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AAA Southern New England

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Nantucket Wine Festival at the White Elephant Hotel

By Jamie Coelho

The White Elephant of Nantucket has wowed guests since the 1920s, but 2010 marks the first year that AAA recognized the historical inn as a Four Diamond property.

The hotel is quintessentially Nantucket, situated on the waterfront within walking distance of restaurants, shops and art galleries. And it plays host to the island's most popular events, including this month's Nantucket Wine Festival.

With 53 rooms and suites and 11 garden cottages, the resort is equipped with a spa, a children's beach and the Brant Point Grill restaurant. The harborside lawn, complete with comfortable chaise lounges, overlooks a dock where boaters can moor their yachts.

The service and accommodations here are impeccable. Employees abide by the highest standards, and all



Sipping reds and whites at the Nantucket Wine Festival.

hotel room elements — from sheets to shampoo — are first tested out by management.

"We slept on three different mattresses overnight to find the most comfortable one," said Khaled Hashem, managing director of Nantucket Island Resorts.

White Elephant employ-

ees remember the acronym SPIRIT while on the job. "S" is for "Smile"; "P" is for "Positive attitude"; "I" is for "Initiate eye contact"; "R" is for "Remember guests' names"; "I" is for "In a crisp, clean uniform," and "T" is for "Teamwork."

It's because of the service, location and events that guests return again and again. The 14th-annual Nantucket Wine Festival kicks off the season May 19 to 23. The White Elephant serves as the headquarters for celebrating world-renowned wines paired with the finest cuisine from the nation's top chefs.

"It's the first formal social event of the season," said Dennis Toner, festival founder. "What better place to hold it than at the grande dame of Nantucket, sitting right on the waterfront."

One highlight is the Harbor Gala on May 20 at the hotel. Guests will experience the most exquisite wine and

food pairings at more than 30 stations, each teaming a different winemaker up with a restaurant chef.

"Picture ordering the most expensive wine and the best dish on the menu at the best restaurants, and then multiply that by 30," said Mr. Toner.

The White Elephant hosts the Celebrity Chef Winemaker Auction Dinner on May 22, which spotlights chef Brooke Vosika of the Four Seasons Hotel in Boston, as well as the wines of Fine Estates from Spain. The Grand Tasting is held on May 22 and 23 at the Nantucket Yacht Club, which features tastings from wineries, cooking demos and food samples. Other special events will occur at various locations, all within walking distance of the White Elephant.

During the festival, the hotel is offering "sip & stay" packages combining accommodations and tickets to various events. 