

New England's Apple Orchards • Beautiful Clay Cookware • Mead Goes Modern

FLAVOR

Northeast

New England's food and wine magazine

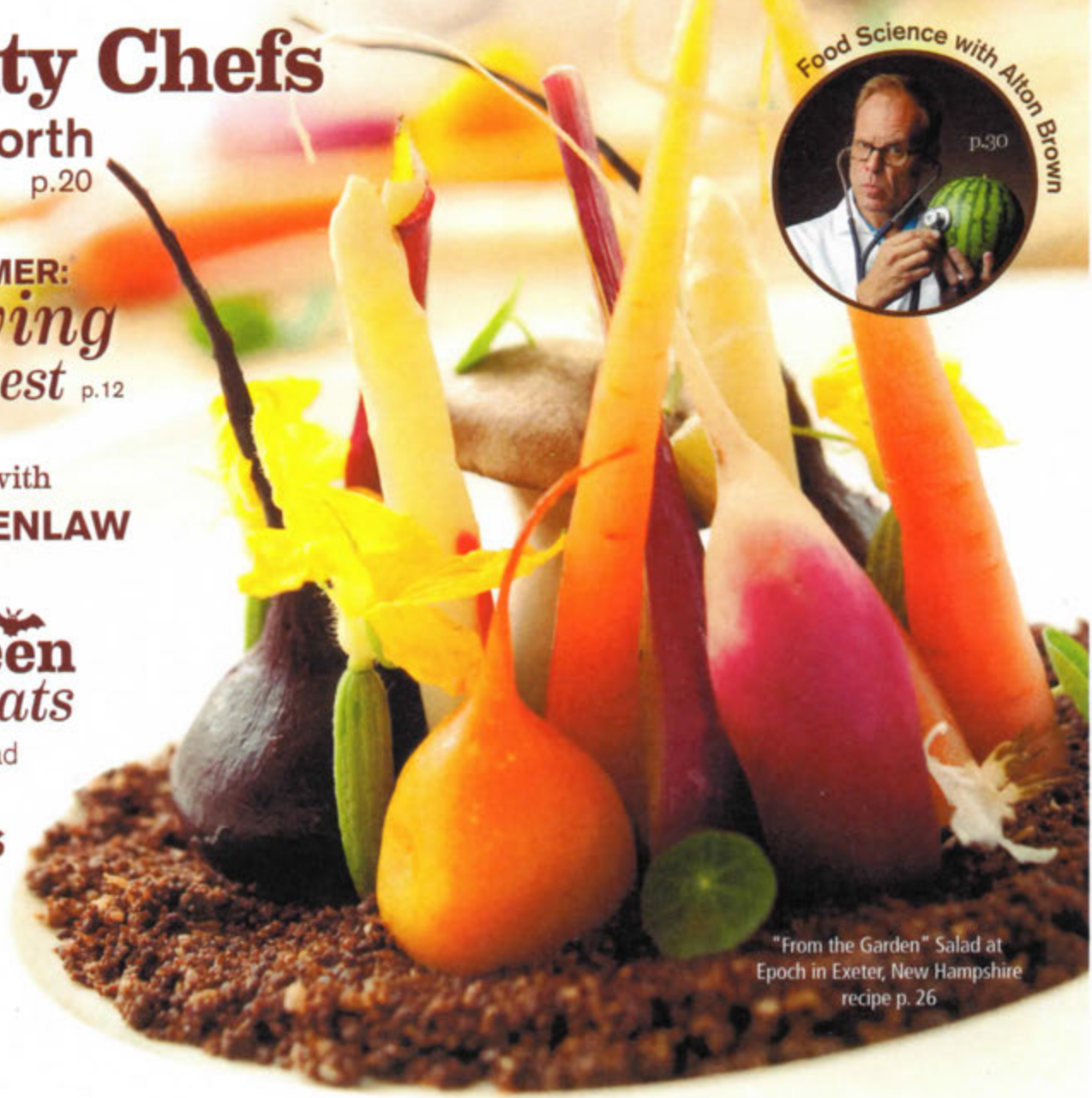
Big City Chefs
migrate North
p.20

SAVING SUMMER:
preserving
the harvest p.12

In the Kitchen with
LINDA GREENLAW

fun & simple
Halloween
party treats
with Matthew Mead

FARM STAYS
from Vermont
to Maine



"From the Garden" Salad at
Epoch in Exeter, New Hampshire
recipe p. 26

AUGUST/SEPT/OCT 2011
Please display until 11/01/11


\$5.95
0 74470 26183 4 03>
NORTHEASTFLAVOR.COM



GET MORE FLAVOR!
Scan this code with
your smartphone and
like us on Facebook.

+ NEW ENGLAND
HERITAGE POULTRY
Healthy Back-to-School Recipes





New England

FARM STAY VACATIONS

Rural Retreats to the Family Farm

BY MARIE HARRIS | FARM PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARTER WEEKS

"IT ALWAYS AMAZES ME how many people are discovering, for the first time, where their food actually comes from." Jackie Caserta, proprietor of The Inn at Valley Farms, echoes the sentiments of the growing number of innkeepers and farmers throughout New England. We are out in her garden admiring a vigorous garlic patch and talking about farm stay B&Bs. "It's usually the country inn experience that attracts our guests at first," Jackie says. "But after they've been with us a while, they begin to become involved in what we do here, and that's what makes their experience really special."

A farm stay vacation combines the relaxing pleasures of a rural retreat with the chance to experience first hand a little of what it takes to grow, raise, and tend the vegetables, fruits, and animals that sustain us. This kind of holiday has long been popular in Europe and the British Isles, and it's a trend that is quickly catching on here, for reasons ranging from interest in organic food to a move toward environmentally-friendly tourism. And thanks to this "agri-tourism," many small family farms are finding new ways to survive, even thrive.

We visited four such farms, each with a particular agricultural focus and its own ambiance.

Opposite page, clockwise from top: Kim Goodling with a Grand View spring lamb; Bob and Amy Jensen tell the Fern Hill story; Portrait of Liberty Hill as Thank You Note by artist Danielle; The Jensen farmhands: Denali, Rachel, Joseph and Jessica (Some kids play with kittens, some kids play with kids!); Jackie Caserta with a Valley Farms chick.

This page: Jack and the other cashmere goats are pets at Valley Farms.

For complete information (including rates, directions, etc.) on the farm stay B&Bs mentioned in this article, please go to:

www.grandviewfarmvt.net

www.libertyhillfarm.com

www.fernhillfarm.com

www.innatvalleyfarms.com

Other farm purveyors:

www.vermontshepherd.com

www.cabotcheese.coop

www.kingarthurflour.com

www.alysonsorcharod.com



GRAND VIEW FARM

We drive a few muddy miles in low gear to arrive at Grand View Farm at the crest of a hill in Washington, Vermont, where Kim Goodling and her husband, Chuck, raise sheep. This morning, pregnant ewes jostle each other in the stalls while new lambs nudge their mothers.

On any given day, Kim can count almost 100 mouths to feed: ewes, rams, lambs, llamas, angora goats and their kids, angora bunnies, meat birds and laying hens, pigs, a Border Collie and three cats. "And that doesn't include people!"

A kitchen divides the family side of the house from the cozy guest rooms. Kim serves breakfast in the private parlor or, on beautiful days, outside on the porch that overlooks the "grand view."

"People come here from everywhere, and for all kinds of reasons," Kim explains. "There was the woman who simply wanted to work alongside me mucking out stalls for a weekend to get away from her day job in an office cubicle." A father visits the farm with his young daughter. A wife gives her husband an anniversary gift of a weekend at the farm, complete with a day-long tutorial on how to raise sheep. Sisters and girlfriends come for reunions. Kim and her home-schooled children run a summer sheep and wool camp for children and their moms where they learn felting, weaving and braiding. And people book stays during lambing and shearing seasons for the express purpose of helping with those activities.

"My favorite story so far," says Kim, "is the one about the young man from Montreal who brought his fiancée here (she had loved sheep since she was a little girl), had me tie a diamond ring to the collar of one of the ewes, and then led his bride-to-be on a ramble in the field where she discovered her ring in a heart-shaped envelope." She laughed. "You can bet I tied that on with double knots!"

LIBERTY HILL FARM

Across the valley, in the lee of the Green Mountains along the White River, Liberty Hill Farm and B&B carries on a proud tradition of dairy farming in Rochester, Vermont. Beth Kennett and her husband, Bob, were the first farmers in the region to open their home and farm to visitors for an authentic farm experience. And authentic it is. We arrive to a spitting rain, but the B&B's young guest-cum-tour-guide, Danielle, is undeterred. She bundles up in a pink jacket and dons rubber boots. First she shows us the tent-like pens that house the new calves, the ones she had helped feed that morning. Then she leads us to the cow barn. "I milked this one yesterday," she says proudly. She goes on to explain how each cow has a name tag in her ear and how every calf will be named with the same first letter as the mother.

"I'm waiting to see a calf being born!" Danielle announces. We follow her to the "maternity ward" in another barn and there it is! A calf, not 15 minutes old, being licked by its mother. Danielle is over the moon. She runs to tell her parents and her younger sister Raquel. "Oh, and that's Pearl," she calls over her shoulder, "so her calf will have to have a name beginning with 'P'." Danielle and Raquel confer and agree that the newest arrival will be called 'Princess.' Their South African parents, along with a couple from India, are as charmed and excited as the children.

Inside the farmhouse, the common rooms are spacious and the bedrooms cheerful. Beth offers her visitors both breakfast and, when they return from exploring the regions many attractions, dinner served family style. As she puts the finishing touches on a carrot soufflé for tonight's meal, she describes the cuisine. "It's grandma's cooking, really. Everything's fresh and local."

One of the ways this small operation can survive is that it is a member of the Cabot Creamery Cooperative, a farmer-owned organization that provides markets for the milk produced by New England dairies like Liberty Hill. "The Vermont artisan

My favorite part is feeding the calves with a bottle. I fed more than twenty today! (Danielle, 6)



cheese industry wouldn't have developed without the help of Cabot. We have always had the philosophy of working together," says Beth.

If Beth's guest book entries are any indication, it's the unique opportunity to participate in the life of a hard-working dairy family that draws visitors from all over the country and around the world and keeps them returning year after year.

Opposite page: Grand View menagerie.

This page, clockwise from top: Pearl welcomes just-born Princess to Liberty Hill; Beth Kennett watches her visitors get acquainted with one of Liberty Hill's calves; Weaving is just one of the activities at Grand View Farm.



For more information about New England farm stays:

Farm Stays—Northern New England: Your Guide to an Unforgettable Farm Vacation, by Martha Passos Duffy

www.theheartofnewengland.com/Farm-Stays.html

www.bedandbreakfast.com

A comprehensive e-guide to Maine farm stays: www.mainefarmvacation.com

E-information about farms in Vermont: www.vtfarms.org/interior.php/sid/2

Farm Stays in New Hampshire: www.sleepinthehay.com/nh

And for a wide range of sustainability workshops and rustic lodging:

D Acres Organic Permaculture Farm and Sustainability Homestead, www.dacres.org

FERN HILL FARM

At Fern Hill Farm in Naples, Maine, Amy and Bob Jensen cobble together a living that combines part time employment in the “outside world” with raising their Nubian goats and running a small B&B. Amy makes the goat’s milk cheeses that can be found on the menus of high-end restaurants in Portland. She confides that her delicately flavored Fern Hill chèvre owes its mild taste to the fact that they don’t keep a buck on the farm.

The house, which once belonged to Civil War hero Gardner Wiley, includes four painstakingly restored guest rooms, including the new Mt. Washington room which boasts a view of the storied peak as well as a bathroom fitted out with a claw-footed jacuzzi and a dish of Amy’s handmade goat’s milk soaps.

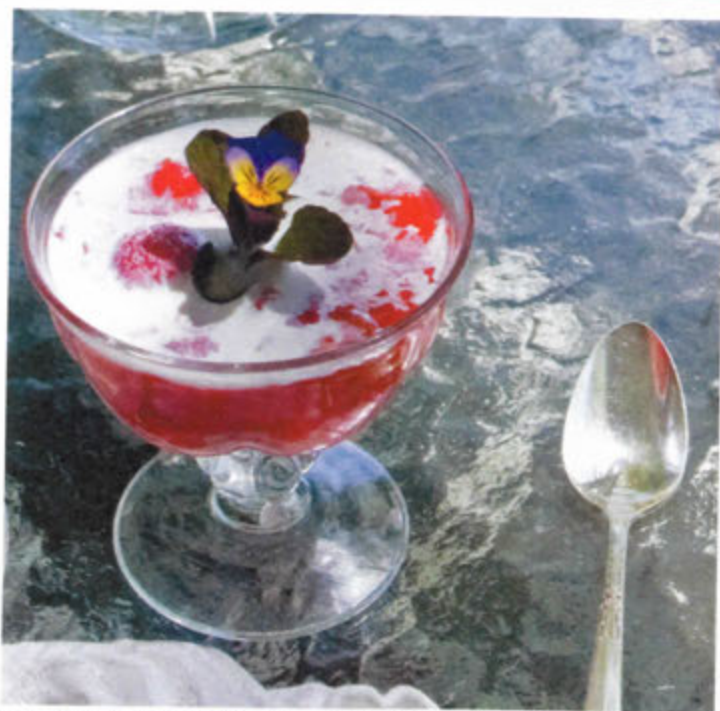
A chef by trade, Amy prepares a different breakfast every day, alternating the savory and the sweet in offerings that might include her goat cheese with maple almond topping, fresh fruit, eggs prepared many ways, crêpes, homemade bread and rolls and local sausage.

Bob and Amy and their four children, two sets of exuberant twins, are pleased to include guests in the daily activities of their farm lives.

“It’s hard work and a bit of a balancing act,” admits Amy. But clearly she and her family are happy with their choices.

THE INN AT VALLEY FARMS

The Inn at Valley Farms in Walpole, New Hampshire, is our last stop. The 1774 farmhouse, with its enormous barn and outbuildings on 105 rolling acres, offers beautifully appointed bedrooms, elegant parlors, and a dining room where guests gather at a long polished table for sumptuous breakfasts. Adjoining the inn are two roomy cottages with kitchens that are stocked daily with fresh eggs; across the meadow sits another farmhouse that can accommodate larger groups. Guests have carte blanche



The Inn at Valley Farms’ Strawberry Rhubarb Compote, recipe on p. 43.

to snip herbs and pull vegetables from garden rows conveniently marked to aid uninitiated gleaners.

The Inn at Valley Farms might be called a laboratory (albeit a graceful and elegant one,) for green lodging practices, organic vegetable growing, and pasture-based methods of farming.

“Everything we do is geared toward sustainability,” Caserta says. Their cattle are 100% grass fed, daily rotated in fields kept fertilized by the “direct deposit” method. They don’t use any pesticides or commercial fertilizers.



Opposite page: The boys know their way around the Fern Hill milking parlor.

This page, top: Valley Farms laying hens will be moved from field to field, fertilizing them while enjoying the real meaning of "free range." **Bottom:** Fern Hill Nubian goats wander the greening pastures.

Agritourism is becoming increasingly popular across the U.S., from day-long excursions to longer farm-related vacations. Links to farms nationwide can be accessed through www.farmstayus.com

Another work and learn approach is provided by World-wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, USA (WWOOF-USA™), part of a world-wide effort to link volunteers with organic farmers.

Each half-day of volunteer help is traded for food and accommodation, with no money exchanged. WWOOF farms offer a variety of educational opportunities, including growing vegetables, keeping bees, building straw bale houses, working with animals, making wine, and more. The WWOOF-USA Host Farm Directory lists more than 1000 organic farms and gardens across the country. The program is open to anyone 18 years of age or older, regardless of experience. www.wwoofusa.org

