

FALL/WINTER 2013

# OUR COUNTRY HOME



A country house,  
lovingly restored

Giving a  
tea party

Meet the divas  
of quilting

Celebrating the  
Great Pumpkin

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Cover photograph by Isabel Braverman

Like Aesop's fabled grasshopper, many of us have fiddled away this year's extended summer. Inevitably, those warm, glorious days finally have come to an end. Some mornings, frost creeps silently into our yards during the hours just before dawn. Hats and heavy coats have come out of storage or from the backs of closets. Outdoor chores that we could have and should have done weeks ago, take on urgency—draining and putting away the garden hose, bringing indoor plants back in after their outdoor summer vacation, taking down screens, cleaning fallen leaves from gutters, making room for the car in the garage in anticipation of the first snow. Or perhaps you have your own special chores that are part of your annual ritual of getting ready for winter.

This issue of **Our Country Home** is devoted to all things warm and cozy—from wrapping yourself in a beautiful handmade quilt or an alpaca fleece garment from a local alpaca farm to giving a special tea party for a group of friends or preparing a satisfying pumpkin entrée that's pretty enough and dramatic enough to serve at a dinner party, from choosing a good book to curl up with on a chilly afternoon to discovering the joy of pulling the blanket up to your chin and sleeping in on a cold morning.

The featured house in this issue is an 1800s farmhouse that has recently been made over with enough modern features for comfort while retaining the historic atmosphere of this lovely Hortonville, NY home.

We invite you to join us in these pages to dream of all things warm and cozy as residents of the Upper Delaware River Region begin our annual seasonal hibernation.

Jane Bollinger  
Section editor  
Our Country Home



## OUR COUNTRY HOME

A RIVER REPORTER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

PUBLICATION DATE: October 31, 2013

THE RIVER REPORTER

Stuart Communications  
Creative Services

Our Country Home, a special publication of  
The River Reporter, is published by  
Stuart Communications, Inc.  
Entire contents ©2013 by Stuart Communications, Inc.

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# Something old, something new

## *A country house lovingly restored*

By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

There's a reason that people are obsessed with home makeover shows. There's nothing like a good transformation story and the big reveal. We constantly tune in to "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" and "Trading Spaces" to watch cringe-worthy spaces become homes you want to live in, all led by the skilled and snarky renovators who have become household names (Ty Pennington, Genevieve Gorder). Not to be outdone by celebrity makeover artists, Ramona Jan of Country Home Restoration (Abrahamsville, PA) has recently completed a project to restore an 1800s farm house in Hortonville, NY, owned by Westchester resident Cheryl Greenberg.

Jan orchestrated the makeover and restoration of Greenberg's house. (She doesn't like to use the word "renovate"). The restoration was a dramatic change. Jan said, "Everything from the landscaping down to finishing off the basement [was restored], so that it looks and feels like it did when it was first built." Jan and Greenberg wanted to keep the historic qualities of the house, so the resulting finished

product is a mix of the old and new.

The restoration included starting from scratch in the kitchen. "We completely tore out the kitchen, because the kitchen looked like it had been redone many times, and the last time it was done was probably the '70s," said Jan.

There were about four layers of wallpaper on every wall and ceiling of the house, so Jan and her team took all the wallpaper down and exposed and repaired the plaster, rather than get rid of it, which is what a lot of people do. They gutted out two bathrooms, made archways where there used to be doors, and built a shower where there used to be a closet. These were the large transformations. The house is filled with many special touches of restoration: for instance, repurposing barn wood to create a closet for the washer and dryer. During the restoration, when they knocked down walls, they discovered hidden treasures—like the sliding wood doors that separate the dining room and living room and the kitchen cabinet glass front doors. I said to Greenberg that it must have been like opening a present, and she smiled in agreement.

The house isn't the only structure to get a makeover on Greenberg's property. In the expansive yard sits an old chicken coop. While no work has begun yet, it will be transformed into a guest house where Greenberg hopes her children and grandchildren can play and hang out. Greenberg is especially fond of the wrap-around porch, and once you see it you would be, too. The large porch is painted white, as is the rest of the house, and the floor is a light gray. There are two sets of stone steps each leading to a separate entrance, and white wooden chairs and an old wood and linoleum table provide places to lounge and look at the view of the creek right across the road.

Besides the dynamic duo of Jan and Greenberg, there was also a team of local workers who helped with the



*TRR photos by Isabel Braverman*

**Ramona Jan of Country Home Restoration** stands on the porch of Cheryl Greenberg's 1800s farm house in Hortonville, NY that she recently finished restoring.



**Greenberg's dog Tripper** stands at the front entrance.



**One of the upstairs bedrooms** has views of the creek across the street.

*Continued on page 4*

# SOMETHING OLD

*Continued from page 3*

project. The carpenters were Teb Fink and his crew of fourth-generation carpenters. Russel Lyons did exterior painting, and Andee Kraft worked on various parts of the job, including wallpaper removal. Jan said she handles pretty much every aspect of the job. “I pitch in wherever I can; whatever my height and age allows,” she laughs.

I asked Jan how she got into the home restoration business. “I grew up in a family of builders, half Italian, and never thought I would be in the trade,” she said. “I lived in an apartment most of my life, so when I got my home, it needed work, and I dedicated myself to restoring my 1915-era house, and then pretty soon people noticed and asked me.”

Jan has worked on many houses around the area. However, she said she doesn’t take on every project. “I take projects with people who are interested in restoring their homes with a modern twist.” She and Greenberg worked very well together.

“Ramona was fabulous to work with—a great partner who shared my vision of the house—making sure that historic elements were preserved and creatively incorporating the new with the old,” said Greenberg.

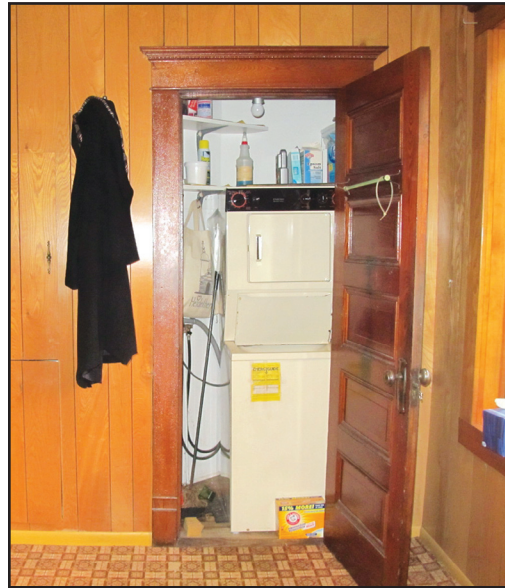
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**The kitchen before**



**The kitchen after** (notice how Tripper makes an appearance in both photos). TRR photos by Isabel Braverman



**The washer and dryer closet before**



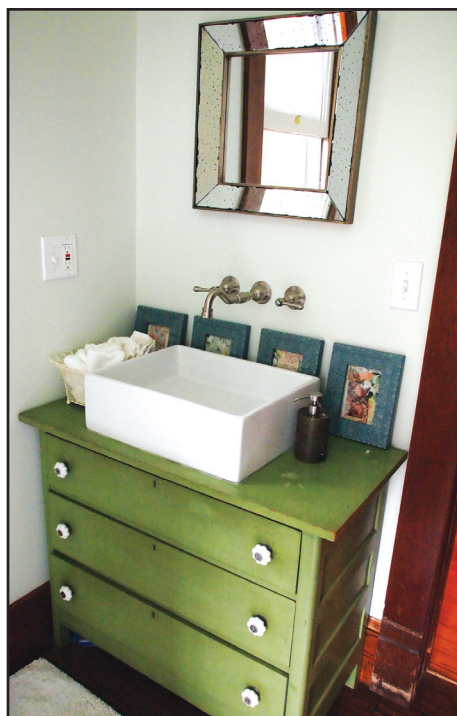
**The washer and dryer closet afterward**



**An antique mirror** decorates one of the bedrooms.



**Towels and bath robes** hang in the downstairs bathroom, which used to be a closet.



**The downstairs bathroom after**



**The downstairs bathroom before**

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## SOMETHING OLD

*Continued from page 4*

“What I like to do is work closely with the client,” said Jan, “to try to, first of all, save them money; I’m very scrappy. I like to work with what they already own and not have them buy so many new things. I will try to upcycle as much as I can. If they don’t have it, I try to find it somewhere.”

Much of the furniture in the house has been repurposed or bought from an antique shop. Other spaces, like the kitchen, are new and modern. And the living room uses furniture from Greenberg’s Westchester home.

“It has been a wonderful process and my family and friends are thrilled to begin a new era of traditions and celebrations, but most of all looking forward to quiet times together on the porch,” said Greenberg.

Jan said she doesn’t usually have a vision for a house. Her first aim is to open and brighten up a space, and then to look at it as a blank canvas and discover the taste of the customer. Later, there will be a drawing, but Jan said she doesn’t like to make the drawings set in stone, because once you have a feeling of what’s in the space, there are always changes to make along the way. “It’s really an improvisational creation,” she said. “It’s like jazz music. Since I used to be a musician, I can swing with that; no pun intended.”



The old chicken coop on Cheryl Greenberg’s property will soon be renovated into a guest house.

*TRR photos by Isabel Braverman*



The large wrap-around porch is Greenberg’s favorite spot to relax with friends.



Although the dining room table and chairs are new, they are in keeping with the style of an old farm house.



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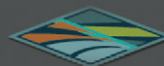
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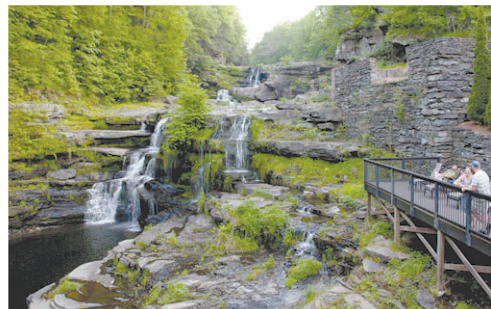
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## Meet the divas of quilting

By LYNNE FREDA

Some do it for the fellowship and conversation. Some do it for the satisfaction of having something to show for all their hard work. Some do it for the art. But they all have the same goal: to make a quilt.

Quilting circles have become extremely popular in the Delaware River Valley region. Hundreds of (mostly) women have organized with other quilters who love the craft as much as they do. They subscribe to daily emails with quilting newsletters; they are slightly addicted to YouTube quilting videos, where they learn new techniques; and they belong to Facebook quilting groups and exchange ideas.

And in most cases, they started quilting in the same way: it was a natural progression from crafting, sewing, or needlework (like crocheting or knitting) to quilting.

"I was always a crafter. I used to sew dolls and their costumes, and always had a sewing machine. Quilting was just a natural progression," explains Keyna Hust of The Divas Quilting Circle out of Youngsville, NY.

Fellow diva Jennifer Berglas says, "I always sewed and was a crafter. I like to put things together. I made kids' clothes, place mats, and now quilts." Same with diva Ruth Pontious of Jeffersonville, NY, "I always sewed. I had four kids and made a lot of their clothes. I started quilting in the '80s, by hand, not a machine."

Given the recent popularity of quilting, you might think it was a fairly recent hobby. But the craft goes back centuries.

Quilts started as a necessity to keep humans warm and out of the elements. They were as basic as woven linen or spun wool. American pioneer women had no time to work on luxuries such as a decorated quilt; they were doing all they could to keep their families fed, clothed and out of danger.

Decorated quilts were for wealthy women who had time on their hands. They were not made of fabric scraps as many are now—rather, they were decorative and showcased the fine needlework women of privilege worked so hard to exact.

Big changes came after the mid-19th century. The advent of manufacturing on a large scale changed the tex-



Photos by Lynne Freda

Choosing from a limitless variety of fabrics and designs, the opportunity for quilters to express themselves creatively knows no bounds.

tile industry, making fabric affordable and available. Women no longer had to spin or weave their own materials. Because of that, quilt making became widespread.

The style of quilting also changed around the mid-1800s; block-style quilts became the rage. Quilting bees became popular, with women working on individual blocks and sitting around quilting frames to attach them to the body of the quilt.

But the biggest change came after the sewing machine was invented. That allowed women to make clothing for their families in less time, which allowed more time for quilting. And the quilts could be made on the machine instead of the tedious and time-consuming hand sewing.

These days, most quilters use machines, from the simplest to the most sophisticated ones with computerized designs and even lasers to guide the quilter around designs. (They can also run into the thousands of dollars.) There are special machines made just for quilters with longer, stronger needles to go through thicker quilt material and batting. Many machines are called "long-arm" to handle the size of

the material.

But not all of these talented crafters make their quilts on machines. Amy Dunn, owner of the Mountain Quilt Works on Route 652 in Indian Orchard, PA is a custom, hand quilter. She sells material and supplies in her shop, and she takes custom orders. While Amy enjoys her work, she says there's no easy way to "hand-do" a quilt. "It takes time and patience, and there's no way you can make much money on it. It's a labor of love." Amy has just spent about three months and 200 hours crafting a beautiful quilt for an older woman who has made quilts for all her children and most of her grandchildren. But arthritis robbed the woman of her ability, so she enlisted Amy to make three remaining quilts.

Amy started quilting when she was a teenager. When The Mountain Quilt Works opened in the mid '80s, it was a natural fit for her to work there. She eventually bought the store in 1992.

Six years ago, Jackie Murphy of Honesdale, PA decided she'd open a quilting store. Again, she was a crafter, scrapbooker, and she knitted and cro-



Quilter Amy Dunn does custom, hand quilting at her shop, Mountain Quilt Works, in Indian Orchard, PA.

Continued on page 10



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# QUILTING DIVAS

*Continued from page 8*

cheted. She belongs to the Wayne Highlands Quilt Guild, and they meet at her store, "A Stitch in Time," on 7th Street. "We enjoy our 'sew-and-tell' time. We share ideas and see what we've made since our last meeting."

Jackie and other quilters say they've noticed a trend in recent years from quilts used as bedspreads and comforters to smaller art quilts.

That's what Katharina Litchman of Jeffersonville, NY specializes in. She calls herself a contemporary art quilter. Katharina was a New York City banker, when she caught the quilting bug. But after making many bed quilts, she felt she wanted to branch out and stretch her creative side. Katharina now designs and makes art quilts, which are in demand. She started experimenting with dyeing her own fabrics, using all natural dyes and material to make the designs. "It's a lot of work," says Katharina, "and I always make a mistake or two. My quilts are not perfect, and no two will ever be alike." She is the first art quilter to be inducted into the Catskill Mountain Quilters Hall of Fame.

Despite the difference in the styles and motivation for quilting, all have one special quality in common: they have huge hearts. Each group or individual participates continually in charity aspects. Quilt raffles are common in the Delaware River area—but did you realize each one raffled off has to be made by someone? In many cases, each member of the quilt circle makes a block or square, and they take turns finishing it. Local agencies are the beneficiaries of the money raised.

The divas in Youngsville save all their quilting scraps in what they call a "cat bag." Once enough scraps are accumulated, they're sewn together to make a cat bed, which the divas then donate to the Sullivan County Humane Society, at a rate of about one a month.

Amy Dunn from "The Mountain Quiltworks" participates in "Conkerr Cancer," a program where crafters make pillowcases for children with cancer. So far, Amy and customers at her shop have donated 2,240 cases and counting. She also participates in quilt raffles for charity.

*Continued on page 12*



*Photos by Lynne Freda*

**Amy Dunn of Mountain Quilt Works** has been quilting since she was a teenager.



**The Wayne Highlands Quilting Guild** meets at Jackie Murphy's quilting shop, A Stitch in Time, in Honesdale, PA.



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# QUILTING DIVAS

*Continued from page 10*

At “A Stitch in Time” in Honesdale, Jackie Murphy is challenging quilters and customers to “Fill the Cradle” with 150 baby quilts between now and March. It’s for “Project Linus,” a charity that provides comforting quilts to kids in the hospital with serious illnesses. Her shop also saves scraps and accepts donations of fabric in a project called “Shreds for Beds”. They make dog beds for Dessin Animal Shelter.

As busy as the hands of all our local quilters are, their hearts are just as full, giving back to those who need help the most. And whatever drives them, whether a quilter is making a specimen for a bed or the wall, for a child or a bride, whether they’re meeting for the social aspect or the sheer creativity of art of quilting, this is one craft that won’t fade away any time soon.

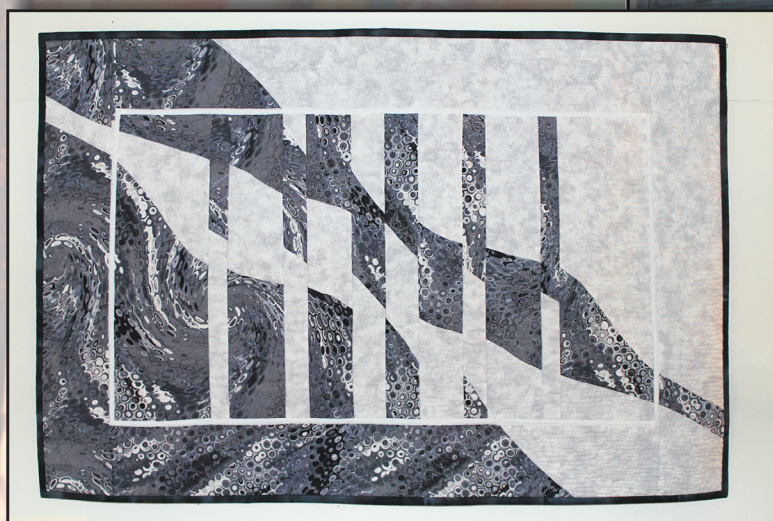


Quilting groups like **The Divas Quilting Circle** of Youngsville, NY, are increasingly popular in the Upper Delaware River Valley.

▶ **Making pillowcases for children with cancer** is a program Mountain Quilt Works participates in. The shop’s customers have donated more than 2,000 over the years.



Contemporary art quilter **Katharina Litchman** of Jeffersonville, NY is the first art quilter to be inducted into the Catskill Mountain Quilters Hall of Fame.



These quilts are **one-of-a-kind** works of art created by Katharina Litchman of Jeffersonville, NY.



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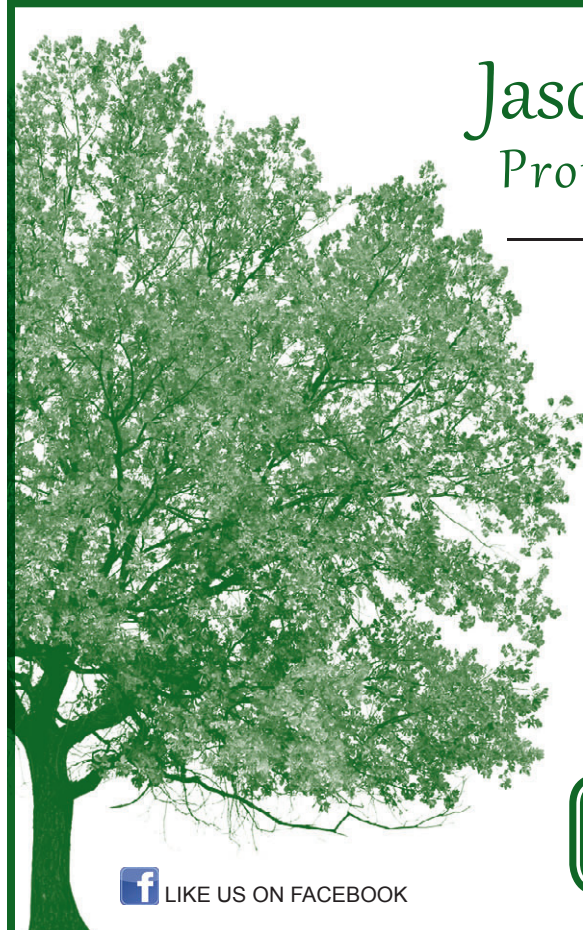
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## Reader, writer, independent bookstore owner

**K**elly McMasters owns a small, independent book store, *Moody Road Studio*, located in Maude Alley in the 1000 block of Main Street in Honesdale, PA. She writes about the experience in a monthly column for **The Paris Review**. She is the author of “Welcome to Shirley: A Memoir from an Atomic Town,” the personal story of growing up in her hometown on Long Island, NY where there were three nuclear reactors and all three leaked. A documentary based on the book was shown earlier this month at the Black Bear Film Festival in Milford, PA.

McMasters is married to artist Mark Milroy, whose studio is located in Wayne County, PA on Moody Road, which inspired the name for the bookshop and for his art studio. They have two young children.

**TRR:** On a scale of one to 10, where 10 is “wonderful,” how would you rate curling up with a book on a cold rainy or snowy afternoon?

**KMcM:** Definitely a 12. I was thinking about it earlier this week because I was just starting to miss summer. Up here in summer, there’s always so much to do and to get done chore-wise that you never really have those lazy afternoons. In winter it’s much quieter, and there’s more opportunity to just curl up and be by yourself. There’s something I love about read-



**McMasters’ love of books** began as a child growing up in the Catskills in an isolated house at the end of a long driveway. “I’m an only child, so (books were) a huge companion for me.”

ing during the day in winter. Somehow it’s like going to the movies in the middle of the day and when you come out and it’s still light, it’s something like playing hooky that’s really fun.

I think aside from maybe beach reading that winter reading is my very favorite.

**TRR:** Do you have a favorite genre that you like to read?

**KMcM:** There’s certainly stuff that I’m drawn to more, but there isn’t much that I would say I dislike. I’m primarily a non-fiction writer and an essay writer, and so I always love reading essays and non-fiction books, but I also love my novels and poetry, and I like science fiction and historical fiction, too, so I’m definitely not exclusive.

**TRR:** Can you name a book that changed your life?

**KMcM:** So much of my life has been changed by books... (Pauses in thought) I would say it probably started with “The Secret Garden,” and then... I went through this moody period in college, this kind of transitioning period where it felt like every book was transformational. I was reading “Anna Karenina” and “Steppenwolf” and “White Noise.” So these books sort of got me to different emotional places. And then “The Orchid Thief” by Susan Orlean was professionally transformational. That was when I realized what an open frontier non-fiction could be. That book was just thrilling in that way. And then E. B. White’s essays and Joan Didion’s essays, those collections were also professionally [influential]...

**TRR:** When I go to a bookstore, I’m really overwhelmed by how many choices there are. Do you have any thoughts to share on how to make a decision?

**KMcM:** I think anybody who works in a bookstore and is putting their time in around the books is there because they have an addiction to books, like me. I’ve found that to be true in all of my favorite book shops, so I always go for the staff recommendation. [But don’t just] ask what they’re reading; tell them what you like... and don’t be shy or feel like you have to pretend that you like something super literary. Be honest, because then you’ll get the next favorite book.

**TRR:** Finding good, new writers is both a pleasure [when it works out] and a challenge. And frequently an author’s first book makes for a really exciting read, because he or she is just burning to tell that story. Do you have suggestions for how to discover new writers?

**KMcM:** There are a few prizes that I keep my eye on every year. Writers will submit their manuscripts, maybe they’ve never been published..., but it’s a juried prize and there are a few that are almost always outstanding without fail, and those



TRR photos by Jane Bollinger

**Kelly McMasters is a writer, an insatiable reader and the proprietor of a small, independent bookstore in Honesdale, PA.**

have become some of my favorite sleeper hits that I never would have found out about otherwise. Also books that are [mentioned in] literary magazines or are out from small presses. Their books are always quiet; I mean you’re not going to see them typically on the **New York Times** bestseller list. I hardly ever read what’s on the bestseller list; it’s just not where my interest lies. And then also I have a pretty decent network of people in New York who are publishing, and other independent book store owners who are saying what they’re excited about, and reading series—I like to see who’s reading where in a reading series and maybe I’ll look at a book that I hadn’t considered for the shop. And my mother. (Laughter). She’s a huge book person, and almost every conversation we have, she’s just read about some new book. I mean we’re reading totally different lists, so I always listen to my mother.

**TRR:** I’m the crazy aunt who always buys books for

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# TASTEMAKER

Continued from page 14

**TRR:** I'm the crazy aunt who always buys books for Christmas and birthdays for my nieces and nephews and any other children I know. I'm determined to turn them into readers, but I also never know how to choose books for children. Do you have any advice?

**KMcM:** Well, there are some pretty great and reliable "best 100 books of the century" lists that are in the Moody Road cannon. I think the **New York Review of Books** has a good one; the New York Public Library has a really good one. Many of them would be classics, so maybe they've read them, but I'm a big believer in the classics. I mean, not that I don't believe in the new stuff, but for gifts, it's kind of nice to give something that isn't just out.

I actually I had a crazy aunt who always gave books, and I still remember, and I still have one; it was from my high school graduation. At that point I had no plans of being a writer. I mean I won my high school poetry award or something like that, but I never thought of being a writer as a career, because I thought, "Well, who can do that?" But she gave me this giant hardcover book called "The Big Book of Women Writers," and at the time it did feel a little like, "Oh, really? That's what I get for graduation?" But I'll tell you, it's one of my all-time favorite gifts that I've ever received because she saw something in me that I didn't see. And I've returned to that book again and again; it's been really inspiring, so that was a fantastic gift. And also don't just [consider] novels, but also something like Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring"—something that might not be the best thriller, or a love story, but there are some really beautiful and classic books like that that will stretch your brain and also be a beautiful read.

**TRR:** Do you worry about children not reading enough?

**KMcM:** It's terrifying. Maybe about a year and a half after my book was published, I read at this college in Brooklyn, and I visited one particular class... It was for kids who were trying to catch up to college level. This one teacher who invited me thought that because [my book] was a Long Island story, that they might see themselves reflected because [they were] the same age. Actually we had a really fantastic discussion, but I would say that

a third of them said that this was the first book that they'd ever finished, and I can't even fathom that.

I know that some people just aren't readers and that's fine—no actually that's not fine, but you know what I mean. And that's why I partner here with First Book, and for every book that I sell, we give a book to a kid in Wayne or Pike County. Last year First Book did their book gifting around the holidays... and they're planning their Christmas event again this year. They focus on pre-K. These are the very first books that these kids will ever own, and then they're going home and reading them to their parents, because in some cases their parents can't read, and that act—I mean I have a two year old and a four year old and we're constantly reading together. With the two year old, he's just now asking for the books, and he's really excited in choosing his books, and now the four year old is starting to read to me. It's this really interesting capsule in time where... we're sharing a story and sharing physical space. I mean they'll both be on my lap, and it's such an amazing time together. And that's what I think will translate into a love books later on. I mean that's why I love books, because they were such a huge part of my childhood.

I grew up in the Catskills for those first pre-reading years. Probably very similar to a lot of your readers, we were in a little house where we couldn't see any other houses. There were just me and my mom at the end of this long driveway, so what we did was read. I don't even remember a TV, though we must have had one. We listened to the radio and we read. It was just part of our everyday [life]... and then once could read to myself—I'm an only child—so it was a huge companion for me. I would say the first series where I started demanding books was the Nancy Drew series. I loved [those]. I was obsessed. And then I started getting really into Christopher Pike, which was like teen horror where you scared yourself a little (laughter) and Judy Blum, of course. I mean I would say probably my first book that I was obsessed with where I read it and I couldn't stop thinking about it even

Continued on page 18



Beyond having "an addiction for books," McMasters explained that the original idea for the store was a "celebration of paper." The woodblock prints are by her artist husband Mark Milroy.



Finding your next favorite book may be as easy as asking someone who works in a bookstore to make a recommendation, according to the owner of this independent bookstore.



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# TASTEMAKER

Continued from page 16

Secret Garden,”

**TRR:** Tell me about running a small independent book store.

**KMcM:** This is my first crack at small business, at a physical business. So there have been some surprises about those things that go into it, like quarterly taxes and sweeping the floor and that kind of stuff, which is fine. But what's been really interesting are the reactions of people. Some walk in and it's like they've fallen into a secret garden. They say, "I didn't know you were here. I can't believe you're here. I mean, what are you doing here?" (Laughter) So they start to look [around], and then they'll say, "Oh, I read this," or "Oh, I've been wanting to read that." There's just that excitement, which of course is how I feel every day.

And then there are the people who walk in and you can sort of tell that they don't feel they belong here and they're trying to be polite, but then their eye will catch something that interests them, and that's sort of my favorite moment. Then there are people who just poke their head in the door and say "books," and then they run away. (Laughter)

I'd say another thing is that the idea of this store from the start was the celebration of paper, and that goes to our woodblock prints as well as to the printed book. A lot of the books, particularly the ones on the table, are not art books necessarily, but they're kinds of books that you wouldn't get the same experience if you read them on an e-reader. Not to say that I'm anti e-reader, because I'm certainly not. It certainly has its place, but I can't imagine reading poetry on my Kindle, or...

**TRR:** Do you have a Kindle?

**KMcM:** I do, although I have to say it's probably lost its charge 16 months ago and I haven't...

**TRR:** So you sort of have a Kindle.

**KMcM:** (Laughter) Yes.

**TRR:** But curling up on a cold snowy afternoon with a Kindle just isn't the same.

**KMcM:** No, going back to your original question, perhaps the best part about curling up and reading is falling asleep with the book on your chest. (Laughter)

**TRR:** Tell me about your column for *The Paris Review*. How did that come about?

**KMcM:** Well, I had an essay published in the *American Scholar* right as the shop was starting to open. The *American Scholar* is like my nerdy crush (laughter), so I was very excited, because I'm a religious reader. They had this column by Michael Dirda, who was a huge bibliophile, and I saw in one of his columns that he was going to be leaving and that they hadn't found a replacement yet, so I thought, "Oh my gosh, this is perfect. I can write for the *American Scholar* on a column basis."

So I put a pitch together and sent it to my agent. And she said, "I love your pitch—just the idea of leaving the city and coming to the country and opening a bookshop. Can you let me have this pitch for two weeks and let me try to [send it around]?" And so she sent it to *The Paris Review*, and they wrote back immediately and they said "yes." Later on I asked why they were so quick to say, yes, and [my editor] said she thinks it's every literary person's dream in New York City to (a) leave the city and (b) open a bookshop. She also said she [didn't want] this to be a sort of glowy thing; she wanted the real stuff, and that is what I think I'm giving in the column. But it's also helped me figure out how I'm feeling [about the bookstore] and how it's doing. I'm just trying to be honest on the page, but it's also reaffirmed—not that I thought running a bookshop would be easy—but it's just reaffirmed my relationship with books.



Down this narrow alleyway at 1023 Main St., Honesdale, PA shoppers discover a handful of shops, among them is the independent bookstore, Moody Road Studio, where proprietor Kelly McMasters loves to talk about books with customers and browsers alike.



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# The warmth of a cup of tea

## Giving a tea party

By LISA DeNARDO

Imagine yourself on a leisurely drive through the winding countryside of South Wales. You pass luscious green rolling hills speckled with woolly sheep and patches of lush woodland. This journey ends down in a deep valley, complete with a river running through it, at a stately home built somewhere around 1810. You make your way up to the beautiful home past the stables and horses, and find yourself sitting in the conservatory in the center of the large house. The conservatory is filled with beautiful plants, where the sunlight pours in through the many windows to warm your soul. This memory was one of many shared by Christine San Jose, who has “84 years’ experience in high tea.”

Christine San Jose is a British native and grew up with the “duty to king and country to drink tea every day.” On that particular day, San Jose recalls sitting in this very conservatory with her friend when a three-tiered tea trolley was rolled in with “oodles of tea.” She enjoyed scones with rhubarb and damson preserves, English digestive biscuits, slices of ham, salad, as well as “good” bread and butter. It was a moment in time that remained with her all these years.

Traditionally, high tea was eaten in the early evening, around 5 or 6 p.m. and included much more than just a cup of tea. It was a substantial meal, equivalent to supper that originated in England. Delicious sweet foods, such as scones, cakes, buns, or tea breads were combined with tempting more savory foods, such as cheese on toast, toasted crumpets, cold meats and pickles or poached eggs on toast and, of course, plenty of tea.

High tea was historically much more of a working-class family meal than it was an elite social gathering. In England the working class made up the majority of the population and there was great pride to be amongst the working class. The “high” in high tea does not imply that fancy, high-class, or expensive foods are served (or that high tea is enjoyed by well-to-do Britons). It actually refers to afternoon tea served on a dining room table (a high table) as opposed to afternoon tea served on a “tea table” (a low table). By contrast, afternoon tea is traditionally served around 4 p.m. This is a lighter meal a satisfying “snack” between lunch and dinner that will include scones, thin sandwiches, biscuits, and assorted cakes.

On a brisk fall afternoon recently, I had the pleasure of joining Christine San Jose and a group of women

for a high tea party ourselves. We met at The Willow River Gallery Café in Honesdale, PA. Willow River is owned and operated by Trix Render, who opened the art gallery in 2009 and the tea shop in 2011. Render offers everything from a simple cup of tea (or coffee, if that’s your preference) to extravagant tea parties; slices of pie or cake to an entire sit-down gourmet dinner. Everything offered in the tea shop is made from scratch using local products whenever possible.

Tea was served in the art gallery at a large table laden with sweet and savory treats. Following a unique tradition at the café, whenever you order tea, Render will invite you to select your own tea pot from her unique collection of wonderful pieces that fills a cupboard off to one side. As the guests took their seats at the table, each found a place setting of fine china with one of Render’s one-of-a-kind tea cups and saucers already waiting.

The menu included two kinds of delicate open-faced sandwiches (a choice of cucumber, or salmon) with the bread cut into round or heart-shaped, bite-size morsels; and such a variety of sweet treats it was hard to count: scones served with whipped cream, an assortment of cookies, pizelles, and crepes filled with bananas or apple compote; and, of course, plenty of tea.

Today we understand that tea offers many health benefits. Medical studies have proven that Green, White, Oolong, and Black teas are loaded with healthy antioxidants, fluoride, and Vitamin C. Tea is a name given to a lot of brews, but purists consider only green tea, black tea, white tea, oolong tea the real thing. They

### High Tea at Willow River Gallery Café

#### Menu

##### SAVORY

###### Finger sandwiches

- Cucumber with cream cheese & nasturtiums
- Smoked salmon & capers or
- Egg-salad & watercress
- Chicken salad

###### Savory mini quiches

- Spinach
- Fig and gorgonzola
- Bacon

##### SWEET

- Scones with jams and cream
- Crepes with sautéed banana, or pears, or peaches
- Variety of cookies
- Pizelles rolled & stuffed with *dulce de leche* cream
- Chocolate mini cups with lemon curd and kiwi berries

##### SELECTION OF TEAS

- Winter White Earl Grey, Midsummer Peach, Cherry Blossom, Black Currant, Peppermint, and Chocolate Mint

Continued on page 22



Tea is served from an exotic collection of tea pots and tea cups at The Willow River Gallery Café, where customers are invited to select their own tea pot.



Photos by Lisa DeNardo



Christine San Jose, center, entertained the guests at this “high tea” with her memories of “proper British tea” served in her youth.

# ENTERTAINING

Continued from page 21

are all derived from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, a shrub native to China and India, and contain unique antioxidants called flavonoids. The most potent of these, known as ECGC, may help against free radicals that can contribute to cancer, heart disease and clogged arteries.

Although a lot of questions remain about how long tea needs to be steeped for the most benefit, and how much you need to drink, nutritionists agree any tea is good tea. However, a good pot of tea cannot be made from bad tea, and each tea variety needs to steep for the correct amount of time for the best results.

As I sat on this beautiful fall day, listening to San Jose speak passionately of her childhood memories growing up in Britain and stories about her relationship with tea, my mind started to wander. I thought about this group of women, who took the time to gather together over a cup of tea, to celebrate each other's company. Discussion was sparked on what brought each of us to the lovely small town of Honesdale. As each tea cup was filled and refilled with earl grey, exotic mint chocolate, or various herbal blends, and sweet treats were passed around, a deep feeling of casual comfort set in. There was talk of our own childhood memories, of being little girls, and having tea parties with our stuffed animals and dolls with the little miniature tea sets many of us had as young children. To me it seemed as if the warmth of the tea extended into a richness of stories and short bits of where life had taken each one of us. As we sat, we began to weave together these small threads and connections in a way that bound us all together... within our community.



**Savory finger sandwiches** cut in the shape of hearts were served, along with an endless variety of sweets.

“A good pot of tea cannot be made from bad tea”

Tea Variety	Water Temp.	Steep Times
White Teas	180°	4-6 minutes
Green Teas	180°	1-3 minutes
Oolong Teas	180°-212°	3-5 minutes
Black Teas	212°	5 minutes
Herbal Teas	212°	5 minutes

## Collecting tea cups

By JANE BOLLINGER

Collecting tea cups (and their saucers) has been popular since the 19th century, and today it is one of the most affordable antiques collections for would-be collectors just starting out.

There are several ways to collect tea cups: you can collect them by type and style, or by a specific time period or manufacturer (the list of companies is long, but among the best known are Wedgwood, Royal Doulton, and Spode), or very simply, you can choose the shapes, colors or designs that please you best. It's also common to inherit collectable cups and saucers—either individually or as a collection—from relatives. My tea cup collection was handed down to me from my mother-in-law.

Always collect cups and saucers as a set. If you are a beginning collector, do not worry about your new hobby as an “investment.” (Almost no one gets rich collecting tea cups.) Just do it for the fun.

You will find tea cups and saucers at antiques shows, estate sales, yard sales and places like Salvation Army and the Good Will.

Compared to many other antiques (furniture, for example), a tea cup collection doesn't take up much space. As your collection grows, don't feel you must



TRR photo by Amanda Reed

display everything you have acquired. Always display matching cups and saucers together; display the cup resting on the saucer or with the saucer on a plate stand behind the tea cup.

Porcelain or bone china should not be washed in the dishwasher. Even “dishwasher safe” pieces will last longer if they are hand washed. China with gold or metal trim should never be put in the microwave, and should be washed with a soft cloth, never an abrasive material.

Whether you use your favorite pieces regularly or bring them out only for special occasions, this is an agreeable hobby; there is, of course, the thrill of the hunt, but perhaps the best reward is finding some special treasure that you can look at and use for years to come.

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## *Prepare them for the journey back inside*

By ANNE HART

**A**fter a summer vacation on your porch or deck, it's time to prepare your house plants for the trip back to their winter home. For their survival and your enjoyment, they need to be prepared for the lower levels of light, temperature and humidity of the house. It's really just a reversal of the process of hardening off plants or seedlings in the spring. When night temperatures cool to the 50s, the fall ritual can begin. These tips should help with the process:

**Move the plants to a shadier location.** If they've enjoyed full sun all summer, get them used to lower light levels by moving them to your porch or a shadier side of the house. Gradually move them to shadier and shadier spots over a few days.

**Check for bugs.** As you move the plants, check each plant for insects both on the plant, in the soil and on the pot. Hand pick any insects you see, or spray (on both sides of the leaves) with a mild solution of vinegar or Listerine (20%), dish soap (1%) and



**This Christmas cactus already has flower buds** and will be in full bloom well before Christmas.



*Photos by Anne Hart*

**Many house plants, like this Christmas cactus, thrive outdoors** in the summertime with little attention, but getting these cacti to bloom at Christmastime takes some special care when bringing them indoors again for the winter.

water (79%). For bugs in the soil, prepare a bucket of lukewarm water, and submerge the plant up to the top of the soil level for about 15 minutes. Anything living in the soil should rise to the surface. Scoop the creatures away. If the soil is heavily infested, it's better to re-pot the plant, discarding the old soil. Clean the pot on the top and bottom, and don't forget the dish underneath.

**Check for disease and tidy up the plant.** Snip off any dead or diseased-looking leaves or stems. If the plant looks unhealthy, it's kinder to compost it. Each plant will suffer some shock as it gets used to indoor conditions, and an already-stressed plant will have a harder time surviving. If the plant is root bound, repot it with new potting soil.

**Quarantine.** If you have other indoor plants, keep them separate from the travelers for a few days just to make sure that you haven't brought any bugs inside.

**Choose the right indoor location.** Keep the plants away from drafts created by doors opening and closing, heating and cooling vents and the like.

Plants that need full sun should be in a south facing window. Plants that need partial sun can be in windows facing east or west. If your house isn't sunny, grow lights can be used.

**Change your watering habits.** In the summer, the heat can dry out a potted plant very quickly. Plants won't need as much water inside because temperatures inside are usually lower. Plants also grow more slowly under lower light conditions. Water only when the soil is dry to the touch, and don't let standing water sit in the bottom of the tray. This can foster root rot in the plant. If you can, group the plants close together. You can also place them together on a tray filled with pebbles. A little water in this tray will help boost humidity. Again, don't let the pots sit in standing water. **Remember, no wet feet!**

**Know your plants.** Some plants have an easier time transitioning than others. Herbs are particularly difficult because they generally like full strong sun

*Continued on page 26*

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## ASK THE EXPERT

Continued from page 24

and warm conditions. If your potted **basil** is tall, cut it back to where there are multiple branches so that it will be smaller and bushier. Don't let the stems become woody. Place it where it gets at least six hours of sun a day. It needs to be in a pot where it quickly drains after watering. Water only when the top inch or so of soil feels dry, every seven to 10 days. **Rosemary** is difficult, and some varieties are easier to overwinter than others. It likes full sun, cooler temperatures than basil or other herbs, and should be kept evenly moist. Keep it in a sunny window in the coldest room of your house. Its growth will be spindly and slow in January and February, so pinch it back in March so that more sprigs will be created and they will have shoots which are sturdier. **Succulents** need lots of light, not very much water, and no fertilizer. Keep-



In the summertime, this basil plant grew tall and bushy, but it needs to be cut back when you bring it inside in the fall.

The trimmed-back basil plant needs at least six hours of sun a day. Take care not to overwater it. ▶



Plants that need full sun should be placed a south-facing window. Those that need partial sun, like this clivia, prefer windows facing east or west.



ing them in a cool spot will keep them in a semi-dormant state all winter, which is ideal. **Christmas cactus** likes indirect sun both outside and in. It likes to be on the dry side, but the soil should never completely dry out. This can cause the flower buds to drop. Overwatering has the same effect. I have a plant that descends from a Christmas cactus dating back to the 1960s. My mother would bring the plant inside in early October and keep it in the attic, which had one east facing window, watering it once every 10 days or so. She brought it downstairs in early November, and it always bloomed at Christmastime. I don't expose mine to that prolonged period of darkness, so mine is either a Halloween or a Thanksgiving cactus!

[Anne Hart is proprietor of Domesticities & The Cutting Garden in Youngsville, NY.

[www.thecuttinggarden.org](http://www.thecuttinggarden.org)]



Succulents like this *aloe radula* need lots of light but not much water and no fertilizer.

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By LAURA SILVERMAN

Nature's timing is flawless. As if on cue, the winter squash and pumpkins appear just as the onslaught of zucchini starts to ebb. And they're here to stay, their stout curves and painterly colors a pleasure to behold throughout the winter. Every year I stock up on the many varieties grown by Alice and Neil Fitzgerald of River Brook Farm in Cohecton, NY including international heirlooms like the brilliant orange Hubbard, the voluptuous *Musque de Provence* and the charmingly bumpy *Marina di Chioggia*. These all have a dense, creamy flesh that is equally delicious roasted, fried (pumpkin tempura!) or stewed.

Pumpkins and winter squash are domesticated species of the genus *Cucurbita*, and the difference among them is more culinary than botanical. Winter squash tend to have a finer texture and milder flavor, while pumpkins have a more pronounced flavor and flesh that is often orange. Though they are not completely interchangeable, for brevity's sake I will refer to them from here on as pumpkins. They are a warm weather crop that can be stored well into the winter, provided they have been "cured"—a weeks-long drying process in a warm, dry spot (a sunny windowsill or greenhouse) during which the skin hardens and the flavors intensify. Unlike many root vegetables, pumpkins require little cossetting and can spend several months in a frost-free shed or on your kitchen counter, with nothing more than a thick layer of newspaper to keep them happy.

In addition to being delicious and hardy, pumpkins are an excellent source of nutrition, high in the vitamin C and omega-3 fatty acids that support our immunity through the



Photos by Laura Silverman

**Pumpkins, easily identified with Halloween and Thanksgiving,** are often underappreciated after the holidays, but pumpkins keep well, are plenty delicious and are a rich source of nutrients all winter long.



Photos by Laura Silverman

**Tomatoes, carrots and fennel** are among the ingredients of an elegant entree in which a pumpkin becomes the serving vessel.

cold months and rich in beta-carotene, whose powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties soothe arthritis and help prevent the build-up of bad cholesterol. The seeds contain plenty of protein, so consider roasting them for a snack rather than dumping them in the garbage (or the compost heap).

If the closest you've come to a pumpkin is carving a jack o'lantern for Halloween or spicing up a can of puree for Thanksgiving pie, you might be intimidated by the prospect of transforming a big, gnarly one into dinner. Take heart, because a world of luscious discovery awaits you, and it all starts with this humble, thick-skinned vegetable. It's as easy as roasting a whole one in the oven. At 375 degrees, it takes an hour or two for a big pumpkin to collapse into a soft heap of tawny flesh. Some varieties exude quite a bit of water, and it's not a bad idea to let those drain in a colander after roasting. But whipped well or sliced and caramelized under the broiler, all it needs is a slick of peppery olive or a pool of good butter and a shower of flaky sea salt to make a satisfying side dish.

To transform this into a main event, thin it with stock and perhaps a little buttermilk, add curry and a few sprigs of cilantro, and you have a very nice, warming soup. Or combine it with flour and eggs to make tender *gnocchi*, perfect with a wild mushroom ragout. Or stir it into risotto with sage and

Continued on page 30

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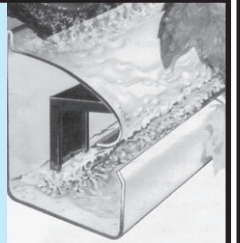
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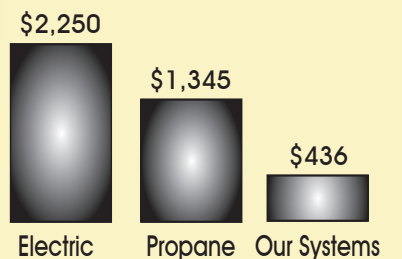
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# THE GREAT PUMPKIN

*Continued from page 28*

butter, the ultimate comfort food. Or add cream, eggs and honey, pour it into ramekins and steam it in a water bath for a very luxurious pudding. Or bake it into your favorite quick bread with plump raisins and chunks of crystallized ginger. The possibilities are myriad and mouth-watering.

A small pumpkin, such as a five-pound Winter Sweet (a grey variety of the Japanese kabocha) easily serves four people. You can choose a much larger one to feed a crowd, and the recipe included here is so easy yet makes a dramatic presentation fit for company. Choose a fairly round, symmetrical pumpkin with the kind of dry, nutty flesh that's ideal for roasting; when in doubt, check with the farmer. Then you simply carve a lid from the top—precisely as you would when making that jack o'lantern—scoop out the seeds and pulp, and scrape out enough flesh to leave the shell about three-quarters of an inch thick. What you're left with is a gorgeous natural vessel that you can fill to the brim with all manner of treats before roasting it to tender perfection.

I prefer this dish to the slightly "kitschy" pumpkin soup served in a pumpkin shell that was popular a few decades ago, primarily because the

stuffed version lets you eat much more of the whole vegetable. (And, you don't have to worry about the leakage issue.) Inside is a flavorful mix of seasonal vegetables sautéed with some of the pumpkin itself and liberally seasoned with spices. This is mixed with a soft cheese—you can't go wrong with the fresh mozzarella from Tonjes Farm Dairy in Callicoon—sealed with the pumpkin lid and roasted to a bubbling and fragrant stew in your oven. The shell stays intact, often softening enough to be entirely edible, but providing the structure necessary to cut and serve it in thick wedges. It's a surprisingly rich and hearty dish, and one that's best offset with an assertive salad of crisp bitter greens.

My recipe is vegetarian, but you could easily sneak in bits of chopped ham, crisp bacon or chorizo, or even add ground beef, pork or lamb. Feel free to use whatever vegetables you have on hand, or to skew the spices to suit your palate. This is really a technique more than anything and you can take it in whichever direction you choose—with lamb, black olives, fennel and feta; with chorizo, zucchini, corn and jalapeños; with tofu, mushrooms, spinach and sesame oil. It should keep you well fed all winter long.



*Photos by Laura Silverman*

**After some initial cooking**, this thick vegetable "stew" is stuffed into a hollowed out pumpkin, then roasted in the oven. The dish is served by slicing the squash into wedges.



*Photos by Laura Silverman*

**Fennel seeds, toasted, and spicy pimentón**, a Spanish version of paprika with a smoky taste, bring depth of flavor to the author's recipe for Stuffed & Roasted Pumpkin.

## Stuffed & Roasted Pumpkin

Serves 4

- 1 5-lb round pumpkin or winter squash
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 shallots, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 leek, white and light green parts only, thinly sliced
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½-1 teaspoon spicy pimentón
- 2 teaspoons toasted ground fennel seeds
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 cup diced pumpkin
- 1 cup diced tomato
- 1 cup diced fennel
- 1 cup fresh mozzarella or other melting cheese, shredded
- 4 Tablespoons grated Parmesan

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Using a large, sharp knife, carefully cut into the top of the pumpkin to detach a lid, as you would for a jack o'lantern. Scoop out all the seeds and their pulp to make a clean cavity. Use a heavy spoon and/or knife to scrape out some of the inside flesh of the pumpkin, leaving the walls about ¾-inch thick. Dice this flesh and set aside.

Heat a large, heavy sauté pan over medium heat and pour in the olive oil. When it's hot, add the shallots, garlic, leek and jalapeño, and stir together for a minute before adding the salt, pimentón and ground fennel seeds. Cook until lightly caramelized, about 5 minutes. Add the carrots, pumpkin, tomato and fennel and cook for another 10 minutes or until the liquid has cooked out. Remove from heat and stir in the cheeses.

Place the squash shell on a baking sheet lined with foil or parchment. Rub the inside with a little olive oil and sprinkle with salt, and then carefully spoon the vegetable mixture into the cavity. You can fill it all the way up. Set the lid on top and place in the oven.

Bake for 60 to 75 minutes, or until a metal skewer slides in easily through the side. You want the squash to retain its shape, so don't bake until it's so soft that it collapses (although it will still taste good if you accidentally do this).

To serve, slice the squash into wedges and arrange any filling that falls off back on top.

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THE **RIVER REPORTER**

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By KEVIN KEARNEY

Most, if not all, homeowners would fix a window broken by a wayward softball. What many people don't know, though, is that there are often small air breaches in many different places of the home that, if combined, could easily be the size of a softball or bigger. As a result, much energy, and many dollars, can be lost.

This was just one of many facts presented by SEEDS and Pennsylvania Power and Light (PPL) during a recent workshop addressing techniques homeowners can use to be more energy efficient. "We're just here to offer quick and easy ideas to save energy at your homes," said Jocelyn Cramer, executive director of Honesdale, PA-based SEEDS, or Sustainable Energy Education & Development Support. About two dozen people attended the free workshop at the PPL Learning Center in October, which is Energy Awareness Month.

SEEDS is a nonprofit organization committed to developing a local renewable energy infrastructure and promoting more sustainable living. It also offers a free home energy assessment program each summer to residents of Wayne and Pike counties.

As for house windows, SEEDS volunteers Jim Sanders and Pete Snyder offered numerous tips that are both simple and inexpensive. They said homeowners should run their hands around windows and doors to feel where air is entering or escaping, and then use caulk to seal the spots.

Caulking helps keep out drafts

"Caulking is extremely important," Sanders said. He said caulk is inexpensive and easy and quick to apply. "None of this is very complicated," he said. "And you'll be saving energy and money."

Another way to cut down on bills is to make sure a home is properly insulated. "Insulation is designed to keep heat in, not keep the cold out," said SEEDS volunteer Phil Buckingham.

Buckingham talked about the importance of wrapping water pipes, which

is "very easy and inexpensive to do," especially with pre-made pipe wrap tubes. Wrapping hot water pipes will cut down on time waiting for hot water to reach the faucet. It also will reduce condensation and protect pipes from freezing, he said.

He also suggested homeowners wrap their water heaters in a water-heater blanket. Newer models have insulation inside the shell, but additional wrapping makes it cheaper to heat and can keep water hot longer in the event of a power outage.

It was noted that water heating accounts for the second largest use of energy in most homes. One of the easiest ways to save is to set the water heater thermostat to 120 degrees. Also, turning down the thermostat about one degree will save homeowners about 2% on their heating bills, according to SEEDS. Turning it down five degrees will save about 10%.

Jenna Wayne, an official with PPL Education and Public Outreach, talked about "phantom power," energy that is wasted when appliances—from toaster ovens to televisions to coffee machines to microwave ovens to phone chargers—remain plugged in when not in use. "It's sucking power out of your life," she told the crowd, noting that 10% of power, or about \$200 a year, is wasted when appliances remain hooked up when not in use.

"It's really simple to unplug something when you're not using it," Wayne said. "When it's plugged in, it's in standby and it's using energy."

Lighting also is a significant part of a household's energy bill. Energy-saving bulbs such as CFLs or LEDs can save 75 to 90% off the lighting portion of an electric

Insulation is designed to keep heat in, not cold out

bill, according to SEEDS. Homeowners should decide which lights they use most often, changing them first. Any light used more than two hours per day is a good candidate for a more efficient bulb. PPL customers may visit [www.pplelectric.com](http://www.pplelectric.com) to find out how much energy they are using.

Water is another resource that can be reused. And it is vital to do so, said Jamie Knecht, a watershed specialist with the Wayne County Conservation District. She noted that 97% of the earth's water is salt-water. She also noted that it takes an abundance of the resource to produce clothing and cook food, from cotton shirts to hamburgers.

Water can be reused in numerous ways, such as using pasta water to water plants. Knecht recommended that people just be generally aware every time they go to pour water down the drain, and to ask themselves can the water be used elsewhere.

The watershed specialist also suggested homeowners use **water aerators on faucets and low-flow shower heads and toilets**. By doing the latter, a homeowner will save over a gallon of water on each flush. For well owners, using less water means using less electricity to pump it; and for metered water systems, using less water cuts down on the bill.

Conserving water helps cut a homeowner's utility bills

Reusing items creates less waste to be trucked to a landfill

SEEDS Chairwoman Katharine Dodge talked about the importance of **reusing products**. The tips she gave included reusing jars and pots, which can be used as small containers to store odds and ends; newspapers, cardboard and bubble wrap can be useful packing material when moving or storing items; envelopes can be reused by sticking labels over the address

and, alternatively, can be used as scrap paper; carrier bags can be reused while shopping or as bin bags around the house; paper bags make useful wrapping paper; twist ties can be used to secure loose items such as computer wires; and egg cartons and foil can be

Appliances draw electricity even when they're not turned on



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Continued on page 34

# Winterizing your home

Write your own checklist of simple steps to prepare for Old Man Winter



graphic by Amanda Reed



# Ten steps to a safe heating fire

By ANDREA BRUNS

Madonna Badger wasn't awakened by her three daughters' squeals of delight on Christmas morning 2011. Instead she awoke to smoke in a dark and silent house. Quickly the house was engulfed in flames, and all efforts to save her family failed. Ashes from the fire that had warmed her Connecticut house on Christmas Eve had been carelessly disposed of, and in the night, the embers caught fire. In addition, no smoke alarm sounded a warning. The resulting inferno robbed Badger of her children, her parents and her home.

Whether you light a fire in an open fireplace, or heat your home with an enclosed fire in a wood- or coal-burning stove, fire safety is everything.

Heating fires, according to the U.S. Fire Administration, account for 36% of rural residential home fires each year. These disasters are easily preventable through simple safety measures.

**To prepare your home for a safe season take these preemptive actions:**

1. Install smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them once a month to ensure functionality. Also install a carbon monoxide detector.

2. Have your fireplace or wood stove and chimney inspected and cleaned at least annually, more frequently if you heat 24/7 with a self-contained wood- or coal-burning stove. Creosote buildup and cracks in the ventilation system can lead to chimney fires. You can find a local certified inspector through the Chimney Safety Institute of America at [www.csia.org/search](http://www.csia.org/search).

3. If you use an open fireplace, remove flammable items from around the hearth.

4. Clear your roof of leaves and pine needles, and remove branches that are positioned above the chimney.

5. Mount a mesh-screen spark arrester on your chimney to further protect your house and surrounding foliage from sparks.

**A few operational guidelines should be followed to ensure safety as each fire warms your home:**

6. Before lighting a fire, open the chimney's flue. Keep your wood stove's air inlet and

## DIY

*Continued from page 32*

given to schools to be used in arts and crafts projects.

Less garbage going to a landfill means less fossil fuel being used, Dodge noted. "Reusable is a great idea," she said.

Dodge also recommended people think ahead when cooking or baking. Can you put more than one vegetable in a pot, such as placing corn on the cob on top of beans? "And cut your items in smaller pieces to cut down on the cooking time," she said.

SEEDS works with private residents as well as area businesses to find ways to help them save energy and operate more efficiently. Anyone seeking more information can visit [www.seedsgroup.net](http://www.seedsgroup.net), call 570/245-1256 or email [Jocelyn@seedsgroup.net](mailto:Jocelyn@seedsgroup.net).



Photo by Robbie Sproule, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

your fireplace's doors open while you have a fire. Restricted oxygen supply inhibits complete combustion and can lead to creosote buildup in the chimney.

7. Burn small fires using seasoned hardwood to reduce smoke production and creosote buildup. Do not burn flammable liquids, cardboard, or trash in a wood stove or fireplace.

8. Close your mesh screen on your fireplace to prevent embers from escaping into the room.

9. Never leave an open fireplace fire unattended.

10. Whether you have an open fireplace or self-contained heating stove, you will have ashes. Dispose of ashes in a metal container with a lid, and place the can at least 10 feet from any buildings.

Protect yourself, your loved ones and your home by responsibly approaching every fire you build during the coming cold winter months.



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# GOING LOCAL Alpaca: The new-age Golden Fleece

By JONATHAN FOX

The Catskills and Upper Delaware River Valley are known for many things: hiking, river rafting, apple picking and the beauty and serenity that a visit to our region provides. Each season has something different to offer to visitors and residents alike, but since the 1970s, a warm and fuzzy attraction has caught on—alpacas. The gentle creatures have been domesticated for thousands of years and the Moche people of northern Peru often used alpaca images in their art. Too small to be used as pack animals, they have been bred exclusively for their fiber and meat, but it's their fleece that has made the alpaca highly prized throughout the world. Today, alpaca can be found all across the United States, including right here at home, where their incredibly soft hair is made into scarves, hats, gloves and socks, along with stylish high-end garments that are sought after by folks from all walks of life.

The fiber harvested from the Alpaca is lustrous, luxurious and silky. It is softer than cashmere and warmer than wool. Knitters, spinners and crafters have been producing clothing and artistic creations with it here in New York and Pennsylvania for years, even sparking events like alpaca festivals.

Imagine! Alpacas is the name of a business owned by Denise and Ed Burkart, who have a cozy farm in Jeffersonville, NY. A recent conversation with them revealed some of the mystique surrounding the crea-



TRR photos by Jonathan Fox

Herds of alpacas dot the landscape in various locations throughout New York and Pennsylvania.



Consumers can purchase alpaca in many forms, from harvested fleece to finished products.

tures and what can be achieved from harvesting their fleece. “The animals are shorn once a year, in early spring,” Denise explained, “so that they can be cool for the summer and provide fiber for the folks that spin, crochet, knit and felt. I, myself, am more into the crafts and soft-décor items for the home that customers are often drawn to, and incorporate both wet and dry felting techniques in some of the unique items that I produce locally.” Felting involves laborious hours of interlocking the fibers, which create mesmerizing color variations. The end result, a strong, durable fabric, is used for both small and large-scale projects. The Burkarts welcome visitors all year long and have a small retail store on the premises, where folks can admire, try on and take home a variety of products. Whether you're looking for the raw materials or a finished product, there is something for everyone, beginner or accomplished, and the variety offered allows for every budget.

Durable and beautiful, items made from alpaca fleece have long been treasured, but the recent rise in popularity of local alpaca farms has allowed consumers here in the country to spin their own yarn, weave their own blankets or purchase a one-of-a-kind garment of such high quality that they can be

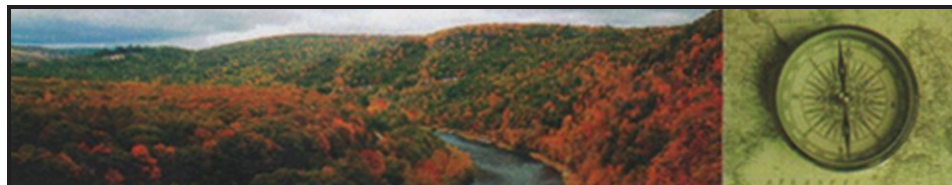
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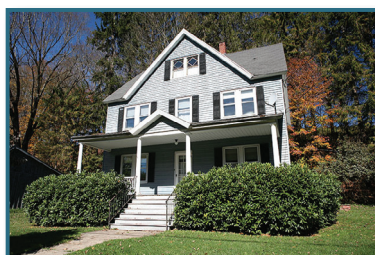
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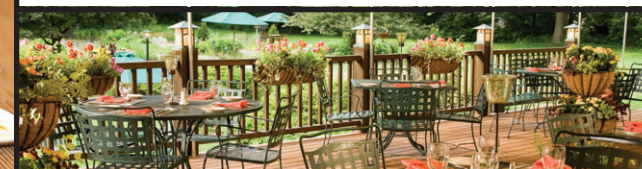
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## GOING LOCAL

Continued from page 36

“passed down for generations” according to Burkart.

Spread out over 40 acres in Callicoon, NY, another alpaca farm is thriving. Sixteen years ago, Rob Bruce and Michele Armour “decided to get a weekend place in the mountains,” finally settling on the property now known as Rosehaven Alpacas. Their journey from city dwellers to county life has been interesting, and their fascination with the animals themselves began with Rob coming across a small herd of alpacas “in the middle of a road,” after they had wandered out of their enclosure on a farm nearby. “We had seen a few signs for an alpaca farm in the area,” Rob said, “but had never really paid attention to it.” That day, surrounded in the road by “strange, long-necked, alien-looking creatures,” changed Rob’s and Michele’s lives fairly quickly and led to their ongoing love affair with the sweet, gentle giants. Today, the pair hosts the annual Alpaca Festival at Bethel Woods Center for

the Arts each Labor Day weekend. Networking with others is a big part of what Rosehaven does. “We’ve had a great time meeting and knowing [other] alpaca

people,” they say. “We email together, learn together, travel to shows together and most importantly, we laugh together.” Rosehaven Alpacas has grown exponentially, hosting other farms on its property, building a large clientele and supporting an extensive inventory with its online store. Men’s and women’s apparel, kids clothing, and golf attire are available along with yarn, fabric by the yard and items for the home. “Cozy up with a luxurious alpaca throw,” their website reads, “or treat your feet to a beautiful rug that will last forever.” Hats, socks, bags, gloves and mittens are but a few of the *luxe* accessories available at Rosehaven, Imagine! and other alpaca farms scattered about the countryside. What better time than now, with winter upon us, to add to your wardrobe, or enhance your own warm and cozy home with

something made from modern-day golden fleece?



Imagine! Alpacas’ Denise Burkart displays yarn, garments, craft items and fleece in her retail outlet in Jeffersonville, NY.

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For more information regarding alpaca farms in New York and Pennsylvania visit [www.ilovealpacas.com](http://www.ilovealpacas.com).

# ☞ A WINTER'S NAP The joy of sleeping in

By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

Listed under the Special Skills section of my resume are ballet, cooking and sleeping in. Just kidding. But really, if sleeping in were an Olympic sport, I would get a gold medal. If you wanted to give me a present, you should give me a day where I can sleep in. As The Postal Service (the band, not the mail delivery system) said, "Don't wake me; I plan on sleeping in."

It feels as if I used to sleep in all the time, as my non-full-time-job lifestyle afforded me such joy. But I suppose that's not quite true. In high school, I would have to wake up at 6 a.m. or some time when the sun wasn't up due to my hour-long bus ride (yes, that's how we do it in the country). And then on Saturdays I woke up at 8 a.m. to go to dance rehearsal for the day. In college there were some days when I would have an 8 a.m. class, and some days when my first class was at 6 at night. This allowed for a very flexible sleeping schedule, which

I miss, oh so much. And now I wake up at 8 a.m. every day, Monday through Friday. One would think I would have gotten used to waking up so early (and trust me, I know some people get up even earlier than I do); but, oh no. If I could sleep in every day I

would. However, getting only one or two days a week to sleep in makes it all the more special.

If you feel the same way, you should relish in the glory of sleeping in. Here is how it should be done. Wake up to the silence of no annoying ringing alarm clock. Take the time to open your eyes, look at the clock, and then not care about what time it is (or don't look at the clock at all). Now close the shades, pull the covers up, and sink your head back into that wonderfully cushiony pillow. You can lie there and think about anything you want, like whether or not your significant other will want to get brunch as much as you do, or think of the title of your best-selling memoir. Close your eyes and drift slowly back to sleep. Then, sleep and sleep until you want to. If I can't fall back asleep, I'll just lie there and daydream, or cuddle with my cat.

Sometimes, I feel the need to justify why I slept in. "Oh, well I worked really hard yesterday," or, "I slept in so I'll have the energy to clean the house today." These things may or may not be true. The truth is, you don't need an excuse to sleep in. As Nike says, "Just do it!"



This is an Austrian postcard from 1901.

Contributed photo

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