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Running a business takes financial savvy, dedication, passion and... writing skills? It does if you hope to run the in Lovell, Maine. After managing the inn for more than 20 years, Janice Sage is looking to hand off the torch.

But instead of going down the traditional route of listing the property, Sage has decided to choose the new owner based on a 200-word essay. The theme of the essay is, " Why I would like to own and operate a Country Inn." The entry fee is \$125 and Sage has the right to keep all of the money she receives. She hopes to attract 7, 500 applicants, which would bring in an estimated \$900, 000 — the price a listing agent said the 210-year-old inn was worth.

The Center Lovell Inn, built in 1805, sits on 12 acres of land and offers views of the White Mountains and Kezar Lake.

It has 10 guestrooms, a dining room that seats 40 and a wrap-around porch. According to, the applicants must be at least 18 years old, and the 200-word essays must be postmarked by May 7. After the deadline has passed, Sage will pick the 20 submissions she likes best and two anonymous judges will decide the winner. Sage will announce the judges' decision on May 21. Related: While it may seem like a strange idea, the contest is actually carrying on a tradition, as this is how Sage came to own the inn.

Back in 1993, Sage was managing a restaurant in Maryland when a friend told her that a couple in Maine, Bil and Susie Mosca, were offering to give their business to whoever mailed in the best essay, along with a \$100 entry fee, . She wrote the essay in about an hour and won, being chosen from the 7, 000 submissions that came from around the world. Now, at 68, Sage

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wants to retire and is using a very similar method to find her successor."

There's a lot of very talented people in the restaurant business who would like to have their own place but can't afford it," she told the Press Herald. "

This is a way for them to have the opportunity to try.

" Bil Mosca told the paper that he was pleased Sage was using a similar process and that he thinks the contest will be a successful one. Reflecting on when he created the contest, he remembered many people asking how he and his wife could be sure they made the right decision. He'd tell them simply, " We trust." The trust paid off, he told the paper. " It turned out we were right," he said. Related:

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