

ACING *the details*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS THWAITES

When it comes to high-end leisure, the details make a world of difference. That's why the Port Carling Golf and Country Club, the only exclusively private club in the area, always sweats the small stuff.

At your service

"We pride ourselves on our service, whether it's on the course or in the clubhouse," says general manager Wayne Middaugh. "A lot of time is spent training staff to anticipate all possible member needs. Expectations here are very high."

Employees not only know the members by name, but they are also aware of each member's

preferences. If a member likes to drive a certain cart, use a particular brand of ball, or drink a specific beverage when they're golfing, it will be waiting for them when they arrive. "Our philosophy is to exceed everyone's expectations every day," Wayne explains.

The carts that await golfers are washed and polished with gleaming tires and comfortable bucket seats. They are then outfitted with everything a member could want: a cooler with ice and drinks, a rolled towel in the cup holder, a notice with the day's cart rules, and a sign showing the pin placement for every flag on every green. There's even a container of divot sand that's green to match the grass. After

playing, members can leave their clubs and bags with staff to be carefully cleaned and safely stored until the next round.

Because the personal touch is so important at the Port Carling Golf and Country Club, members never get a machine when they call to book a tee time. Instead, there is always a PGA of Canada Golf Professional who can set up a tee time or answer almost any question, from the poly-cotton blend in your new golf shirt to the bounce on your wedge.

Gorgeous grounds

The course at the Port Carling Golf and Country Club is excellent. "That's the point of

the club, after all," says Wayne with a laugh. But here again attention to detail elevates players' experience.

Staff hand-rake all the sand traps daily. "The highly-trained turf staff also hand-paint the edge of the holes, which are also changed every day on a pre-set six-position grid," says Wayne.

The 80 gardens across the property are painstakingly kept. They are designed to achieve

the ideal balance between continuity and variety, and many indigenous plants have been incorporated. Weeds have no chance to get the upper hand under the watchful eye of the gardening team, and close attention is paid to edging each and every garden.

"Every time I drive in and view the gardens I'm impressed," says Wayne.

Members are too: not only are there constant appreciative comments, but members often ask staff for advice about caring for their own gardens and dealing with pests.

Fine dining

Great food and drink play another important part in the overall enjoyment of a day at the club. The attention to detail so evident in the other areas of the Port Carling Golf and Country Club is equally at play in their luxurious dining room.

It begins before the dining room opens with staff completing a pages-long checklist in preparation for meals, from white-glove setting of silverware and glassware to fluffed pillows on the sofas. "They double- and triple-check everything. The food and beverage team of John and Vaso Tassoulis are going for perfection in everything they do," says Wayne.

Servers meet with all the chefs before each meal to learn about every single ingredient in the dishes being offered so they can answer any questions members might have and are able to provide clear and correct information to anyone with allergies. Thanks to careful records in every point-of-sale system, chefs and servers are all aware of members' allergies, as well as how they like their meat cooked or their martini prepared, so there are never any unpleasant surprises.

Another part of the pre-service preparation is that servers are instructed about which wines are recommended for pairing with each dish. Members can also choose from the club's list of more than 120 wines, which are almost all based on member preferences. They can even browse in the humidity- and temperature-

controlled wine room off the dining room before selecting their wine.

Food served at the club is made with only the highest-quality ingredients, many of them local. The chefs even keep their own kitchen garden of herbs and edible flowers that are used on every plate.

During service, the executive chef comes around to each table to receive feedback on the day's offerings. In fact, that's how many new menu items are developed: based on members' comments and requests.

Finally, when the satisfied members are all gone, staff turn around and prepare to offer the same extremely high level of service the next day. They know their job is excellence, one member interaction at a time. **DS**

BY PAULA BOON



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Little things count at a private club



Executive Chef John Tassoulis



Gardener Clare Kuehner



General Manager Wayne Middaugh, and service experts Jay Dix and Andrew Milner