foolery

BOREAL BAY

Everything looked the same when we drove into the resort this year. The docks looked the same, the boats looked the same, and the cabins were still that odd yellow that reminds me of a 60's-era refrigerator. That, however, was where it stopped. The name was new, the owners were new, the staff was new, and by the end of the week, even one of the boats was new. Besides the yellow cabins that I expect to be stamped with a "Sunkist" logo, the only other thing that that hadn't changed was Ally the Wonder Dog cruising the cabins at dinnertime, looking for handouts.

Welcome to the Boreal Bay Lodge.

We were greeted by the Nelsons; Kevin, Jean, and their daughters Jennifer and Amy, plus Chef LeeAnn, John and D'Arcy the dock hands, and of course Girly, the Nelson's new camp dog. Sarah came later, but that's another story. The first thing I noticed was they all seemed genuinely happy to be there, and they were all looking forward to making our stay as enjoyable as possible, which it was.

I have to confess right here that my wife and I have been friends of the Nelsons since we lived in Minnesota, but I wouldn't be telling you about our positive experience if it wasn't true, I'd be writing about my life in North Carolina on my blog. That said, let me assure you that my friends and I weren't the only people enjoying the Nelson's hospitality. I continually saw other guests up at the office just shooting the breeze, or sharing their day with the Nelsons and the rest of the staff. Speaking of the staff, I often stay in 4 star hotels when I travel, and I want to tell you that I've never seen a group so eager to please. Sure, in many ways it's easier to manage a small staff at a Canadian resort than a staff of 1000 at a New York hotel, but the Nelsons do it in a way that molds the staff into one cohesive unit, in other words, a family.

When you talk to Kevin and Jean about the lodge, the word "family" comes up a lot. Not only do they want their staff to be family, they want their guests to feel like part of the family too. Carrying the theme a step further, the Nelsons see Boreal Bay Lodge as a family friendly place that is perfect for starting new traditions as a family vacation destination. Here's the cool part, and I'm guessing about the reason, but I think that one of the things that the Nelson's have instituted to make the staff feel more like family is that everyone, from the owners to the lowliest staff member, is on the schedule to do the dishes. I'm glad they stopped there, and didn't include the guests in the dishwashing rotation.

But enough about them. It's time to talk about the week. We had a great week of fishing, catching smallmouth almost at will. We caught the occasional northern, and Jim even got a muskie while Sean caught his first lake trout. I got everyone (even Kevin) using the wacky rig, and we were all successful with it. Yes, the week was fabulous, the service was great, and the food, ah, the food was marvelous as each meal was a gastronomic delight unto itself.

We took advantage of Boreal Bay's modified American Plan, which, in addition to the cabin, provided dinner each evening. It helps that we were the only people at the lodge taking advantage of a meal plan, because we were given an opportunity to influence the nightly menu. If they've got it, LeeAnn will make it. If they don't have it, but it's reasonable, LeeAnn will get it. Don't expect lobsters and caviar,

but if you want a full, wholesome meal, then the American Plan or the modified American Plan just might be right for you. Think about it, who really wants to cook after a full day of fishing on Crow Lake?

So thats how the week went. Fish all day, pork out at dinner, sleep, fish all day, pork out at dinner, etc. This is living. End of commercial.

Tom