

By ALICIA B. SMITH
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Simsbury Life

The Mill at Hop Brook readies for opening, first with a restaurant.

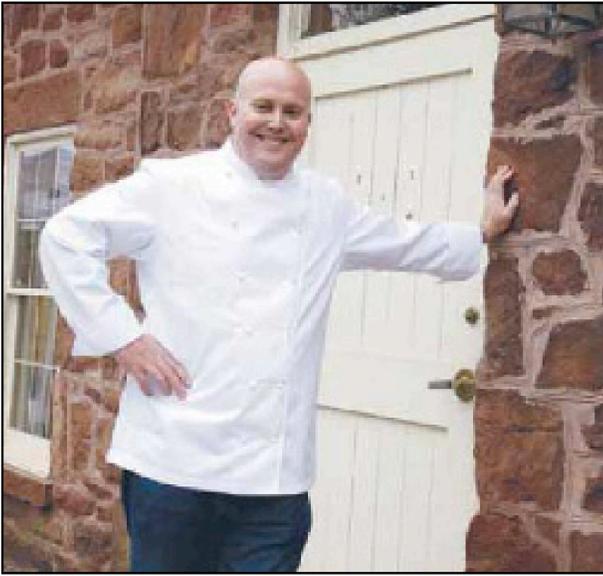
CHEF Tyler Anderson's new kitchen was nothing but lines drawn on an architectural rendering. But the chef was patient, knowing that in a few weeks, those drawings would become a fully functional kitchen in his latest culinary venture, Millwright's Restaurant.

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The gristmill building, along West Street, was a hub of activity and noise as workers busily installed a new elevator, built a new staircase, put in a new kitchen and otherwise prepared the three-story space for the restaurant, formerly the Hop

Brook Tavern. Outside, construction equipment was busy leveling dirt to prepare for a new parking lot. Renovations also include upgrading the building's air conditioning, heating and lighting. Across Grist Mill Road, more heavy machinery was finishing site work in order to begin construction on the apartments. With the restaurant slated to open this month, Janeczko gave a tour of what it will look like. The dining room will be on one level. A no-reservation area with two large tables will be in one part of the



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dining room, and the kitchen will have its floors redone.

On the lower level will be a tavern area with a fireplace, and the dining area here will be a mix of large banquettes and high tables. On the third level will be an event room for small parties of about 50. This space also features a unique view of gristmill machines from days past and will offer a show kitchen area for demonstrations. New parking will include a front lot of 90 spaces that will be accessed through a one-way entrance. There will be a drop-off area that includes a covering above the sidewalk

The mill's history and significance to a community was not lost on Janeczko, who is excited to be returning the building to its roots as a functioning part of the community. "Without a mill, there would be no town, no food," he said.

"This is the place where they would grind corn and wheat for the winter. It's a wholesome kind of structure. Tyler and his team will come in and sustain Simsbury with wholesome food." The main restaurant will open first, and Janeczko said the lower level and event room will open at a later date, most likely in the fall. Anderson has been busy, having looked for a space for his restaurant for more than year and now making the transition from his kitchen at the Copper Beach Inn in Ivoryton – where he garnered a reputation as a premier chef — to a restaurant of his own. He said anyone who is truly passionate about what they do never looks at it as a job.

"It's been a process, training for this," Anderson said. The chef grew up in California. His culinary career had him working with chefs such as Charlie Trotter and Sarah Stegner. He has experience as the chef at the

Ritz Carlton in Chicago, where under Anderson's management the restaurant received the highest Zagat rating in the country. He was also instrumental in bringing honors to the Prairie Grass Café that included a three-star rating by the Chicago Tribune. The restaurant was also recognized by Bon Appétit as one of the "50 Hottest Restaurants" in the United States.

Anderson was introduced to cooking in New England during his time as chef at the Equinox in Manchester, Vermont, which was awarded four stars by the Mobil Travel Guide. Many may recognize him from his victory on the Food Network's competitive cooking show *Chopped*. When developing a menu, Anderson's style is to allow his producers to dictate what is on the menu based upon what they have available. He will be using food items from many local producers and said that if something is not made or grown within a 200-mile radius, it will not be on his menu.

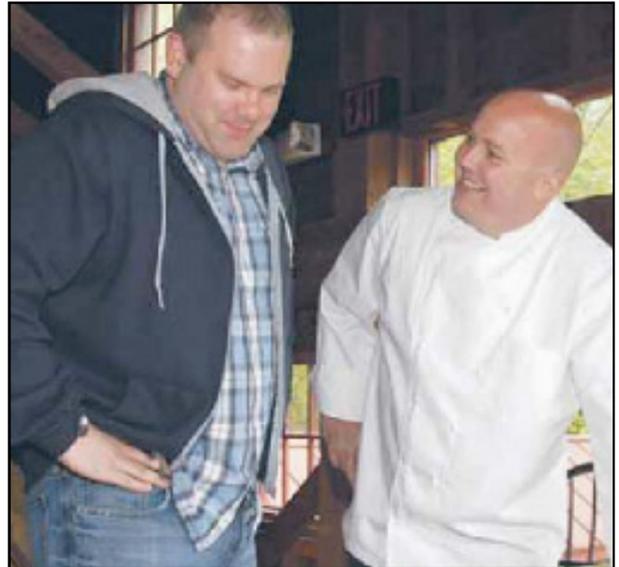
"The driving force behind it, produce from that radius, is freshness, and ultimately it tastes better," Anderson said. He will be working with a farm in Canton. The chef is planning to incorporate many traditional New England techniques into his kitchen and include "grandma food," as he called it – food that offers a certain level of comfort to diners. He added that the

restaurant is considering making its own butter. He described his establishment as “approachable fine dining.” The first time he stepped into the mill building, he knew this was the place for him. While he has contributed to the opening of restaurants at hotels in the past, this is his first time doing so on his own. “This is the full experience,” he said.

In addition to wanting the physical space to be perfect, both Anderson and Janeczko have developed a great working relationship. “The synergy is wonderful,” Janeczko said. “They are absolute experts at what they do. You put the two together, and it’s been actually very exciting for me.” “It’s exciting for us to work with a group so geared toward quality,” Anderson said of Janeczko and his team. “We are learning a lot from them.”

One of the entrances to the former mill has guests walk over a covered bridge to enter the main building. This walkway offers views of Hop Brook and is a special feature of the project. The former mill space will also be home to Farmington-based Landworks Realty’s newest office, also slated to open this month. Gary Emerito, the agency’s broker/owner, said Landworks Realty “has experienced an exceptional growth rate of 65 percent in each of the past two years, despite the challenging

Tyler Anderson reviews some plans for his new Millwright's Restaurant with Director of Operations A.J. Aurricchio.



economy. A second location will enable us to better serve our clients in Simsbury and Canton, the Granbys, Bloomfield, West Hartford.”

The office will be located in the former mill at 77 West Street and is part of the 15,000 square feet of commercial space being developed. “Our new space will ensure both clients and agents the leading-edge conveniences and technologies they require in a setting that is uniquely historic,” Emerito said. Landworks Development LLC has worked in town before, having developed the award-winning Summerfield near the Granby town line. The townhouses, consisting of five buildings, will be constructed in the rear parking lot and each will have its own view of the brook. The project has been in the works for the past two years and required new zoning from the town to

accommodate the mixed-use aspect.

“The zone didn’t exist,” Janeczko said. “The town was contemplating a flexible zone. We showed the town what a flex zone could look like. It’s a fantastic place to build something like this.” The housing component will offer affordable places to live, the restaurant will be a draw for not only nearby residents but for others as well, and those who live in the development can easily walk to the center of town. Thanks to the mild winter, the project is ahead of schedule and work on the mill and parking lot has accelerated. The foundation work for the apartments is ready, too. “The final phase will be the town homes,” said Janeczko. “This is the first market-rate rental housing in the region. It will be nice for Simsbury and neighboring towns.” ■