

Rediscover the Wallowa Lake Lodge

By Katy Nesbitt

Go! Magazine

WALLOWA LAKE — The treasured Wallowa Lake Lodge has been a favorite destination for nearly 100 years as a weekend getaway or an evening out to dinner.

Madeline Lau was hired as the lodge's new manager in February 2020. Within a month she and her board of directors were flummoxed as to how to run the historic lodge during a global pandemic.

"It was tricky," Lau said. "There was a huge feeling of uncertainty those first two months."

Once regulations were sorted out, Lau said the board and staff decided to keep the lodge and restaurant open, but reduced the number of diners from a capacity of 84 to 42.



www.facebook.com/WallowaLakeLodge
Summer Sundays feature yoga on the lawn at Wallowa Lake Lodge.

The pandemic didn't slow down tourism much in Wallowa County, and the lodge was no exception.

Lau said they were busier than they thought they would be. "The Wallowas seemed safe to

a lot of people so we had tons and tons of visitors and it turned out to be what felt like a normal season,"

she said.

COVID-19 precautions didn't interrupt their ability to rent rooms or serve meals, but it did prompt moving programs and meals to the lodge's deck overlooking the expansive lawn framed by large conifers.

"We really tried, this year and last, to get outside," Lau said. "That was a huge reason for the rebuild and expansion of the deck."

For entertainment, lectures on Thursday nights and music on Fridays are held on the new 2,000-square-foot deck. Guests are offered al fresco cocktails, beer, wine and food. Lau recommends the lodge's Scandinavian charcuterie board for an afternoon or evening repast.

"The new bar in our lobby has been well received and we try to feature liquor, beer and wine from Oregon or the Pacific Northwest," Lau said.


The restaurant also sources local food like Stangel bison steak and ground beef, raised in Wallowa County, she said.

The lectures and music, as well as the new menu, draw Wallowa County residents looking for a night out. Lau said this is intentional as she, the board and staff want the lodge to be open, accessible and welcoming to the community.

"A lot of people have affection for the lodge," Lau said. "For a business to be lasting and appreciated it has to be loved and used by the community."


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CONTINUED ON PAGE 19