The New New Hamptons Pool - Stunning and Eco Friendly by Chris Hall

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Bridgehampton - Although bordered by miles of America's most beautiful coastline, an equally essential aquatic element of Hamptons living is the pool. That said, things have changed dramatically since the days of the vinyl lined cement rectangle in the backyard. Hamptons.com decided to talk to the two cool cats that founded Casual Water.

Helping to set the standard in both breathtaking design and green friendly technology are Gregory Paul Kirwan and Michael James Hartman, the principals and pool/spa professionals of Casual Water. Friends in college at Southampton University, they founded the company 16 years ago in Bridgehampton, where it is still located today with a new showroom on Main Street.

The obvious question was what has changed and Kirwan told me, "What has changed is the education level. Twenty years ago the caliber of people putting in pools was for lack of a better word, old school." Hartman added, "They learned it from whoever had hired them originally. They taught them how to do Gunite and they just carried it on. Now there is more education through the American Shotcreate Association and the Association of Spa/Pool Professionals." As Kirwan noted, "We travel all over the country to pool builder schools and events. We have learned more in the last five years about our industry, things we didn't realize we didn't know."

As Gunite still remains the number one process in pool construction, it is the plumbing aspect of the construction that has dramatically changed and led to greener, more efficient water treatment processes, "Our company is geared to more energy efficient design, safety, water cleanliness and clarity. The science in those three fields has changed dramatically in just the last five years," Kirwan explained. Hartman elaborated, "It has been at least five years since the two horsepower, two inch plumbing days. Everybody has gone to larger plumbing."

They went on to explain that the larger pipes of the pumping system not only create cleaner water, but increases energy efficiency. According to Kirwan, "The larger the diameter of the pipe, the slower you can run the water through the filtration system, which creates more energy efficiency." He went on to say, "We can run swimming pools today on one quarter of the energy we used 10 years ago."

The slower water exchange by definition creates a lower suction rate in the intake ports at the bottom of the pool, this improves safety by reducing the possibility of a child being trapped in the bottom of a pool by the extreme suction of past filtration systems. It is now the law that every pool must have two intake ports at least three feet apart at the bottom of a pool and proper intake covers. The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act became law motivated by the tragic death of the granddaughter of former Secretary of State James Baker III who was tragically eviscerated, which only took seconds, when entrapped in the suction drain of a pool.

Kirwan and Hartman are absolutely dedicated to creating safe pools, including automated hard cover retractable covers so childproof that Kirwan said, "We could be sitting on top of one having this interview." Casual Water actually goes an additional step in their anti-entrapment commitment to pool safety, "We adopted a lot of these safety procedures long before they became law. Now we are making it physically impossible to be entrapped in one of our swimming pools. Our main drains are directly connected to the skimmer lines, it is literally impossible to be entrapped in our pools. Our pumps would turn off automatically. We are the safest in the galaxy! Somebody may be able to equal us, but nobody will ever beat us. Ten years ago, nobody asked about safety features, now it is an issue."

Casual Water may out-source things like landscaping, landscape mason work and actual pool design, sometimes using the world's greatest pool designers, however they have the equipment, manpower and expertise to keep all pool construction and filtration design strictly in-house. Their commitment to state of the art filtration technology is nothing short of remarkable, "Our swimming water is the equivalent of drinking water," Kirwan boldly claimed. "Our copper pipes eliminate any need for chlorine."

"We are putting systems in swimming pools that are using natural oxygen and copper ionization to clean swimming pools and neutralize disease, while simultaneously neutralizing the ph in the pools. It affects any bacteria, any disease or carcinogens in the water. We create pools that eliminate any need for chlorine. It is essentially mineral water."

It amazed me when Kirwan and Hartman told me that they create pools that do not require the daily dose of chlorine, "Our copper pipes eliminate any need for chlorine." This is generated because Causal Water uses sustainable glass instead of sand as a filtration system.

I asked Kirwan and Hartman if they would compromise construction and design for a client that did not appreciate the eco/safety friendly commitment to pool construction. Kirwan said, "We will not change our standards for any price."

Highly corrosive and actually chlorine generating, Casual Water avoids, bordering on refusing, to create salt water pools. Frankly, I personally have never understood why anyone in the Hamptons would want a saltwater pool. There is nothing more refreshing than stepping out of the salty ocean and diving into a fresh water pool. It turns out that salt water pools are actually less eco-friendly.

Safety and eco-friendly advances aside, obviously, well addressed by Casual Water, Hamptonites are equally concerned with the aesthetics regarding pool design. "We work with the top pool designers in the world. From energy efficiency to environmental compliance to what any client would possibly want, written on a cocktail napkin or a 25 page blueprint, we create the art they envision."

The days of flat, single color Gunite hues are over as far as pool walls and bottoms are concerned. Kirwan and Hartman showed me sample photos of tile and stone finishes that were remarkable. The Beadcrete beaded surface finishes where nothing short of stunning, as too were the Lightstream glass tile finishes.

Yes, there is great art in the construction of pools, but there is also a great responsibility to the safety of children and others and to the protection of the environment. Along with Casual Water, there are several pool companies in the Hamptons that are committed to these values. Do your homework, search them out, get references and demand their industry certifications before you decide to dig a hole in Mother Earth.

For more information on Casual Water go to http://www.casualwater.com

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Chris Hall began his career in the swimming pool industry over 30 years ago. He is currently a consultant to Casual Water; the premiere swimming pool construction and service company in the Hamptons. a Casual Water has locations in Bridgehampton and Southampton. To learn more about Casual Water and the importance of choosing the best gunite swimming pool construction, please contact Chris at chris@casualwater.com and 1-631-537-5475

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