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### ***Epicurious: Change in the current for Edgewater***

*Chris Shiner steps into role as executive chef at popular lakeside retreat*

By Holly Fraughton

It's a beautiful place to call "the office" — long tables set with polished silver and stemware perched atop crisp table linens, all set against the serene backdrop of Green Lake. The dining room is essentially all windows, so, on a beautiful summer day like this, sunlight streams in, and there's a faint breeze off the water coming in through the open doors that lead out to the patio, which is surrounded by lush gardens.

This is my first visit to the Edgewater Lodge, a popular lakeside retreat, tucked away and off the beaten path. I've come to check out the venue, and chat with the man who has recently taken over their culinary creations, Chris Shiner.

Originally from Brookside, Nova Scotia, Shiner moved to Whistler in 1998. He isn't a stranger to living in tourist towns, either. Before Whistler, he lived and worked in Victoria, just outside of Banff, and Blue River.

Shiner grew up in a household that appreciated different types of cuisine, so food was always of interest to him.

"My mom grew up in an old-school meat and potatoes family, so she hated it... so they'd cook anything out of magazines, something new all the time," Shiner said.

But it wasn't until he went to work at a summer camp at the age of 16 that he had his first taste of cooking for others. There, he whipped up breakfast for 200 hungry kids, plus camp favourites, like grilled cheese sandwiches, en masse.

A lot's changed since his days as a cook at a camp.

Shiner went on to train with a Swiss master chef and worked for a local catering company until 2002, when he decided to strike out on his own and start a personal chef business, Chris' Cuisine, which saw him going into some of the larger chalets in town to prepare gourmet meals. Through that job, Shiner ended up cooking for the women's national ski team for the last few years.

"I have an artistic background and a bit of a science background, so it's good," Shiner said. "It lets you work with your hands and be artistic, but at the same time, there's a lot of logic involved."

He also enjoys teaching, and thrives in the busy dynamic of the kitchen.

Now, he's the man responsible for the cuisine at one of Whistler's hidden fine dining gems.

"I get to be in the kitchen doing most of the cooking myself... and my wife was tired of me driving Snowcat," he added with a laugh.

That's right — Shiner is an avid outdoorsman, too. He comes from a logging

background, so he spends the summers running trail crews, building the men's and women's downhill.

"I work a lot in heavy, hot kitchens all the time, and I take a break when I finally leave a kitchen, usually, and go tree planting or falling or something for a few months and go outside and live in a tent," he said.

So far, business has been good since Shiner took over in May — they're actually booked solid for the entire month of August.

Though he was a bit nervous about carrying over some of the former chef's dishes, as the two have very distinct styles, Shiner was confident in the dishes he'd developed for the menu at the Edgewater.

"Everything I do... in here is always from scratch," he said, adding that he believes the key to good cooking is using fresh, quality ingredients. "I don't pre-make anything."

It hasn't even been a stretch to get used to all of the weddings — when Shiner was in the catering business, they would do up to 16 different dinners a night.

In the fall, the weddings should slow down a bit, and they'll be able to offer more a la carte service.

But there are some downfalls to the job — like many chefs, Shiner cooks so much at work that he doesn't spend much time in the kitchen at home. Cheese and crackers seem to be a dietary staple.

"I've lived on those for a long time," he said with a sheepish grin. "That's one thing with cooking — I've eaten my body weight in cheese and crackers."