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# Friday Harbor House

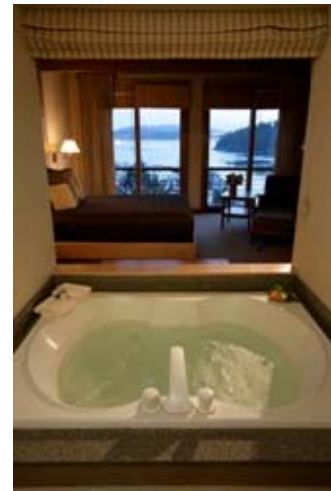
## Maybe the best bluff ever

Getting away, removing yourself from daily life and resetting your brain is important considering how we seem to fill our lives to the brim every day. Friday Harbor, about a two-hour trip from Seattle, is one of those places that just wipes clean the slate. And Friday Harbor House (FHH), sitting atop a prominent bluff overlooking the harbor, is frosting on the cake.

Built in 1994-1995, it is a lovely place that has been updated over the years and recently (about six years ago) added a conference center and three town-view suites. There are 23 rooms total, all of which have gas fireplaces, oversized jetted tubs, flat screen TVs, free WiFi and comfortable lounging robes. A continental breakfast is served each morning with house made granola, baked goods, fresh fruit and juices. About 10 a.m., coffee, tea and more baked goods are available in the San Juan Room.

The San Juan Room is used for events, weddings, meetings—any gathering for up to 70 guests. Furnishings are flexible and can be moved to meet any needs. The room has WiFi, audio equipment and systems, a retractable projector screen, a 52" flat screen TV, LCD projector and computer and iPod jack.

On the bluff in front of the inn is a lovely landscaped, grassy area with benches, tables and chairs where guests can sit back, stare at the water, mountains, boats and other islands and let their minds relax.



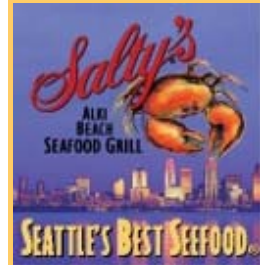
A small property managed by Columbia Hospitality for owners Lang and Anne Simons, it doesn't offer some of the amenities of a large resort (spa, gym, etc.). But you don't need these. You can arrange for spa treatments in your room and have an entire island to work out on. What FHH does do as well as the larger spots is offer a wonderful dining experience at The Bluff Restaurant. The dining room's atmosphere is casual with a small bar—4-5 seats—

*Manila clams from Chef Kyle Nicholson*

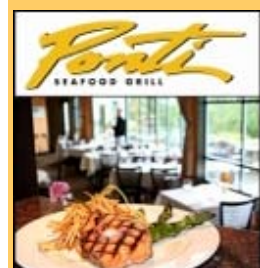
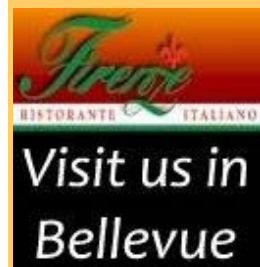
and a dining room overlooking the marina and harbor. Their philosophy is to stay as local as possible food-wise, so you'll find kelp, sea beans, nettles, berries, mushrooms and even spruce tree tips used on the menu. Waldron Island provides a great deal of their produce, and Jones Family Farm on Lopez Island is another main source. They get lamb from the Skagit Valley and some fish from local fishermen.

Chef Kyle Nicholson has been at FHH for a year now and enjoys "putting a bulls-eye on the island" and finding food around it. Although his choices in school didn't seem to have a pattern, they have all led to this moment. He was in a general education program at Evergreen State College that changed to sustainable/organic farming that morphed into nursery/greenhouse/hydroponic gardens. Wanting to find a niche that was more lucrative, he started taking business and statistics classes. He attended

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Portland's Western Culinary Academy (now called Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts) and it all came together.

Born and raised in Salt Lake City, Kyle took his degree and went back to Utah working for Kimpton. He moved on to Park City where he learned about high volume fine dining at River Horse on Main. Taking a break from the kitchen, he started teaching at Sur La Table's culinary program. "We did corporate retreats, weekly date nights; a lot of events. I'd run enough kitchens to know how to teach, but after about a year and a half, the professional kitchen was calling," Kyle recalls. He took a job at a Park City fine dining restaurant, Talisker On Main.

Kyle and his fiancée were looking to settle elsewhere (Mendocino, Willamette Valley, Bainbridge) and found the FHH chef job. "I looked into Columbia Hospitality and like how they operate. They offer great support. We really like that there are 250+ days of sun on San Juan Island and how self-sufficient it is." He uses things like kelp, taking the stipes or blades and roasting them to create something very like a nori sheet. The tubes he slices on the diagonal, pickles them, dredges them in semolina, onion and garlic powder and red pepper, then flash fries them. "I love foraging. During trips to Italy and South America, I loved eating seasonally and locally. It's common in so many cultures; we're just taking it to the fine dining level." "We" includes Sous Chef Aaron Rock who comes from The Boulders at Scottsdale's Waldorf Astoria where he was the lead line cook. Relatively new (about five years) to cooking, he grew up in Chicago and played pro hockey in Toronto. "There were no seasons in Scottsdale," Aaron says. "The Pacific Northwest was about the only place I hadn't lived. After talking with Kyle, I wanted to come out and use the local products. The vegetables don't need much, they shine on their own. I'm excited about going through the seasons and buying things at the farmers market like watermelon radishes."

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Cider glazed short ribs



In early October 2011, Kyle was named Innkeeper as well as Chef. "I've worked in several hotels and it's all about hospitality: solving problems, working with vendors, creating an atmosphere people want to return to," he says. Their goal is to make FHH a place for everyone, visitors from Seattle and Canada and locals. "We want to offer people an experience."

They'll continue holding cooking classes and winemaker dinners and are talking about creating culinary/hotel packages to interest people. The evolving menu is headed toward small plates so people can come in for a glass of wine and a bite or combine several plates to create a full meal.

*Chef Kyle Nicholson*

Whether you want to hike, bike, eat, drink, explore or let your eyes do all the work, FHH is the perfect home base for your trip to the island.

Connie Adams/November 2011

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