



DINING ON THE OCEAN FLOOR

A TRULY ONE OF A KIND CULINARY EXPERIENCE IN THE WORLD!



Experience one of the most innovative culinary feasts in the world on the bottom of the ocean floor where twice daily the tide averages 47.5 feet up to 53.6 feet on a raging tide day.

In 1975, the Guinness World Records cited this Bay of Fundy location, in Nova Scotia's Minas Basin at Burntcoat Head Park, as having the highest tides in the world!

In 2015, Tourism Nova Scotia decided this would be a great location for a one-of-a-kind culinary experience and approached The Flying Apron Inn & Cookery to undertake and plan this feat. The Flying Apron alongside their community partners piloted the experience with 39 visitors at three different times in the summer. By July 2016, Tourism Nova Scotia noted that the four scheduled public dinners were sold out. By September 2016, the Flying Apron reported a second-year attendance increase of 333 percent welcoming 169 people to the four public and two private sea-bottom dinners.

Here, timing is everything — from staging the event, to welcoming guests, preparing each course, delivering a delicious culinary feast — then clearing away the guests, tables, chairs, BBQs and more, all before 160 billion tonnes of salt water gently yet inescapably flows back across the smooth, ocher-red sandy flats, here at the upper reaches of Canada's iconic Bay of Fundy.

A Bucket-List Iconic Experience

The Bay of Fundy, one of the top seven wonders of North America. It is here the tide quietly rolls out, 20 lucky people begin their 'descent' to the ocean's floor. They arrive at Burntcoat Head, take a deep breath of fresh, salty air, put on rubber boots and grab their camera as the adventure begins with a greeting by Jennifer Nicholls, The Flying Apron host. She introduces foraging expert Jonathan Newell from Newell's Jewels Edibles for a tour of the natural edibles that grow within the park.

Foraging up an appetite leads guests to their first course "Shore Boil" served atop the red rock cliffs. A bowl brimming with the freshest Nova Scotia seafood cooked in wine from Avondale Sky. Paired with local craft beer from Meander River Farm & Brewery and local wine from Avondale Sky Winery.

The guests are then whisked away by Burntcoat Head Park's passionate park guides to discover the salty magic and mystery of the newly exposed shoreline with a walk down the stone stairs to the ocean floor to see fossils, tidal pool creatures and to see first-hand the impact of the powerful tides on the coastline. During the tour the tide will ebb to its lowest point and begin rising again.

Guests are guided to the ocean floor dining room at the end of their two hour tour. Chef Velden and his team have been busy preparing some of the finest and freshest Nova Scotia foods for guests to enjoy overlooking the incoming tide and the setting sun.

5 star TripAdvisor review

We enjoyed our "Dinner on the Ocean Floor" in August 2016. It was a truly remarkable experience. The Flying Apron Cookery chef prepared the meal, and it was truly superb. We enjoyed the foraging discussion, the shore boil, the tour of the ocean floor, and the marvelous dinner. The beers and wines were perfect too. The price initially sounds high, but when you consider what all includes is well worth every penny. Plus how often can you say you ate dinner in a place where a couple of hours later would be under many feet of water. A once-in-a-lifetime experience.

August 2016
Cathleen B

"Our guests came from across Canada, the USA, travel writers from England and we had our first marriage proposal at one of the dinners."

Melissa Velden, Co-owner
The Flying Apron Inn & Cookery





First the “Celebration Plate”, a selection of fine Nova Scotia cheeses and charcuterie hand-made by Chef Velden, served with Flying Apron pickles and artisanal crackers. Next the “High Tide, Low Tide” main course featuring a beautiful cut of local, pasture-raised beef, butter poached Nova Scotia lobster tail and succotash with organic vegetables, topped with foraged greens.

Experience partners Avondale Sky Winery and the Meander River Farm & Brewery provide the wine and ale pairings for each course. In fact, Meander River’s Surf and Turf Scotch Ale was created just for this experience (infusing seaweed from the ocean floor) and went on to win the Experimental category at the 2015 Atlantic Canada Beer Awards.

No meal would be complete without stories from the chef and host Jenn, their tales enlivened with the Last Course “Sun & Moon Meet” a dessert made of fresh local berries, lavender phyllo, Grand Marnier and mascarpone cream.

The Experience comes to a close as guests sip on a cup of Just Us! fair-trade organic coffee and enjoy the company of their fellow travelers fireside watching the tide creep into the Tidal Flats. You feel like you are in another world — and indeed, it’s a world that will be underwater in a few short hours — so lingering is not an option!



Check out the YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mnp17jqkFhc>

Where Did the Inspiration Come From?

The Burntcoat Head Park Upgrading and Enhancement Project (2014) identified potential ways to enhance the interpretation potential of the site with graphic panels, artifacts, animation and time-lapse films, dioramas, real-time tidal monitoring, books/brochures and trained interpreters. Most of these methods represent one-way communications to visitors, rather than an experience that engages visitors.

Around the same time, Tourism Nova Scotia was intensifying its focus on collaborating with local industry to increase the number of world-class experiences, aligned with Destination Canada’s signature experience criteria and leveraged with EQ market-segmentation information.

“When Nick suggested the idea of dining on the ocean floor, my first thoughts were: How will you create a fire under water! We don’t scuba dive! Nick just smiled and said ‘I was thinking when the tide was out.’ We just laughed and then ran with it!”

Melissa Velden, Co-owner
The Flying Apron Inn & Cookery

The idea for Dining on the Ocean Floor emerged when, Tourism Nova Scotia Development Officers returned from attending “The Edge” experiential travel training course at the Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism. Tourism Nova Scotia focuses on experiences that offer a global competitive advantage and when they visited the site of the world's highest tides and wanted to create an experience that could only happen there.

Business owners are now working directly with tourism operators around the province to create unique, compelling experiences for visitors. Now they can dine on the floor of the Bay of Fundy at low tide, thanks to the Flying Apron.”

**Nova Scotia Throne Speech.
October 13, 2016**

The province was keen to see the master plan advanced and the municipality was committed to infrastructure upgrades but they needed experiences that would capitalize on the amazing destination. Tourism Nova Scotia conducted online research on culinary tourism experiences and dining on the ocean floor scored very high. The next step was to find the right partner.

The Flying Apron Inn & Cookery was approached; the highly respected, award-winning company became the enthused catalyst for experience development, securing other complimentary local partners and engaging in several meetings with Burntcoat Head Park staff.



Ingredients for Success



Chris and Melissa Velden

“Amazing, local partners are the key to our success,” says The Flying Apron co-owner Melissa Velden. “When we decided to take the lead on this, we instantly thought about Avondale Sky Winery and the Meander Farm and Brewery as community-based partners as we already had a partnership and friendship, so we invited them on board.

“We also knew that we had to do more than offer dinner, that if this was going to be successful we had to give guests a more in depth experience. So we asked ourselves: Who in the community could help create a unique piece that adds to this experience?”

Immediately Jonny from Newell’s Jewels Edibles came to mind as we have worked with him before. And while none of us had seen the site where this would take place, everyone said yes, let’s give it a try. We wanted to work with the park and showcase the unique story and features of Burntcoat Head and we also needed the park’s permission to undertake this event. We met with Caroline Greenland (The Park’s Executive Director) as well as their interpreter Nancy Pick and April Maclean from the Municipality of East Hants. They gave us the run down of the tides and with both the board’s and Municipality’s permission we had a green light to run with the experience.”

"The benefits for Burntcoat Head Park, The Flying Apron and partners is a tourism example of how strong businesses who collaborate together can offer something truly amazing."

Nick Fry, Experience Development
Tourism Nova Scotia

When Burntcoat Head Park interpreter Nancy Pick received the call she thought: "The people at The Flying Apron are so adventurous, they're into everything with the community and love to try things. I liked that the program didn't leave a big footprint on the environment, compared to thousands of tourists, so I said yes because I love where we live and we need tourism in the area, but we need to grow it responsibly."

The Role of Tourism Nova Scotia

Tourism Nova Scotia planted the original seed for the idea with The Flying Apron's Melissa and Chris Velden. Next, Tourism Nova Scotia, participated in local area meetings and conducted research that confirmed that visitors were seeking unique, culinary events, building on Nova Scotia's centuries-old connection to the sea. It was looking to support tourism businesses that would strive to be world-class, have the potential to become a Canadian Signature Experience, truly offer guests a differentiated, memorable experience and drive benefits to the community. Tourism Nova Scotia supported the marketing efforts and assisted with promoting packages that allowed Flying Apron to book rooms at its inn, as well as the *Dining on the Ocean Floor* experience. Tourism Nova Scotia developed the World Class Experience Excellerator Program modeled after the success of Dining on the Ocean Floor. https://tourismns.ca/sites/default/files/excellerator_program_2016-17.pdf

"The province has gotten better at marketing the unique experiences Nova Scotia has to offer. We're doing different types of marketing, combining traditional marketing with social media and PR tactics. We had our whole campaign going this past season called If You Only Knew."

Michele Saran, CEO,
Tourism Nova Scotia
novascotiaherald.com (9 Sept
16)

Unexpected Challenges

The idea was planted in November 2014. By June 2015, the first ocean-floor experience was offered. It brought excitement but it also brought three key challenges: underestimating the logistics, planning and development time to set up the first experience; accessing labour to offer the event while keeping the restaurant itself open; understanding the true costs.

Results and Evolutions

- 333-percent increase in guests: 39 in year one to 169 in year two, and 80 + guests already on a waiting list for 2017.
- Meander River Farm & Brewery won the silver medal at the 2015 Atlantic Canadian Beer Awards for its strong scotch ale (custom crafted for the experience) flavoured with seaweed and peated malt.
- Increased the minimum group from 6 to 10, to 18-20 for public events, accommodated groups of 40 and 53 people for the two private events.
- Increased the price point from \$249 to \$295 per person to help achieve a profit by end of season based on a better understanding of costs/labour/time to pay everyone fairly for their supplies and efforts to successfully deliver the program and make it sustainable.



- Considering taking advance payments in 2017.
- Burntcoat Head Park raised its regular tour price from \$10 to \$15 per person; counter intuitively, there has been a positive effect on visitation.
- Strengthened the partnership between The Flying Apron and East Hants Municipality and the Burntcoat Head Park Association for the interpretive component and additional person power needed to set up the dinners at the park.

- The municipality provided a place onsite to store The Flying Apron's dining tables, chairs and other equipment, rather than having to transport them 40 minutes each time and each way from the restaurant.
- Benefited from the partnership with Tourism Nova Scotia who brought in media which led to greater media coverage
- Added 'tasting certificates' to the Meander River Farm & Brewery and Avondale Sky Brewery in the visitor-welcome packages to encourage additional exposure of these experience partners and encourage multi-night stays.
- Sent a hand-written personal invitation with information to everyone who made a reservation, followed with a thank-you note to each guest with a group photo and a request for feedback.
- Included take-away menus and locally made seashell shaped organic fair trade chocolates (in custom-designed take-away packages) from Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-op.
- This year, was able to keep the restaurant open during the off-site public experiences to thus help ensure a better overall financial picture.
- Extend the cancellation policy from seven days prior to the event, to one month prior. Should there be cancellations, this allows potential guests more time/flexibility to book and secure the newly available openings.
- This year, better marketing, images, videos and the coverage from Tourism Nova Scotia helped drive more clients to the experience. Which leads to happier clients wielding more personal cameras and cellphones, ever-expanding positive social media coverage.

"A very important and key component to these events selling out was our profile on novascotia.com. This has been an invaluable tool for Dining on The Ocean Floor but also our Inn and business."

Melissa Velden

Tips from the Trenches

- Focus on the potential; see the opportunity in your own backyard with fresh eyes.
- Choose your experience partners wisely, be as inclusive as possible with people from your community.
- Examine your differentiators and underused assets and dream big with experience ideas
- Work with your provincial and municipal government colleagues who can contribute to development in ways that an individual company simply can't do on its own.
- As the experience's popularity grows and demand increases for more of your public or private events, revisit your costs and pricing annually or even quarterly.

