



TEAM BIOS

Rakesh Taneja

Proprietor

Rakesh is a retired Indian Army Colonel and hotelier who has 28 years of experience working with charities and companies of every size. His specialty is turning around struggling businesses and making them successful, something he has done often, including with nine hospitality properties across five different states. Rakesh's passion is reducing the divide between rich and poor by supporting small businesses and encouraging the employee ownership business model. In 2018, Rakesh visited the Elk area, fell in love with the Elk Cove Inn & Spa, and purchased it shortly thereafter. He managed the Inn on his own until Covid struck and the business shut down for three months, during which time Melissa and Chef Victor came on board as working partners.

Victor Passalacqua

Proprietor and Executive Chef

Chef Victor was Born in Peru to a Spanish mother and Sicilian father. He made his culinary debut in Montréal at the Institut de Tourisme et d'Hôtellerie du Québec and pursued his studies in hospitality further in Lausanne, Switzerland. Dedicated and disciplined, he has worked alongside renowned chefs like Paul Bocuse, Edward Merard, and Ferran Adrià. He has worked in multiple countries and owned many restaurants – both big and small – including Miami's beloved Barrel Wine Cantine. Before moving to California, he spent 25 years in Miami where he was appointed to the advisory board of the Miami Culinary Institute. There, he started a food and wine pairing program that became mandatory for graduation from the Institute. In 2012, he and his wife Melissa managed and owned a small high-end French wine distribution company in Miami. They become very involved in various wineries in France and Spain, developing new lines of wines to cater to American tastes, expertise they bring to Sibo, the Elk Cove Inn's in-house restaurant. Chef Victor says he came to Elk to retire, even though he spends mornings making breakfast for the guests and most afternoons prepping the dinner service. He is taking farm-to-table to a new level by planting and harvesting his own vegetables, fruits, and herbs on the inn property, as well as foraging for wild seafood and mushrooms.

Melissa Boon

Proprietor

Melissa, who was born in France to a Dutch father and French mother, was raised in the Dominican Republic in and around hotels and restaurants. With her inimitable wandering spirit, she explored new horizons and found an opportunity for herself and Victor across the country in a small town called Elk. Her love of nature, the ocean, foraging – and of course food and wine – pairs perfectly with her many roles on the property. From maintenance to computer work and of course innkeeping and serving, Melissa wears multiple hats and loves the challenge and most certainly the view. She is also a certified sommelier and is always happy to suggest the perfect wine to accompany Victor's stellar cuisine.