

When I received a phone call in the summer of 2014 urging me to audition for the Travel Channel's new series, Hotel Showdown, I was extremely skeptical. I receive countless calls claiming our inn can be featured on some TV or radio show, but there is always a catch, usually in the way of thousands of dollars. Quite honestly, had I received the phone call during a busy time, I would have said 'thank you very much' and hung up on them! But they caught me during a rare calm moment and I must have been in a good mood because I not only listened, I agreed to audition.

From there, I went through several interviews including a Skype interview with the casting director. I must have said something right, because before I knew it, they were presenting me with a contract and I was going through it with a fine tooth comb looking for that caveat that would put a halt to what was looking like a huge investment in time and energy. But any concerns I had were put to rest by the production company and in late October, I found myself packing my bags for a nine day journey to film the show. Since this was reality TV, all reactions had to be as authentic as possible so the four contestants had no idea where they would travel from day to day. All I knew was we were starting at our property and venturing to three other inns somewhere in New England. We were chauffeured by the production company and thankfully, we all go along very well and I thoroughly enjoyed those nine days, despite long hours of filming and traveling.

I have to admit, the three other properties competing, the Attwater, in Newport, RI, Stowe Meadows, in Stowe, VT, and the Firehouse Inn in Barre, VT, were tough competition. We all run very different operations - from a modern, boutique hotel to a mom and pop luxury bed and breakfast to a restaurant with beautifully appointed accommodations - each hotelier brought something unique to the table and operated a very successful and attractive business. I had no idea, when it was time to reveal the winner, who would emerge on top. The winner was determined solely by the vote of the other three competitors. We judged in three categories - accommodations, hospitality, and amenities. A certain number of points was allocated for a first, second, and third place vote and whoever accumulated the most points would open a suitcase at the end of the episode containing \$25,000 in cash. It was a nail biting moment when we counted down and were each allowed to unzip our cases. And I have to admit, I was completely shocked when I opened mine to find the cash piled inside. I have all the confidence in the world about the inn my staff and husband and I run, but my competition was stiff - it really could have been anyone's game.

While I have been the recipient of hundreds of congratulatory emails and accolades, I must give a huge amount of credit to my husband and staff whose behind the scenes efforts ultimately won us our prize. Our interns' hospitality ranked us high in that category, our housekeepers' and maintenance staff's attention to detail earned us points for accommodations, and Chef Kevin and Assistant Chef Claude wowed the contestants with their outstanding breakfast and afternoon tea. And the icing on the cake...James potty trained our son while I was away. Seems I should go away more often!

So what will the prize money be used for, you wonder? That's an easy one...I have wanted to redo a particular bathroom since we bought the inn in 2006. It was never a necessity, but more of a frivolous upgrade so essentials like roof maintenance, new boilers, air conditioners, and sprinkler systems took precedent. But not this time! Stay tuned on Facebook to find out which bathroom will get a facelift and view pictures of the redesign process....

Click [here](#) to watch a video clip of the show!