



Elf In The Oak Café

Describe Your Business

The Elf in the Oak is a unique café location in Burdett that offers a wide variety of breakfast and lunch sandwiches, their own blend of coffee, baked goods, vegan and gluten free options and delicious local wines and beer. Two years ago they opened their Ice Cream Shop where they sell Purity ice cream cones and mouthwatering sundaes. The Elf in the Oak offers private celebrations including but not limited to birthdays, bridal showers, baby showers, business meetings, catering, etc. Owner and Chef Cody Evans is pictured at left.

Tell us your story

My great grandparents, Arthur and Charlotte Phelps managed a fruit farm on the property that is now the home of the Catharine Valley Winery on Rt. 414 in Burdett, NY. They survived the great depression by selling their fruit and living off the land. They had two children Earl and Marion Phelps. Marion was my grandmother. She was a vivacious girl and woman. She was a guide in the Adirondacks and eventually went to nursing school. During the 1920's, she was very progressive and went to NYC to work in the hospital to provide care for soldiers coming back from World War I. There she connected with my grandfather Clinton "Jack" Neal who had been wounded in the war. Ironically, Jack Neal grew up just a few miles north of the Phelps farm. They fell in love and married. They returned to the Finger Lakes where my grandfather built a little house, next to the Phelps farm, to raise his growing family. Marion, already in her 30's began having babies - three girls just a year and a few months apart. These three girls are my wonderful mother Harriett and aunts Willie and Barbara. Soon the girls were ready for school and the family moved to Elmira Heights to enroll in the school system there. My grandparents continued to bring my mother and aunts to the lake each summer to enjoy the magic of the sun, water, and woods. The little house was then inhabited by my mother's cousin Don Phelps and his new bride when they first married and then was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Ely as newlyweds. It was truly the home of new beginnings. The Ely family lived in the house for many years and it was eventually sold after all of the family members passed.

For years the little house remained vacant and became uninhabitable. I had always been drawn to the little house but had not been able to purchase it. I buried a St. Joseph statue in the ground and said a prayer over ten years ago to make sure that I would eventually be able to own the property. In summer of 2015, the house was up for sale again. I explored all avenues to purchase the home however financing was very difficult as it was land with an unusable home. In desperation, I took a leap of faith and asked the owners if they would consider a land contract. To my surprise, despite receiving a cash offer, the owners agreed. With the help of St. Joseph it was meant to be. As I explored financing to transform the house into a cafe, I began working with Ken Wilson and Mark Fife from the Chemung Canal Trust Company. Both of these wonderful men had been mentored in the banking world by my late father Howard Fox. They were so supportive and helpful in helping me to navigate the process of obtaining a business loan. Judy McKinney Cherry was also instrumental in supporting our small business with a SCOPED loan. I will always be thankful for their enthusiasm and assistance in the financial process. I truly believe that so many blessings couldn't have occurred by chance. We feel a huge spiritual connection with those who came before us at the Elf.

We are often asked about our name "The Elf in the Oak". My sister, cousins, and I spent our summers at the lake. We did not have television, telephones, or any electronics. We spent our time in the woods making Elf houses in the roots of trees. Often lush green moss grew in between the roots and functioned as carpet. We built tiny fireplaces and tables with

stones and used acorn caps as bowls and filled them with tiny blueberries. We loved creating these little Elf houses in the woods and the tradition was continued with the next generation and our name was borne.

My son, Cody Evans graduated with an Associate's Degree in Culinary Arts from Paul Smith's College. He benefited from many employment opportunities in the Finger Lakes, Saranac Lake, Lake Placid, and in Ireland. Cody enjoys experimenting with different foods, spices and flavors to create amazing new taste sensations. He is passionate about his ingredients and purchases products from local farms and businesses. Cody is inspired by the people who come to enjoy the Elf in The Oak. We love our local folks and enjoy meeting the summer vacationers. They all become friends. The goal of our café is to give our friends a friendly and warm environment where they can enjoy a gorgeous view while enjoying their meal.

Cody's long-term partner Natalie was and is a huge support with her warmth, creativity, and attention to detail. We have recently welcomed the next generation into our family (Aeowyn) with lots of excitement and love. You will often see my mother at the Elf in the Oak watching the people and doing a little supervising. She has been a tremendous support for us. I have been blessed with my wonderful husband Eric who troubleshoots any problems that may come up and can also be seen mowing the lawn. My sister, Cindy Emerson, has been so incredibly helpful with the ice cream cottage and the garden. We have amazing staff who are dedicated to making good food in a homelike and friendly environment.

The Elf in the Oak opened in December of 2017. A winter opening is a bit risky but with the support of the local population we made it. The Elf in the Oak offers a wide variety of breakfast and lunch sandwiches, our own blend of coffee, baked goods, vegan and gluten free options and delicious local wines and beer. Two years ago we opened our Ice Cream Shop where we sell Purity ice cream cones and mouthwatering sundaes. The Elf in the Oak offers private celebrations (birthdays, bridal showers, baby showers, business meetings, etc., after hours and catering. Contact Cody during business hours at 607 546-4641 to discuss special parties. Please come and enjoy The Elf in the Oak café. We love the spirituality and warmth of our little piece of Heaven and want to share it with you.

Written by Cody's mother, Deborah

Contact Information

The Elf in the Oak Cafe

4221 Route 414

Burdett, NY 14818

607-546-4641

foxtrotstables@yahoo.com

<https://www.theelfintheoak.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Elf-in-the-Oak-1868004736756525/>