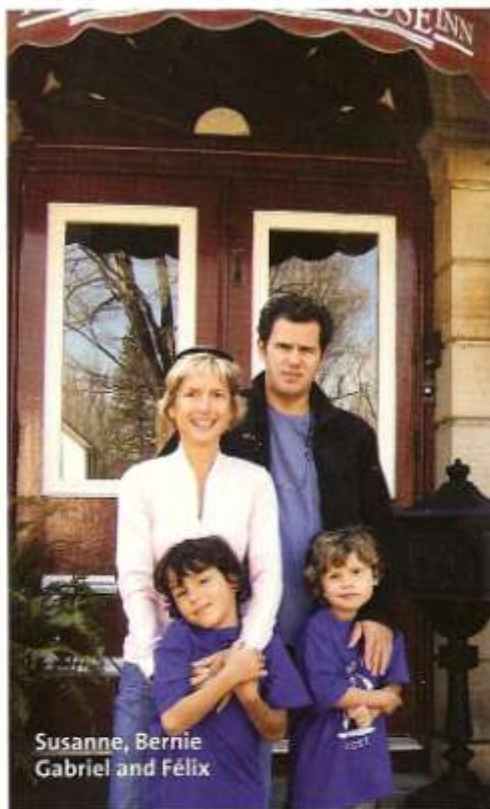




Ram and Sonya



Susanne, Bernie
Gabriel and Félix



Jim and Donna

The Innkeepers' *dreams*

Meet three Canadian families who've
realized their dream of running an inn.
Here, they open their doors to you.

BY BARBARA RIGHTON

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THE LACEBY FAMILY

Amherst Shore Country Inn and Blomidon Inn, N.S.



Blomidon Inn

Over the past 29 years, Jim and Donna Laceby have built not one but two family inns in Nova Scotia. The first is a quaint oceanfront inn on the Northumberland Strait called the Amherst Shore Country Inn. The second is the legendary Blomidon Inn, housed in a spectacular mansion just a three-hour drive away in Wolfville. The two couldn't be more different. The Amherst Shore Inn is beach life at its relaxed best; the Blomidon Inn offers formal dining rooms, a 37-page wine list, a gift shop that sells curios from all over the world, and five acres of gardens to walk through.

Donna and Jim threw themselves into making both places equally successful. And although their sons Michael and Sean, both in their 30s, now run the Blomidon Inn, while a third son, Rob, 41, manages the Amherst Shore Country Inn with his wife, Mary, neither

IF YOU GO

- The Amherst Shore Country Inn is located on Nova Scotia's Northumberland Strait, 15 minutes from Port Elgin, N.B., 20 minutes from Amherst, N.S., or 40 minutes from the Confederation Bridge (to P.E.I.).
- The Blomidon Inn is in Wolfville, N.S., part of Nova Scotia's famous Annapolis Valley, about an hour's drive from Halifax.

Jim nor Donna show any sign of retiring. "Dad's going from manager to mentor," Michael says with a laugh. "As for Mom, she doesn't have to cook anymore, but she still manages the gift shop."

Back in the mid-1970s, when they lived in southern Ontario, the Lacebys, who have five children, owned a beef operation that was not paying off. "We realized that we would lose money if ▶

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we added to our herd, or if we reduced it," says Jim. He had always wanted to live on the Northumberland Strait. When he was offered a job in Amherst, the whole family decamped for Nova Scotia, staying at the Amherst Shore Inn before Jim and Donna decided to buy it in 1980.

All five kids grew up at the Amherst Shore Country Inn. They mowed the lawns, washed dishes and gardened. In the winter, they strapped on their cross-country skis and broke trails for guests. Some guests came



Blomidon Inn:
teak, mahogany and
homespun hospitality

back so often, they watched the kids grow up. "We built a bridge of friendliness," says Jim. "It wasn't a big stretch for us; if you enjoy having friends, you enjoy your customers."

Still, he surprised the community in 1988 when he left Donna in charge of the Amherst Shore seasonal operation and moved with the kids to Wolfville to run the then-bankrupt Blomidon Inn – a 27-room teak-and-mahogany behemoth. "One guy told me it was crazy," Jim says. But the arrangement worked for nearly a decade, before Rob took over the Amherst and Jim and Donna turned their collective attention to the Blomidon.



OK, so you're not the innkeeping type. But maybe these families have inspired you, and you're ready to try a new career. Go online and make your dreams come true with our top 10 job-changing tips.

www.canadianliving.com/july

Along the way they honed their skills. Donna went to culinary school and Jim learned accounting. But they both mastered the same lesson about the hospitality business. "You have to know what your guests needs are," says Jim. "They want privacy, safety, comfort and an experience to remember."

Jim says the best advice for anyone who wants to "live a dream" is to spend time at an inn and learn first-hand how much labour is involved. As far as maintaining harmony within this burgeoning hotelier dynasty, Michael says simply, "We don't dwell on who's working harder." ●

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is for
Juggle

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