

# South Lake Tahoe's Basecamp Hotel putting down stakes to attract locals and tourists



Basecamp Hotel in South Lake Tahoe is catering to an active and younger clientele. Photos/Kathryn Reed

**By Kathryn Reed**

In some ways staying at Basecamp Hotel is like glamping, only every room has at least four walls. In some ways it like a hostel – because of the communal venues – but there is no need to share a room with strangers. In most ways it is redefining what casual, relaxed, fun lodging with good beer and food is all about.

The idea is that it is the base camp for fun in South Lake Tahoe for a traveler who has no intention of spending the bulk of their time in the room.

Basecamp is trying to create a community of travelers and

locals. The beer garden is open to anyone of drinking age. Plenty of locals were enjoying it during the summer concerts because the sound travels easily across the street from Harveys.

“We want guests to feel like they are locals. We want that interaction,” General Manager Amber Gardner told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This weekend is the inaugural Oktoberfest. West Coast beers are on tap or in bottles/cans.



Rooms have few frills, but all the basic necessities.

Christian Strobel in 2012 renovated what was the boarded up, bankrupt 50-room Block Hotel near the state line in South Lake Tahoe. In summer 2014 he and his partner Neils Cotter acquired the adjacent Capri motel, making an additional 24 rooms available last December.

Slapping on a coat of paint and new furniture were not enough. The old Capri parking lot was turned into a greenbelt of sorts for people to hang out on, play games and enjoy a bite and beer. Entrances to the rooms were completely changed, in addition to being overhauled.

The beer garden was the porte-cochère for the Capri, while the kitchen used to be the on-site manager's living room.

Three large garage type doors roll up so there is a seamless flow between the indoors and outdoors. When it's cold, the glass still provides an airiness. Even the concrete floors add to the casual urban feel.



It's not necessary to be a guest to enjoy the beer garden.

Adjacent to the beer garden is a playroom with ping-pong and a television. It can double as meeting space.

“Accessible and casual” is the concept of the entire venue.

Chef Nathaniel Lawrence is creating a pub type menu, with lots of bratwurst. He searched quite a while before he found the perfect pretzel bun. Wild game sausage will be rotated in.

(The hotel owners also own the restaurant at Lakeside Beach and the wedding venue there, so Lawrence was busy cooking there this summer as well.)

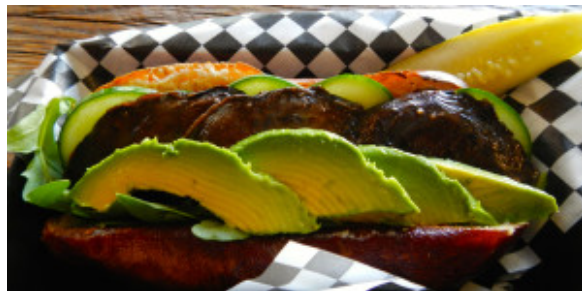
Creative, good food is what he was serving the day this vegetarian reporter popped in. The watermelon salad included his prized pickled onions with feta and fennel vinaigrette.

The portabella dog was something no one else in the basin is doing. On the same bun the meat eaters get, slices of

portabella mushroom were interspersed with arugula, cucumber and avocado. It was divine.

“My background is fine dining. I’m trying to incorporate it,” Lawrence told *Lake Tahoe News*. His goal is to make as much from scratch as possible, and to buy it as local as possible.

Dessert – strawberry shortcake – comes in a mason jar. It was creative in presentation, the perfect amount, and a good balance of cubed cake with the sliced berries.



Vegetarians and meat eaters are bound to be satisfied.

This winter Basecamp intends to resume the family-style dinners on Thursdays-Fridays-Saturday – which are open to anyone. Lunch is also a possibility down the line. For guests, it means not having to go anywhere else; for locals it means another destination.

The beer garden becomes the breakfast room in the morning.

The communal feel of Basecamp is carried throughout the property, with a 16-person hot tub and fire pit that are fenced in. There is also a rooftop hot tub.

S’mores are always available to roast on one of the seven fire pits.

For those needing a place to lay their head at night there are 16 room types to choose from. The family room sleeps six; it has two full size beds with a twin bunk bed above each.

Some rooms have gas fireplaces, a few have private balconies, some come with bathtubs.

In room amenities are sparse and masculine. Lanterns are the lights. The orange-gray décor is comforting.

The Basecamp concept is expanding, with a hotel in Boulder now open and the old Aviva in Tahoe City being renovated with a summer 2016 opening. Each has a slightly different theme, with the South Lake Tahoe one being bear oriented and North Shore trout.

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**Notes:**

- The inaugural Oktoberfest celebration is Oct. 10 from 2-8pm at the beer garden.
- The hotel is located at 4143 Cedar Ave., South Lake Tahoe.
- Phone is 530.208.0180.
- The beer garden is open from 3-11pm.