

The Sag Harbor Express.

October 2, 2014

ALMOND RESTAURANT

Dining With Artists and Writers

BY EMILY J WEITZ

The salon-inspired artist and writers events at Almond in Bridgehampton happened easily, and that's a key part of why they've been successful. Almond Zigmund, co-owner of the restaurant and an artist herself, believed that there was a need, among the rich community of artists and writers on the East End, to connect. And Almond's Artists & Writers Night series has become a must on the calendars of many of the South Forks' culturally inclined in winter.

"I had many conversations with friends about this desire to connect with the community," said Ms. Zigmund, whose husband Jason Weiner is the chef and co-owner of Almond. "And however planned it was at first, it's come to grow into a meeting place."

It was important to offer something like this to the community because Ms. Zigmund is an artist herself, and she knows how solitary the act of creating can be.

"That's one of the reasons we love it out here," she said, "and why historically it's been such a draw. This is a great place to experience quiet, the light, the intensity of space. But the flip side of that is that we are social beings, especially as artists and writers, we feel the need to share the ideas we've been thinking about."

Once a month in the off-season, Almond restaurant becomes a literary den, a venue that encourages these ideas to feed off of each other, while feasting on Chef Weiner's culinary creations. Ms. Zigmund chooses people who want to share something creative, from storytellers to visual artists.

"I encourage people to do something crazy or wacky," said Ms. Zigmund. "And we've run the range from authors to performance artists to photographers."

Last year, Sag Harbor resident and artist Jill Musnicki did an evening with images of her work running on a projector throughout the evening.

"A lot of her work is about setting the stage," said Ms. Zigmund, "so she brought in hundreds of candles and we had venison, which is something that feeds into her work."



Almond Zigmund will be hosting dinners with local artists and writers throughout the season. *heller*

The dinners are usually inspired by the work of the presenting artist or writer. As another example, last year an artist who works primarily with reishi mushrooms came in and did a demo of his work. Chef Weiner created a mushroom-themed dinner.

"It's an experiential evening," said Ms. Zigmund. "But there's not a huge amount of preparation. Everyone is busy, and this is dinner. We want it to be fun and easy. I try to approach it from the viewpoint of: Let's have a good time and come away thinking about things."

The dinners are served family style, which is an important part of the community feel of the evening. Conversations come easily when you're asking someone to pass the salt.

"It promotes a shared experience to eat family style," said Ms. Zigmund. "The shared aspect is important: all being under one roof, having our attention drawn to the same thing."

In some ways, Ms. Zigmund sees it as a way to give back to the community as things slow down. As year-round residents

who make most of their revenue in the summer, the couple wants to offer something to other locals. That's why they try to keep the dinners affordable. For \$45, you get three courses as well as a drink, and tax and tip is all included.

"We are in the same position as a lot of people out here," said Ms. Zigmund. "We can't do the high luxury. We wanted to open the doors and invite the whole community."

The rhythm out here indisputably picks up in the summer, and this is an opportunity to reset the rhythm and reconnect to the people who are here year-round.

"As each year passes and more local businesses go away," said Ms. Zigmund, "it's nice for us to get together and say, 'Yes—we have a community and we're connected.' It's a thirst for engagement, and coming together. That's the spirit."

The first Artists & Writers Night at Almond, on Ocean Road and Main Street in Bridgehampton, is set for October 14, though the presenter is as yet unconfirmed. For more information, visit almondnyc.com.