



Connie and David Nice bought the Husum Riverside Bed and Breakfast in 2015. They have been making it their own since day one.

## Rural Retreat a Nice Place to Stay

*Connie and David Nice tap their children's talents to start a bed and breakfast*

**By Jeanie Senior**

When Connie and David Nice and their two grown children bought the Husum Riverside Bed and Breakfast in 2015, their decision echoed the family's philosophy. The Nice home, Connie explains, has always welcomed visitors.

"We really do believe in the spirit of hospitality," she says. "It's the way we were both raised."

Connie says it was not too difficult a decision to buy the property.

"Our family came to the operation with the skill set we needed," she says.

The Nice's son, Aaron, is an internet marketer. He updated the online presence of the business and linked it to online reservation databases. Their daughter, Rachel Short, has a business

management degree and is the bookkeeper and accountant. Their other son, David—a Klickitat County paramedic—does maintenance, gardening and construction on the property. He is completing work on a sixth guest room.

Connie welcomes guests and prepares the daily breakfast.

"It's pretty much a German breakfast buffet, my favorite breakfast in the whole world," she says.

Connie makes everything from scratch: yeast breads, scones, yogurt, granola and more. Guests eat at tables in the open plan kitchen in cooler months. During the summer, tables are set up outside on the vine-shaded brick courtyard.

The bed and breakfast's extensive gardens were overgrown when the Nices



**The Nices say they enjoy having guests from around the world.**

bought the property. The five-room building, which had been vacant for about a year and a half, needed refreshing. They also restored order to the lush gardens.

“We updated the rooms and moved furniture around, creating what we wanted to have the business say to guests,” says Connie. “I wanted to style it after European pensions.”

The rooms, all with en suite bathrooms, are themed after European destinations: Greece, France, Tuscany, Hungary, the Austrian Alps and, when the sixth room is done, Scandinavia.

“More a boutique inn than a B&B in someone’s home,” she says.

The decor is influenced by Connie’s numerous trips to Europe with her mother, who taught German at both the high school and college level. She was a high school sophomore the first time she visited. Her most recent visit was Christmas two years ago. That trip

included Prague, Berlin and Vienna.

“We also went to Husum, where the founding families of this community came from—even though it’s on the North Sea and no one goes there in the wintertime,” Connie says. “At least we made a connection, and we had somebody from Husum, Germany, come not too long ago and stay here.”

Connie and David, who lived in White Salmon before moving to the manager’s house on the property, have grown to appreciate Husum’s history.

In the early days, the area around the White Salmon River Falls was occupied by one of the largest Native American villages in the Gorge. White settlers arrived late in the 19th century. In the early 1900s, Connie says, the Falls Hotel was built just south of their bed and breakfast. A

1910 ad for the hotel in the Hood River Glacier newspaper called it “the most beautiful spot on the White Salmon River.”

Connie says the building’s location in the center of Husum—just across the road from the White Salmon River and close to river rafting businesses—means a lot of rafters, but their primary market is vacationing couples.

Husum Riverside Bed and Breakfast is open year-round, but is busiest in the summer. Connie says they have to turn visitors away by July.

They get a fair number of lodgers from Europe, and a lot of out-of-state visitors.

“Last year it seemed like everybody came from Florida,” Connie says. “This year we’re getting a lot of bookings from San Diego.”

The Nices try to make it clear the bed and breakfast is in a rural area, but rural can mean different things to

different people. Connie recalls a guest from Florida who climbed out of her car, looked around and said, “Oh my gosh, it felt like I was driving to Canada.”

“We really do love our guests,” Connie says. “It’s fun to meet people from all walks of life, from all over the world. It really gives us a wider understanding of humanity.”

The first year the Nices ran the business, Aaron served dinner on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, offering classic European dishes made with a Pacific Northwest twist.

“He put out great food, but the following year we had a 300 percent increase in business, so we had to refocus on lodging,” Connie says.

The Nices are in their second year of a partnership with Hood River chef Kathy Watson, offering a monthly supper club from spring through September. Each month features a four-course meal that focuses on a different cuisine. Ingredients are locally sourced, and the wine served is from a local Washington winery.

“It’s fun,” Connie says. “It helps us get that restaurant feel and our family comes to help. The dinners typically sell out, and some guests have come to every single one.”

Connie’s breakfasts, meanwhile, are so popular she is publishing a cookbook this summer, titled “Yes, You Can Have the Recipe.” It includes guest favorites, including her Not Really a Scone Scones.

When she retired after 15 years as director of the History Museum of Hood River County, Connie already had published a book of historic Hood River photographs, part of the Images of America series. She’s also working on a novel.

“When I retired, I retired to write,” she says with an almost imperceptible sigh. “Then our family bought a B&B.” ■

*TripAdvisor just awarded Husum Riverside Bed and Breakfast a certificate of excellence for the second year running.*