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### Midwest Ski Update - January 26, 2009



MIDWEST SKI UPDATE -- January 26, 2009 -- by Jim and Ann Neff

Welcome to the Midwest Ski Update, the new SkiNet blog that will cover news from the heartland. With around 90 ski resorts it's a big area to cover so we're off and schussing.

We had the pleasure of traveling to Boyne Mountain in Boyne Falls, Michigan recently to help celebrate Boyne's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. All the hoopla was great fun and film legend Warren Miller was there to act as a master of ceremonies.

The best part of the visit, though, was a chance for us to ride the new chair lift on the Meadows ski slope. We have a warm spot in our hearts for Boyne's chairs because we've ridden so many from coast-to-coast. We're even a bit of ski trivia in that after the first six-place high speed lift was christened in 1992 the two of us along with Detroit News sports writer Jack Berry were given the honor of being the first to ever "officially" ride a high speed six in the United States.

First of all, this new chair replaces America's first quad lift, installed in 1969. Coincidentally, it's also a first in that it's the first conveyor-loaded fixed-grip lift in the Midwest. Better yet, it's a hoot! It's like being on a carnival ride!

When you approach the chair the first thing you see in a moving red-and-white carpet. There are four gates that you gently lean against and that triggers a sensor beam. The gates are atop a very small incline so when the gates open you slowly go downward onto the carpet. A sign instructs you not to push off and just let gravity do the work. Once you're on the carpet all you do is wait for the chair to swing around and then sit down. All the timing is perfect and done for you; there's no scuttling up to the loading area. (Ann noticed right away that children without poles don't have to shuffle or go through panicked gyrations to get to the sit-down point.) We giggled every time we loaded the chair and had to fight the tendency to look back to make sure it was real. It's so cool and so much fun to load we couldn't wait to get back to the bottom of the slope.



Beyond the "wow" factor, though, there is a method to this madness. This is the fastest fixed-grip chair lift in the world and because of the timing the chair can run at faster speeds, so fast that the difference between this fixed-grip and (what it would take) a high-speed on the same slope is only about a minute. According to Boyne officials stoppages of this new chair have been about half of that of the previous old quad, which means it's more efficient for both the resort and the skiers who ride the chair. As an added skier perk, the new chair extends farther down The Meadows run, which means you get to ski more in addition to spending less time going back up the hill – it's a win-win all the way around.

Keep an eye on this technology because its success at Boyne Mountain means it could be coming to other resorts in the Midwest. We were told the technology can be adapted to almost any existing fixed-grip lift for a relatively modest cost. Plus, putting up a new lift of this type costs less than half of the typical high-speed lift. Go to [www.boynemountain.com](http://www.boynemountain.com) to see a video of this thing in action.

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When we returned home from Boyne it was late so we made one of our favorite après ski meals, Ann's Brewmaster Pizza. It's ready in under an hour, costs a fraction of delivery pizza, has a Chicago-style thick crust, and involves beer.

To make the crust, combine 2 cups of white flour, one cup of whole wheat flour, 1 tablespoon of baking powder, and 1 bottle of beer. For a Midwest flair, we suggest getting a Leinenkugel (brewed in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin) 12-pack sampler for this. If you want the crust light, use something like the Honey Weiss. If you want it dark, use the Creamy Dark, Red, or Fireside Nut Brown.

Put the dough on a pizza pan and add your favorite toppings. Bake at 425 for 25-30 minutes and then let stand for 5-10 minutes before cutting. The yeast in the beer makes the dough rise as it bakes. Plus, if you got the 12-pack, you still have 11 beers to enjoy with the pizza.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

A trio of women's clinics are coming up in the near future.

January 30-February 1: Women's Winter Tour Weekend, Crystal Mountain, Michigan, [www.crystallmountain.com](http://www.crystallmountain.com). Great food, wine, and decadent chocolate are part of this getaway which features cross-country and downhill ski clinics and demos, snowshoe tours, Lunafest Film Festival & Chocolate Tasting, and live entertainment.

February 3-5: Ladies Ski and Snowboard Retreat, Boyne Mountain, Michigan, [www.boynemountain.com](http://www.boynemountain.com). The retreat offers women two days of spa visits, fitness sessions, a fashion show, equipment discussions, personalized evaluations, and four hours of daily on-snow workshops and video analysis. All this plus you get to stay in the luxurious Mountain Grand Lodge.

February 5-7: Warming Up To Winter Symposium, Marquette Mountain, Michigan, [www.marquettetmountain.com](http://www.marquettetmountain.com). Emmy award winning video producer Frida Waara has put this together and when it comes to having fun in the winter Frida is the real deal. It's modeled after the Becoming an Outdoors Woman weekends she's been involved with for over a dozen years. Equipment and instruction along with lift ticket meals and even a special morning yoga stretch are all included. She'll cover how to stay warm, protect your skin, and buy women specific gear.



If you're looking for an event for the entire family here's a good one.

February 7: Grand Geneva Winter Carnival 2009, Grand Geneva, Wisconsin, [www.grandgeneva.com](http://www.grandgeneva.com). Skiers from Chicago and Milwaukee might want to check out this annual event at The Mountain Top at Grand Geneva which includes ski school and ski patrol demonstrations, snow boarding and downhill ski competitions, children's games and snow activities, a torch-light parade and a fireworks display.

Utah Update 3/1/09

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