

Centered Around Service

An Interview with Tom Guay, General Manager, The Sagamore

EDITORS' NOTE Tom Guay is a seasoned hospitality professional with over two decades of experience at The Sagamore Resort in Bolton Landing, New York. A native of Glens Falls, Guay trained at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America and began his career as a restaurant chef for Georges. He joined The Sagamore as a sous chef at the Trillium restaurant and quickly rose through the ranks. His career includes executive chef roles at renowned resorts such as Big Cedar Lodge in Missouri, The Woodstock Inn and Resort in Vermont, and Nemacolin Woodlands Resort in Pennsylvania. Upon returning to The Sagamore, he was Executive Chef for two years before serving as Director of Food and Beverage, then as Resident Manager for four years before becoming General Manager. Guay is known for his deep commitment to the resort's legacy and guest experience. He played a key role in revitalizing historic accommodations like "The First House," a 3,500-square-foot lakefront home originally built in 1870 for the resort's innkeepers. Under his leadership, the house was transformed into a luxurious private retreat, blending historical charm with modern amenities.



Tom Guay

How do you describe The Sagamore experience?

Just that, it is an experience. We rely on our history, the lake, and genuine hospitality. The inhabitants of Green Island, where The Sagamore is situated, date back over 150 years. Our forefathers saw that the island was a centerpiece and focal point for the lake. As islands go, it is the largest and has the highest point, boasting 360-degree views of the surrounding Adirondack Mountains and the crystal-clear waters of Lake George. For well over a century, guests have made their way to The Sagamore and viewed it as an escape. Still the same today, our guests look to get away. The Sagamore offers a true resort experience – one where guests can check in, spend a week with us, and never leave the island.

How valuable is it for The Sagamore to have such a broad accommodation offering?

We are so lucky to have a diverse offering with our accommodations. Stay in the historic

main hotel or in one of our homes on the island – we have something for everyone. Our lodges offer an Adirondack experience, including suites with fireplaces, balconies overlooking the lake, and kitchenets for families looking to cook for themselves. The Hermitage, formerly an 1800s carriage house, offers bi-level suites with lofted king-bed bedrooms. But the crown jewel is the main hotel: three floors of lake and garden views offering suites and connecting rooms.

How has The Sagamore approached its food and beverage offerings?

We take a dynamic approach to food and beverage at The Sagamore. Variety is key, both in cuisine and style of service. In addition, we are fortunate to have restaurants and offerings near the lake, on the lake, and overlooking the lake. In season, we have five restaurants and another three lounges/terraces where guests can enjoy their favorite cocktail and a light bite. Up at the golf course is our NY Style steakhouse at the Club Grill. On property is La Bella Vita, which offers Italian cuisine with service

PROPERTY BRIEF Perched on the serene shores of Lake George in the heart of the Adirondacks, The Sagamore Resort (opalcollection.com/sagamore) is a historic and luxurious destination that has welcomed guests for over a century. Originally established in 1883, the resort blends classic elegance with modern comfort, offering a unique escape that celebrates both its rich heritage and its commitment to world-class service. The property includes elegant accommodations including the historic main hotel, lakeside lodges, and private estates as well as award-winning dining at restaurants La Bella Vita and The Pavilion. The property also features a Donald Ross-designed golf course offering panoramic views of Lake George. The Sagamore is more than a resort – it's a destination that captures the spirit of the Adirondacks while delivering the sophistication of a world-class retreat. Whether hosting corporate retreats, weddings, or family vacations, The Sagamore continues to define luxury in upstate New York.



The Sagamore on Lake George in upstate New York



The Sagamore's lobby

throughout the day. Directly on the water is the open-air Pavilion, offering fresh lobster each day. Two more casual outlets include The LakeHouse, featuring poolside dining, and BRGR Kitchen & Bar, where gourmet burgers are front and center.

Keeping our guests on property is important to us. We also open our kitchens up to resort guests with tours and culinary demonstrations paired with wine throughout the year. Half of my career was spent in these same kitchens as an executive chef. As a result, it is both a passion and a focus for me that will never fade.

Will you highlight The Sagamore's focus on health and wellness?

At The Sagamore, wellness is experienced in two powerful ways. Outside, nature takes the lead. Wellness here is rooted in fresh mountain air, endless wooded trails, and the wide-open waters of Lake George. The landscape isn't just a setting; it's an open invitation to move, breathe, and reconnect. Whether you're hiking in the Adirondacks, paddle boarding at sunrise, or simply strolling the shoreline, every moment is designed to renew mind, body, and spirit.

Inside our historic main hotel, the Opal Spa offers another tranquil path to well-being. From deep-tissue massages to detoxifying body treatments – and now a brand-new salt room that promotes respiratory health and deep relaxation – the spa is a sanctuary where stillness and self-care take center stage.

Best yet is to just relax and unwind in an inner tube at the waterfront. Lake George is one of the cleanest lakes in the world and truly a focus of the guest experience.

How important has it been to build The Sagamore team, and to invest in training and service standards?

We are incredibly proud of our core team – many of whom have been with us for more than 20 years. The average tenure for our leadership team is well over 15 years, (our director of operations has been with us for more than 30 years). Staffing every season is something we approach with great intention. We begin locally, recruiting from area high schools, colleges, and trade programs. Our team is also strengthened by an international workforce, thanks to our participation in H2B and J1 visa programs. Once on board, every team member receives a comprehensive orientation and introduction to the resort. But the real training happens on the floor – and it never stops. Ongoing, hands-on learning within each department ensures that our culture of excellence is continually reinforced. To support this, a team of tenured staff came together to define our mission and guiding principles, centered around service – both to our guests and to one another. At the heart of it all: “Be great at what you do, and have fun doing it.”

At The Sagamore, our guests notice everything. And when they see a team that is focused and enjoying what they do, they quickly realize that “we got them.” More than just service standards, we lead with culture, where the mindset is always “consider it done.”

How do you focus your efforts leading The Sagamore, and what are the keys to being effective in the role?

When I meet with new hires, I like to ask them who they work for. Most say “you.” But I tell them the truth: I work for them. While they'll report to managers and supervisors, my role is to ensure they have everything they need to succeed in serving our guests – from

uniforms, equipment, and supplies to food and beverage products, building systems, and operational procedures.

Every day, I'm focused on removing obstacles so our team can focus on what matters most: the guest experience. I also believe in management by walking around. I tell our team they'll see me all over the resort – not out looking for mistakes, but looking to catch them doing things right.

Will you provide an overview of Lake Placid Lodge?

Lake Placid Lodge is a sibling Opal Collection property set in Lake Placid, about an hour and half drive north of The Sagamore. As the only hotel set directly on the tranquil waters of Lake Placid and just a five-minute drive from the downtown Olympic village, this great camp-inspired retreat offers a secluded escape unlike any other. Layered in one-of-a-kind features and furniture handmade by local craftsmen – think towering hand-carved wooden beds, rough-hewn chairs and tables, stacked-stone fireplaces, and other Adirondack adornments – 32 luxurious guest accommodations are scattered across the sprawling property, including 19 secluded stand-alone lakeside cabins. A slew of on-site activities are right at your fingertips, including lake kayaking or cruising aboard the resort's 36-foot mahogany Hacker-Craft, fishing, and hiking the property's various trails – and that's just the warm-weather activities.

How do you describe the Lake Placid Lodge experience?

The Lake Placid Lodge experience is intimate, immersive, and deeply rooted in Adirondack tradition. Originally built as a private retreat in the 1880s, the lodge has long embraced the spirit of quiet luxury in the heart of the wilderness and, today, stays true to its handcrafted heritage, with each beam, stone, and room designed to reflect the beauty of its setting. With a Relais & Châteaux distinction, the lodge is also as much a culinary and cultural experience as it is a place to stay – where personalized service, fine dining, and timeless design meet a true sense of place. Guests come for the peace, the craftsmanship, the firelit evenings – and leave with a connection that lingers long after.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in the hotel business?

You have to be all about service to others. The resort and hotel business is incredibly dynamic – no two days are ever the same. At The Sagamore, we operate almost like a village unto ourselves, with departments ranging from facilities maintenance and groundskeeping to accounting, culinary, housekeeping, recreation, and more. It's a field that rewards passion, adaptability, and teamwork. If you're willing to work hard, stay curious, and always keep the guest experience at the center of what you do, the opportunities for growth are endless. You'll learn something new every day – not just about the business, but about people and leadership, too. ●