

Award winning self catering destination building its foodie reputation

Self-catering destination Morton of Pitmilly is to hold pop up events to focus on its foodie and green credentials.

The award winning accommodation now has plans to promote sustainability across the board.

The venue won the 2023 VisitScotland Thistle Award for Best Self-Catering Accommodation Experience – the first accolade secured by Managing Director, Eilidh Smith since she assumed sole responsibility for heading up the business.

Situated near Kingsbarns there is a wide choice of accommodation in both The Courtyard, comprising ten four star cottages, and The Steading, with six boutique properties boasting sea views and a five star rating. The VisitScotland judges commended the resort not only on the quality of its accommodation offering and high level of customer service, but on its community involvement over the last few years, along with its push towards green initiatives and on developing events and onsite attractions to add value.

The development of new attractions, such as the exciting outdoor café area, with its converted shipping container housing a kitchen where locals chef can host pop up food events, is now at the very centre of Eilidh's spring/summer 2023 plans.

She is busy putting together a 2023 calendar of outdoor café events, looking to attract more chefs and local artisan producers to get involved. Last year saw well attended events offering everything from pizza to Mexican and Asian street food. She has also honed her skills as a barista and serves a coffee blend from Glasgow based Tin Donkey Coffee which is now a popular choice from the kitchen.

The food sideline works for wedding business too. Morton of Pitmilley does not host its own weddings, but acts as an accommodation provider to the many full time wedding venues in the area, such as Falside Mill and Kinkell Byre. Guests can take all of the accommodation and enjoy an onsite informal catered event over the course of the wedding weekend, making the experience even more enjoyable.

The farm is growing its own fruit and veg in a continued push towards sustainability, something Eilidh and her team started doing in lockdown.

Eilidh said: “We started planting all sorts of vegetables in earnest during the first lockdown, using raised beds and polytunnels.

“We really enjoyed it, and we’ve been happy to continue with it, seeing an opportunity to become more self-sufficient. For example, the garlic we have been growing now gets used in our mayo for the kitchen.

“We are donating eight raised bed planters to the local community. They can come in and plant what they want for free, using our stock of seeds too if they wish. All we ask is that they donate a few hours a week to help me with my market garden tasks.”

It’s this idea that has also led Eilidh to consider offering “gardening holidays” on the resort, if demand is proved to be there for such a concept.

She said: "I'd be happy to allocate free midweek accommodation in one of our holiday houses to an interested small group that would give us a few hours of gardening assistance on a daily basis over the course of the break.

"They could explore creative planting, and any other ideas they have. We'd provide a hearty locally sourced breakfast every morning, along with plenty of our delicious coffee throughout the break. We are looking to trial this and see what response we get. Who wouldn't enjoy coming to this beautiful setting and indulging a passion for a few days?"

Having had a small honesty stand for the community to use to buy veg during lockdown, Eilidh now wants to go further and have a more sophisticated refrigerated stand with fresh fruit and veg, eggs and preserves, which can be used by guests as well as people from the local area. She has an apple orchard, and would love to explore having Morton of Pitmilley branded cider.

"We've also got our Pitmilley Pantry," she said, "It offers a selection of locally sourced artisan products for guests to buy to enjoy during their stay. We're always looking to add to that and stock more products, so I'd appeal to local producers to get in touch if they think they have a suitable product for our guests to enjoy during their stay."

With all of Pitmilley's self catering cottages being dog friendly, other recent developments on the resort include the setting up of a dog activity park.

"We welcome guests and their dogs. I don't feel that pop up events should just cover the food side," said Eilidh. "What about an event dedicated to our four legged friends, or a cycling day, as we have so many amazing cycle paths and trails in the area? The sky's the limit now that we have the outdoor café – those attending can gather together, socialise, and enjoy something to eat and drink."

Eilidh continually reinvests in the business, with new furniture, flooring and bathroom fittings recently having gone into several of the cottages. Ready to kick off the new season, there's one other event she wants to ensure is on her to do list.

"We are so pleased to have won the Thistle Scotland Award which is the most prestigious of accolades," she said. "We've won awards before, but this is my first as sole Managing Director so it's special to me. We're planning to hold a community celebration later in the summer, bringing together my loyal and hard working staff, suppliers, past and present guests, and local people. Everyone will be welcome. Let's get together and just celebrate what we have created and achieved over the years."

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