

OZAUKEE COUNTY TOURISM

# Through my eyes: Tourism rep explores Oz

By Mikayla Schowalter

Last month I had the privilege of visiting two extraordinary establishments in Ozaukee County.

The initial destination on my journey was The Chocolate Chisel in Port Washington. During my time there, I had the pleasure of delving into the details of their business operations and gaining insight into the inspirations behind their various practices within the shop. Later in the month I made my way to Cedarburg's Art of Joy. These two partners provide distinct and exceptional experiences, making them both essential destinations for anyone exploring the area.

### The Chocolate Chisel

There's something truly heartwarming about a small family-owned business that not only survives but thrives for over a decade.

The Chocolate Chisel has been enchanting taste buds and creating smiles for 15 years. However, chocolate is not the only thing that they do. In addition to their exceptional handmade chocolates, owner John Reichert hand-makes all their ice cream and sorbet as well.

Nestled in the heart of Port Washington, this modest chocolate shop has become a destination boutique for locals and visitors alike. It's a place where sweet dreams come true, where artisans craft delectable treats and where customers have become part of the extended family. Over this time, they have proudly served an astounding one million customers, leaving an incredible mark on the community.

Significant proof of their dedication and popularity is the impressive amount of chocolate they sell annually. Owner and artistic director Elizabeth MacCrimmon stated, "In 2022, we managed to sell 10,000 pounds of chocolate." That's not just chocolate; that's 10,000 pounds of happiness carefully crafted, wrapped and handed over with a smile. It's something that speaks volumes about the trust they've earned and the quality that they consistently deliver.

One of the key secrets to their success is their commitment to buying their ingredients locally. When using locally sourced ingredients, they not only support nearby



Photo courtesy of the Chocolate Chisel

Professional chocolatier Annaleigh Wanasek holds a plate of peanut butter cups with a case of truffles behind her.

farmers and suppliers, but also ensure the freshness and authenticity of their creations. What truly sets them apart is the personal touch they bring to every interaction. MacCrimmon helps create the branding and packaging, and oversees the interior.

Step inside, and you're not just entering a shop, you're entering a warm, inviting space reminiscent of a chocolate box, from the gold foil ceiling to the milk chocolate and dark chocolate striped walls. The moment you cross the doorway, a cluster of aromas surround you. The air is rich with the scent of carefully crafted truffles, delicately dipped Oreos, chocolate barks and exquisite candied orange peels.

With an inventory of more than 70 distinct chocolate confections, they ensure consistently changing offerings throughout the year, complemented by the thoughtful option of gift boxes — a perfect gesture for your cherished loved ones.

Their journey from a small shop to a cherished community hub is an accomplishment of the power of passion and persistence. As this family-owned chocolate business celebrates its 15th anniversary, they do more than just mark another year; they celebrate a journey that has enriched lives and brought joy to countless souls. Their legacy is not just about chocolate; it's about the connections made, the memories created and the smiles they've inspired. In a single bite, they embrace and deliver the essence of community, love and the simple pleasures that make life truly delectable.

### Art of Joy

The story of how Cedarburg's Art of Joy adapted to challenges, turned them into opportunities and created a unique and inviting space is inspiring.

Art of Joy experienced not one, but two distinct opening dates! Originally envisioning a summer launch in 2022, owners Stephanie Hayes and Mary Creten were met with unforeseen renovation delays in their 150-year-old building. Faced with the prospect of leaving the wonderful gathering space on popular Washington Avenue unoccupied throughout the summer season, they rapidly

shifted their attention from indoors to outdoors and embarked on an extensive landscaping effort, completely transforming the outdoor area.

This included the addition of a charming firepit zone overlooking Cedar Creek. In an inspired move, they repurposed a vintage 1970s camper from Indiana into an inviting outdoor bar. Meticulously planning and assembling all the bar components themselves, Stephanie and Mary affectionately named the camper "The Joyride." It opened to the public on June 16th, 2022.

Throughout the summer and well into autumn, guests enjoyed outside service within their delightful garden setting. The completion of the interior renovations coincided with the change of seasons, and Art of Joy seamlessly transitioned into their indoor space with a splendid grand opening celebration on Nov. 16, 2022.

The AOJ staff dedicate themselves to providing a friendly, welcoming environment, embracing inclusivity as a core value. Offering guests the option of delightful non-alcoholic cocktails was also a must — a shared passion for Stephanie and Mary.

"Our goal is to ensure that anyone who walks through our doors can savor delicious offerings and feel comfortable," Stephanie said. "We believe that every cocktail we craft should have an entirely alcohol-free and equally delightful counterpart."

This commitment led them to an extensive process of recipe experimentation for both their full-strength and alcohol-free menus. If a suitable alcohol-free counterpart couldn't be developed for a full-strength cocktail, they opted to omit it from the menu entirely.

AOJ's talented bartenders curated a collection of OG Cocktails during their initial launch, a selection they intend to keep on their menu forever. Additionally, a seasonal cocktail menu provides patrons with fresh tastes to experience.

Art of Joy's fall menu is now available, as well as weekly specials under the "Drink of the Week" banner, empowering their bartenders to unleash their creativity and concoct unique creations.

What some don't know is that beyond their amazing collection of cocktails lies a retail haven, at the heart of which lies a careful selection of 123 chosen books. Mary has read well over 400 books in her journey to find joy in her life, and from those she selected 100 of the most powerful to offer in their store. They are separated into distinct sections, each dedicated to a specific theme, such as trauma and healing, mindful connection, coping with challenges and culinary and mixology literature.

For Stephanie and Mary, every facet of their establishment embodies joy, from the journey they embarked upon, to their commitment to providing their customers with only the finest of everything. They are both devoted to practicing daily what they refer to as the "Art of Joy." They define it as "The practice of living with intention, gratitude and connection to create a life filled with joy. Doing the work and developing the skills to create and receive joy."

Their goal every day is to provide a space that frees people from their everyday existence; that sends them back out into the world with a fresh perspective and perhaps a few nuggets of joy they can apply to their lives and share with others.

For information on these and other Ozau-



Photos courtesy of Art of Joy

Top, pictured on the stairs leading to Art of Joy's second level are owners Stephanie Hayes, left, and Mary Creten. Above, the business not only has a full menu of alcohol and non-alcohol cocktails, but there is a variety of items for sale on the retail side of the operation.



Photo courtesy of the Chocolate Chisel

A couple celebrates their anniversary with ice cream cones at The Chocolate Chisel in Port Washington. It is an annual tradition for them. Night manager Austin Preisler looks on.

kee County establishments, visit [www.ozaukeetourism.com](http://www.ozaukeetourism.com) and follow the Ozaukee County Tourism Facebook page. On behalf of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, thank you for helping to make Ozaukee County a wonderful place for all to live, work and visit.

*Mikayla Schowalter is administrator of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council. Growing up in the picturesque town of Port Washington, she recently embarked on a captivating journey to rediscover her home county through a fresh and innovative perspective. Her position in tourism helps her promote her community but also confirms her passion for showcasing hidden gems. Join Mikayla as she explores the unique offerings in our beautiful county.*