

# Anniversaries, Oktoberfest, and more: Restaurant looks ahead to fall

By Lauren Harkawik

WILMINGTON - Though many Americans think of it as an October tradition, Oktoberfest, a giant festival held in Munich, Bavaria, each year, typically starts in mid-September and goes through early October. At Alpenglow, which pays homage to the region touched by the Alps, including Bavaria, Oktoberfest celebrations will start September 15 and go through October. The weeklong celebration will include special beers, servers in costume, and a festive atmosphere.

September 15 is another special day at Alpenglow: It'll mark one year since Susan Motyl-Smith became the sole owner of the restaurant, which opened its doors in July 2021. In the two years since, the bistro has established itself as a staple of the Wilmington dining scene.

Looking ahead to this year, Motyl-Smith is leaning into Alpenglow's place as a go-to restaurant in town. She's doing away with long, six- to eight-week closures during stick and mud season, instead opting for shorter closures in December, right before the holidays and ski season gets underway, and May.

"I feel like I'd rather keep a presence and be open," she said. "This is a town — a residential town with 1,200 people living in town and they're looking for a place to go for a drink or a meal and I want to have that presence for the local population."

Motyl-Smith has been with Alpenglow from the start. She opened it with a partner, Becky Clark, but took sole ownership of it last year. The Alps serve as inspiration for the decor, food, and spirit at Alpenglow.

"The journey was to create an apres-ski vibe," she said. "To create the kinds of foods you'd get in the mountains and lakes region, which really is what the Alps is. All of our cocktails are named after different lakes in the Alpine region. We like to borrow words from Germany and France, and we like to bring color into the valley to replicate what you'd get in Europe."

Since last fall, Motyl-Smith has been working with chef Joseph Brogna. Brogna said he enjoyed the creative exercise of creating a menu that had some existing staples, such as the restaurant's winter fondue offering, and was inspired by the Alps and the countries the region touches, including France, Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.

"Joe looked at it and just created this fantastic menu," said Motyl-Smith. "And he has proven that his recipes are what people are wanting, enjoying, and coming back for."

The menu changes seasonally, but current highlights include roasted hünchen, a dish featuring half spatchcock chicken, and Tyrolean lake trout, which is served with Alpine ratatouille, crispy shallots, and tarragon vinaigrette. Staples such as bratwurst, wienerschnitzel, and spätzle are also present. In the winter, one of the restaurant's signature items is fondue.

"It's all about working within a framework," said Brogna. "What will you do within France, Switzerland? You have to get good at making spätzle, and I'm going to have the best bratwurst. You do those things the best you can."

Brogna and Motyl-Smith both said that one of the biggest compliments they can receive is visiting guests returning for a second dining experience after loving the first.

"We've had more than a couple of parties have dinner here on Wednesday and come back here on Thursday," said Motyl-Smith. "They want to get through the menu."

"The best feeling is the people who come in on Wednesday and then come back on Friday and say, 'We made a big



Alpenglow owner Susan Motyl-Smith with head chef Joseph Brogna.

Lauren Harkawik

mistake — we went somewhere else on Thursday," said Brogna.

Speaking of repeat guests, Motyl-Smith said she's discovered a deep joy in getting to know, and talk to, patrons. "If you talk to somebody long enough, you'll realize there's a point of connection," said Motyl-Smith.

Asked what owning a restaurant has taught her so far, Motyl-Smith said it's driven home for her how detail-oriented a person she is.

"I have an acute awareness of the tiny pieces that make up the larger picture, and tend to focus intently on the pixels that create the photograph," she said. "My sister has a nickname for me, 'detalle,' which is Spanish for 'detailed,' and owning a restaurant has resurrected this trait."

Motyl-Smith said owning a restaurant has also given her an inside look, and a new perspective, on things like the cost of living and how difficult it can be for restaurant workers to remain employed consistently enough to make a comfortable living.

"The irony is that we cater to a segment of the population that comes here to visit — they may have second homes here, or just be vacationing — yet many of our restaurant workers can't even afford to live in the town where they work."

It's broadened her perspective, she said, and it's made her see firsthand the importance of government- and town-driven programs to provide housing assistance, public transportation options, and proximal medical facilities.

"It behooves all of us to take a closer look at how we

can make our hard-working and dedicated workers in the valley stay and thrive," she said.

She's also been taken by the similarities between running a restaurant and staging a performance or a television production. Motyl-Smith has a background in television, as both a producer and a host. She says she's come to see things like the decor, lighting, music, and order of the restaurant as setting a stage for the "Alpenglow show."

"My job then becomes one of master of ceremonies, where I need to be keenly aware of any faux pas that may make the dance we do fall out of step," she said. "It is a full-blown performance, and all my cast — my manager, my bartender, my servers, dishwasher, expo, garde manger, and most importantly, the chef — are all supporting each other to create a memorable experience for our patrons so they will want to come back for an encore."

## Winter farmers' market coming and applications now sought

BRATTLEBORO. Vendor applications are now being accepted for the 18th season of the Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market. Its mission is to support sustainable agriculture by providing

a viable winter season direct market outlet for local community-based farms while building community and promoting regional sustainability.

The Winter Market will open for the season on Saturday, November 4, and will operate through March 30, 2024. Weekly market hours are 10 am to 2 pm.

Preference is given to regional agricultural vendors, particularly those bringing new unduplicated products to market. This is a juried market. New vendors or returning vendors with new craft, prepared food or value-added products will need to complete a jury process.

The market's sustainability mission places an emphasis on local sourcing for prepared foods sold at the market meaning that our prepared food vendors are expected to feature ingredients sourced from local and regional growers and producers.

The Brattleboro Winter Farmers' Market is a project of Post Oil Solutions, a grassroots citizen sustainability group based in Windham County.

Anyone interested in the upcoming Winter Farmers' Market season should send in an application soon. The application and market policy information can be found at [www.brattleborowinterfarmersmarket.org](http://www.brattleborowinterfarmersmarket.org).

For more information call Sherry at (802) 275-2835 or send an email to [farmermarket@postoil.com](mailto:farmermarket@postoil.com).

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