

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

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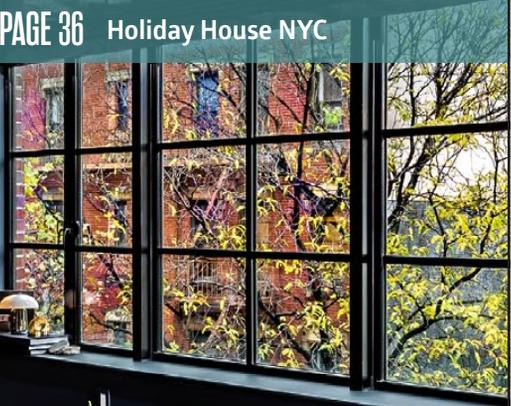
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DESIGNING FOR A CURE

PAGE 36 Holiday House NYC



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44 | carving out an art niche



American Lifestyle magazine

Dear Bill and Judy,

Have you ever bitten into a crisp apple that tasted like maraschino cherries or smelled of roses? This issue of American Lifestyle is chock-full of delightful surprises, beginning with a feature on Weston's Antique Apple Orchards in New Berlin, Wisconsin. Orchardist Kenneth Weston remembers when his grandfather bought the property, which was a dairy farm at the time, in the 1930s. Now they grow over 150 varieties, including Calville Blanc d'Hiver, an antique apple that dates back to the 1500s.

Columbus, Ohio, is keeping a secret: it offers not only abundant urban entertainment and culture but also a greener side that resonates with nature and animal lovers. The Grange Insurance Audubon Center is an 18,000-square-foot facility that's economically designed with recycled materials and serves as an educational hub. There is also the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, globally recognized as a cornerstone of conservation, education, and public interaction with wildlife.

Artist and philanthropist Iris Dankner has witnessed unexpected turns in her life, beginning with a fourteen-year stint as a graphic designer for Lord & Taylor. While raising her two girls, Dankner discovered her true calling was interior design and thus embarked on a different career path. After being diagnosed with cancer, she channeled her creativity and passion into a successful fund-raiser in New York City called Holiday House, which showcases A-list and up-and-coming interior designers while raising awareness for breast cancer research.

As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

Stacey Shanner



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Front of Tear Out Card 1



pistachio rose clouds

American Lifestyle
magazine



- 4 egg whites
- ½ c. granulated sugar
- 1 c. powdered sugar
- 1 tsp. rosewater
- 4 drops red food coloring
- Pinch of salt
- ½ c. finely chopped pistachios
- 3 tbsp. finely chopped organic, untreated rose petals



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Back of Tear Out Card 1

pistachio rose clouds



MAKES ABOUT 12

1. Preheat the oven to 230°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. In the bowl of an electric stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk the egg whites at a high speed until slightly frothy. Continue to whisk at a medium-high speed, adding the granulated sugar 1 tablespoon at a time. Then add the powdered sugar in the same fashion. Add the rosewater, food coloring, and salt and turn the mixer to high. Whisk on high until the mixture is glossy and stiff peaks are formed.

3. Set aside 1 tablespoon of the pistachios and 1 tablespoon of the rose petals for garnish. Fold the remaining pistachios

and rose petals into the meringue.

4. Use 2 spoons to scoop the mixture onto the parchment—one to scoop, the other to shape the meringues—forming 1½-inch mounds. The cookies don't need much room between one another; they don't expand. Dust each meringue with a pinch of the reserved pistachios and rose petals. Bake for 1 hour and 30 minutes, or until hollow sounding when tapped. Cool on a wire rack and serve immediately.

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pizza and pipes

interview with **jack barz** | written by **I.j. ramos** | photography by **jack barz**

Mesa, Arizona's Organ Stop Pizza offers one of the most unique dining experiences in the country by serving its food with a heaping side of organ music. Owner Jack Barz discusses his iconic restaurant and its main attraction, the world's largest Wurlitzer pipe organ, which has been entertaining customers for over four decades.

Tell us a little about yourself. Did you grow up in Arizona? How did you get involved with Organ Stop Pizza?

In the summer of 1973, I moved to Mesa, about two blocks away from where the original Mesa Organ Stop Pizza would open in the summer of 1975. I was six years old the first time I went to Organ Stop and loved eating there. I applied as a dishwasher the summer I turned sixteen. During my senior year, I was promoted to crew supervisor, and that's when my love of the hospitality business started. I decided to get a degree

in hotel and restaurant management from Northern Arizona University, but I continued to work at Organ Stop during school breaks and was hired as a full-time manager upon graduation. That was about the same time the owners decided to build the current location and needed to add to the ownership group.

How did a 1927 Wurlitzer organ become the focal point of your business?

When Organ Stop first opened in 1975, the intention was always for the Mighty

Wurlitzer to be the star of the restaurant. We really are an entertainment facility that serves pizza as a source of income. As we've continued to improve the instrument throughout the years, the organ has become a personality in its own right. The Wurlitzer in the Mesa shop came from the Denver Theatre. The vast tonal resources it possesses are unmatched by any other musical instrument. In fact, because of the tonal range from low to high, it is actually one of the most difficult instruments in the world to record.

How long did it take to set up the current organ system? What sorts of additions or refinements have you made over the years?

We spent about four months installing the organ in our current location. We were a team of about twelve, working seven days a week, usually between twelve to fourteen hours every day. Every pipe had to be individually removed, packed, moved, unpacked, and eventually retuned. The day we opened at this location, we had fifty-one ranks (sets) of pipes operating. With our most recent addition of an eight-foot principal and three-rank mixture, the organ is now at a staggering eighty-two ranks, for a total of nearly six thousand pipes, making it not only the largest Wurlitzer in the world but also the largest theatre organ of any type ever assembled.

The major additions we've made over the years include the current console, which was built for us in 1997. It is an exact replica of the largest console ever created by Wurlitzer that was installed at Brooklyn Paramount Theatre. We've also been able to acquire a set of thirty-two-foot diaphones that Wurlitzer only made twelve sets of. We also have a percussion called the tuned tympani, and Wurlitzer only made three total units of those. Our goal for increasing the size of the instrument is to add color and dimension to what we already have; we do not increase ranks just for the sake of making it larger.

The acoustics of your building, which is more of a warehouse size, would also seem to be important to the sound. Did you want a space with high ceilings, for example, to maximize the musical experience?

This building was built exclusively for the organ to "speak" into the dining room for maximum acoustical pleasure. Several architects, sound professionals, and organ builders worked together to design an area

that allowed the sound to build and have an area that we could serve our customers. There is not a square inch of the dining room/performance area that was not thought out completely.

How do you go about choosing organists? How many do you employ?

We have a staff of four incredibly talented musicians, and each brings a different dimension to the musical performance. They all have their specialties. For example, Charlie Balogh is a master of the Jazz/Big Band era, and Lew Williams plays some classical pieces like a one-man symphony orchestra. With the theatre organ world being a pretty small community, any qualified organists are well within our sights and have either played here as a substitute or have been around long enough that we know of their capabilities. We have a list of people who would love to have the chance to play our Mighty Wurlitzer on a regular basis. That's just how special this instrument is. It's something we are extremely proud of.

What kinds of visuals accompany the music to wow the audience?

Part of the Organ Stop experience is a visual show to accompany the music. Most of the tuned and untuned percussions are hung in the dining room rafters or on the walls for greater audience appeal. Several lighting effects have been added throughout the years, along with military and American flags and bubbles that magically descend from the rafters. We also have a custom three-foot disco ball to help entertain our audience. Our most popular effect, though, is the world famous Dancing Alley Cats. These four kitty puppets have been our most popular staff members for thirty years running. In addition, our organists control all the theatrical and lighting effects, so they're not only the conductors but also the entire band and orchestra, the lighting and



altv To hear the organ in action, visit americanlifestylemag.com/altv.

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stage engineers, and the production crew. They wear many hats while performing every night.

How many customers do you welcome on a given night? How many people visit every year? Are there times or events that draw even bigger crowds?

We're a very seasonal restaurant. Our crowds quadruple during the high season of winter compared to our slower season, which is late summer to early fall. The nightly customer count is about five to six hundred. We seat seven hundred people and often turn over the dining room three or four times per night during the winter. Our busiest times coincide with high tourist season, which includes Thanksgiving weekend, the week between Christmas and New Year's, and spring break. We are one of the most popular tourist destinations in the East Valley of Phoenix, so we are typically the go-to attraction for out-of-town guests. Most years, we serve about 250,000 guests.

What are the most requested songs? Most unusual? Do your organists ever get stumped?

The majority of the musical program is based on audience requests, and there certainly are some pieces of music that do not lend themselves well to the theatre pipe organ, so they are not played. By far the most popular request is the *Phantom of the Opera* theme song. Other popular requests are "Alley Cat," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," Disney pieces, patriotic pieces, and "Bohemian Rhapsody," or, as someone requested one night, "Bohemian Rap-City." One of the most unusual requests is "In a Gadda da Vida." That piece has a cult-like following.

There are several pieces (usually newer music) that our organists are just not familiar with, so those requests generally are not played. With that in mind, one of our organists, Brett Valliant, always has

his smartphone with him at the console for that reason. If he receives a request for an unfamiliar piece of music, he listens to it live while he plays it. He is usually playing about three measures behind what he is listening to. It's quite extraordinary! All of our musicians are so immensely talented; it really blows my mind what they are capable of producing from our Mighty Wurlitzer. Even after thirty years of listening to them, they always surprise me with their musicality.

As amazing as the music is, people wouldn't go if the food weren't good, so tell us a little about it:

We certainly wouldn't be operating for over forty years if we weren't serving high-quality meals to our guests. I think one of the things that makes our pizza stand out is the amount of cheese and toppings we pile high on our pizzas. So many other pizza restaurants have continued to reduce the amount of toppings, and we have always maintained that pizza should be a filling dinner experience that doesn't leave you hungry an hour later. The amount of cheese, meat, and fresh vegetables we top each pizza with will leave you satisfied for hours. We also serve an excellent gluten-free pizza that people rave about, and we serve a variety of appetizers, pasta dinners, and sandwiches, and we have a full salad bar.

What else makes Organ Stop Pizza such a memorable dining experience?

Organ Stop is definitely in a class of its own when it comes to the restaurant world. We are a destination stop more than a spur-of-the-moment dining experience, which is one reason we are only open for dinner to the public. However, we are also available for private lunches for groups of fifty or more people. This gives us the opportunity to host school field trips, company parties, business customer appreciation lunches, church

groups, and our most frequent groups—people staying at RV resorts.

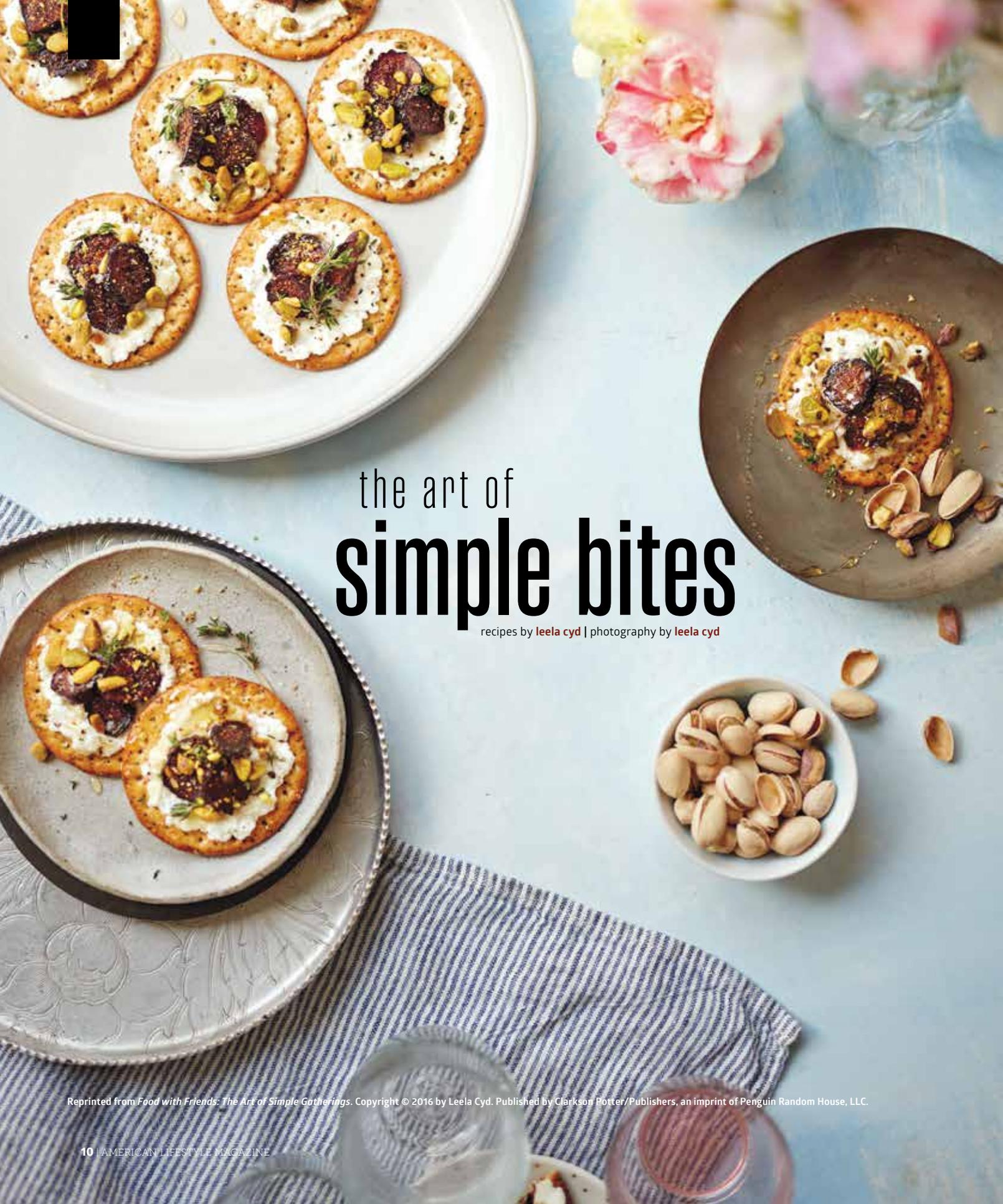
During the winter months, when the Phoenix metro area is filled with winter visitors, Organ Stop often has two private lunches booked every day from January through March. During that time period, people visit us from all over the US and Canada. We also have guests visit from various parts of the world, including many European countries, as well as Asia, Africa, and Australia.

What does the future look like for Organ Stop Pizza?

We'll continue to add rare sets of pipes if any become available, and we are always looking at ways to add to the theatrical portion of the show. Technology plays a huge role in the theatrics available to us. Many lighting effects are now LED-based, so power consumption is much lower than before, meaning we can add to the lighting effects without needing to meet any additional power requirements.

As far as the restaurant itself, we are going to continue to grow with the local market. We constantly hear from folks throughout the country asking us to expand into their area. It would be great to be able to build in other areas, but, unfortunately, there are not that many high-quality organs available anymore, and we really are not looking to expand out of this area. We're happy with what we have going on here in Mesa.

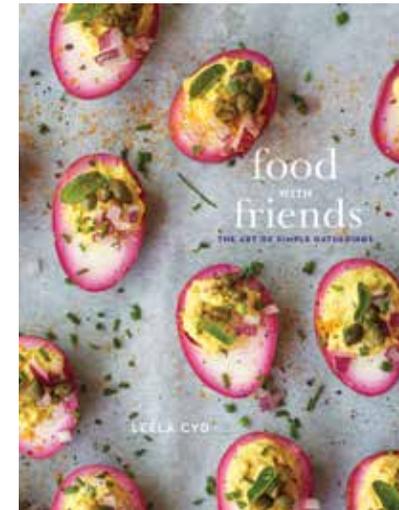
For more info, visit organstoppizza.com



the art of
simple bites

recipes by **leela cyd** | photography by **leela cyd**

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Pickled Fig, Pistachio, and Ricotta Canapés

I FIRST DISCOVERED THIS FLAVOR COMBINATION on a tartine at Cyril's, the sultry, candlelit wine and cheese bar my friends Sasha and Michael opened in Portland, Oregon. I entered the restaurant sighing with happiness, leaving the gray chilling-my-bones weather at the door, and my eyes turned to saucers when I spotted these gorgeous purple, green, and white darlings on the marble bar counter. Upon first bite my mind was sent aflurry on how I might re-create, modify, and enhance this sensual little snack for my own impromptu fetes. Many a good idea has been born at the behest of a cozy space, the company of pals, and the perfect bite to eat, right?

FOR THE PICKLED FIGS

12 dried Black Mission figs, sliced into thin disks
1 cup red wine vinegar
¼ cup sugar
3 sprigs fresh thyme

FOR THE CANAPÉS

1 cup whole-milk ricotta cheese
24 of your favorite crackers
Olive oil
Sea salt
Honey, for drizzling
½ cup pistachios, lightly crushed
Fresh thyme leaves, for garnish

1. Make the pickled figs: In a small pot, combine the figs, vinegar, sugar, thyme, and ½ cup water and bring to a simmer over medium-low heat, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover, and let the figs steep for 2 hours or overnight in the fridge.

2. Assemble the canapés: Spread about 1 heaping teaspoon of ricotta on each cracker. Gingerly place the pickled figs (about 1 or 2 per cracker) atop the ricotta, then top with olive oil, sea salt, a drizzle of honey, and a hefty sprinkle of crushed pistachios. Finish with fresh thyme leaves and serve immediately.

MAKES ABOUT 24 MINI TARTINES



Chocolate Marcona Mini Muffins

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THESE MINI MUFFINS RECEIVED THE HIGHEST FORM OF PRAISE: They were approved by Amelia and Deckard, the two kids of my dear friend. (They were even caught stealing away with a few, so they could share “the brownies” with their friends when their mom wasn’t looking.) These muffins veiled as brownies are tasty and somewhat wholesome, with a low sugar content and the addition of protein-packed almond meal. They make a great road trip snack and/or pair perfectly with a strong coffee as a whimsical, chocolaty breakfast treat.
.....

1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup almond meal
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder (I like Scharffen Berger or Valrhona for depth of flavor)
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup buttermilk
½ cup packed light brown sugar
⅓ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
⅔ cup Marcona almonds (see note)
¾ cup chocolate melting wafers

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Grease 24 cups of mini muffin pans or line with mini muffin liners.
2. In a large bowl, sift together the flour, almond meal, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Discard any large lumps of almond meal remaining in your sifter.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together the buttermilk, brown sugar, vegetable oil, egg, and vanilla until the mixture is uniform. Fold the buttermilk mixture into the flour mixture, stirring just until the batter comes together. Gently fold in ⅓ cup of the almonds and the chocolate wafers into the batter.
4. Scoop a heaping tablespoon of batter into each muffin cup. Top with the reserved ⅓ cup Marcona almonds, pressing the almonds gently into the top of the batter so they don’t pop out while baking.
5. Bake the muffins for 12 to 15 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in a muffin comes out clean. Let cool for 5 minutes in the pan, then gently remove the muffins and let them finish cooling on a wire rack.

NOTE: Marcona almonds are indeed more expensive than regular almonds. They have a salty decadence to them that is very distinctive. If you’d rather make your own, just toast raw almonds in a bit of olive oil over medium heat and sprinkle generously with flaky salt.

MAKES 24 MINI MUFFINS



Sweet and Salty Pumpkin Seed Clusters

I FIND IT SAD THAT PUMPKIN SEEDS, OR PEPITAS AS THEY'RE KNOWN in many Spanish-speaking parts of the world, are often relegated to a one-day, post-Halloween cooking event. I want to eat sweet, salty, spiced pepitas all year long, and they're an unsung ingredient in a lot of my favorite recipes. Everyone should have the experience of roasting hulled pumpkin seeds at least once in their life. As these are roasting, your kitchen transforms into a cozy realm of autumnal flavor. You can practically hear the crunch of dry leaves and feel the crisp chill of the season! And once the cooking is done, you have a dead-easy, highly addictive little bite in about 20 minutes, great for garnishing soups and salads.

1 cup pumpkin seeds
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
Pinch of ground cloves
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat.
2. In a medium bowl, toss together the pumpkin seeds, honey, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, and salt until everything is thoroughly combined. Spread the mixture onto the prepared baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes, rotating the pan front to back halfway through the cooking time, for even browning.
3. Let the pumpkin seeds cool completely before breaking into clusters. Package in a sealed jar or bag for gifting. Can be kept for up to 1 week in a sealed container.

SERVES 4



Pistachio Rose Clouds

THESE LITTLE PINK MERINGUES HAVE A MESSY ELEGANCE TO THEM. Their delicate rose flavor and subtle crunch from pops of crushed pistachios combine for a delectable, fun eating experience. I like my meringues with a slight chew at the center, so if you prefer yours to be crunchy all the way through, bake for 15 to 20 minutes longer than the recommended time. Either way, there's nothing quite like the melt-in-your-mouth sweetness of a good meringue. They are especially tasty when accompanied by a rich, smoky black tea: Lapsang souchong is a wonderful option—its campfire-earthiness helps cut through the extreme sweetness of the meringue.

4 egg whites
½ cup granulated sugar
1 cup powdered sugar
1 teaspoon rosewater
4 drops red food coloring
Pinch of salt
½ cup finely chopped pistachios
3 tablespoons finely chopped organic,
untreated rose petals

1. Preheat the oven to 230°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of an electric stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk the egg whites at a high speed until slightly frothy. Continue to whisk at a medium-high speed, adding the granulated sugar 1 tablespoon at a time. Then add the powdered sugar in the same fashion. Add the rosewater, food coloring, and salt and turn the mixer to high. Whisk on high until the mixture is glossy and stiff peaks are formed.
3. Set aside 1 tablespoon of the pistachios and 1 tablespoon of the rose petals for garnish. Fold the remaining pistachios and rose petals into the meringue.
4. Use 2 spoons to scoop the mixture onto the parchment—one to scoop, the other to shape the meringues—forming 1½-inch mounds. The cookies don't need much room between one another; they don't expand. Dust each meringue with a pinch of the reserved pistachios and rose petals. Bake for 1 hour and 30 minutes, or until hollow sounding when tapped. Cool on a wire rack and serve immediately.

MAKES ABOUT 12

weston's apples o' many flavors

interview with **kenneth weston** | written by **matthew brady** | photography by **j. christopher braker**



Many people love apples, but did you know that some taste like vanilla, strawberries, bananas, and even cashews? All of these and more can be found at Weston's Antique Apple Orchards in New Berlin, Wisconsin, which features over 150 varieties—many of which go back centuries. Orchardist Kenneth Weston gives us a slice of history as he discusses his family's longtime business.

Tell us a little bit about the history of your orchard:

I'd be glad to. I was born in Milwaukee in 1929, and I remember my grandfather purchasing the orchard when I was five or six as a hedge against the Great Depression, but it wasn't an orchard then; it was a dairy farm. There was a small orchard on the farm, but since my grandfather worked in an iron foundry, the basement of the barn was used to cast metals.

Eventually, my father got the idea of adding trees to the orchard with trees sent from nurseries from around the country that had specialty apples. They planted those trees, and they became the origin of the orchard that we have today. Some of the original trees are still here, so they are quite old. In addition, I was a mathematics professor for forty-two years; during my travels, I collected a number of trees, and we added another five acres to the orchard. Today, the entire farm is listed on the National Register of Historic Landscapes.

We sell the apples mainly in two markets: the West Allis Farmers Market, which is near Milwaukee, and the Dane County Farmers'

Market near the capitol building. We sell all varieties at the barn on Sundays.

Has the orchard experienced any difficult times?

Yes, and it was recently. I've never experienced anything like the storms we're having lately. Back in 2012, for the first time in the history of this area, the orchard was hailed out. The hail came down so thick and so fast, it broke windows and pruned the tops of the trees and, of course, decimated the apples. It was devastating. We had a 100 percent loss. It took two years for the tops of the trees to reproduce, and a number of trees did not survive the hailstorm.

We're also on a high hill, so we've always had wind, but now we have 70-mile-per-hour winds, and we've recently experienced continuous rain that lasted for days. The summers are getting extremely hot, too. All of this can affect the orchard.

How do you maintain such a large orchard? Do you have a lot of people working with you?

When I retired and went back to the orchard, I saw very quickly that my father, mother, and sister couldn't care for it by themselves. They were getting along in years, so I worked very hard at giving the orchard away to different foundations. It took four years, but in 2004 my sister and I managed to donate the orchard to the city of New Berlin. Now the orchard is a city park owned by New Berlin. The city maintains the buildings, which include a machine shed, a 1902 Dutch

Colonial barn, and the farmhouse. The family maintains the orchard with about twelve to fifteen volunteers.

We do have a small income from the orchard, and we pay about four pickers to pick the orchard. It takes all these people in concert to keep the orchard going, especially since it consists of these antique varieties, which are much harder to maintain than the average apple. The modern varieties tend to be disease-resistant, and they are easier to pack and ship because they don't bruise. In contrast, we have one variety, Chenango Strawberry, that has to be picked with gloves because the skin is so tender, we could leave fingerprints.

Is there an art to growing good apples?

Yes. In fact, we teach horticulture courses. In April and May, the orchard offers three courses—in pruning, pest management control, and grafting fruit trees—and all of these are important in raising these apples. Pruning helps to open the tree up for sunlight and helps with disease control in spring. Pest management is something we have to be particularly careful about. People roam the orchard with their children, so we cannot use very harsh chemicals, especially if they are long lasting. So we have to be very careful about how we spray the orchard, and that whole technique is explained in the second course. For example, after we spray, we allow three days for the spray to disappear, so the orchard is quarantined for those three days. We

do not use herbicides or anything on the grass, either. We keep it trimmed down to a lawn level. In the grafting course, we teach people the different techniques for grafting new and old trees. That course is our most popular one.

How do you feel apple growing has changed over the years?

When I was a child, my father hired a person to maintain it with essentially three chemicals: one for keeping things from crawling up the trunk, another to help with apple scab, and a third for insect control. He sprayed two or three times a year, and the apples were clean. Now we have to spray every ten days. We start in the early part of April and go through July; some orchardists spray every ten days in August. The chemicals have also changed—those old chemicals used in the '30s would not suffice today. Some chemicals today are reasonably cheap and very powerful: they kill all insects in the orchard. We could never get away with anything like that today in a city park. So we use super mild ones, as well as other ways of controlling insects. So it's more time consuming, but it keeps the fruit clean.

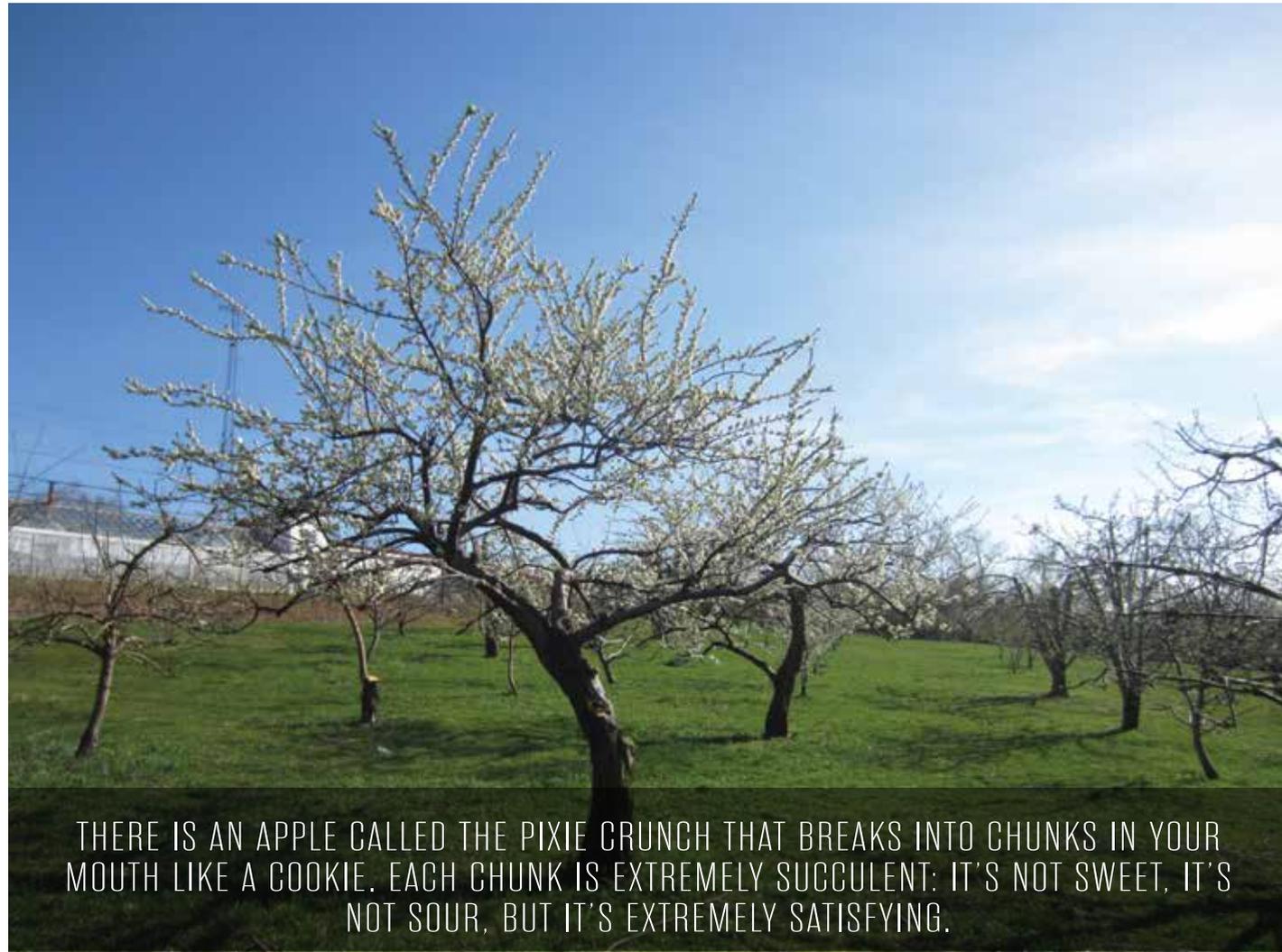
Is the soil under your orchard conducive to growing apples?

You just brought up a very important issue that people should be aware of: the soil flavors the apples. For example, Michigan has a lot of basalt soil, which is volcanic, so the apples grow large and beautiful, but the acids aren't there to flavor the apples. Our orchard, in contrast, has a lot of limestone,



We teach horticulture courses. In April and May, the orchard offers three courses—in pruning, pest management control, and grafting fruit trees—and all of these are important in raising these apples.





THERE IS AN APPLE CALLED THE PIXIE CRUNCH THAT BREAKS INTO CHUNKS IN YOUR MOUTH LIKE A COOKIE. EACH CHUNK IS EXTREMELY SUCCULENT: IT'S NOT SWEET, IT'S NOT SOUR, BUT IT'S EXTREMELY SATISFYING.

and, although it's tough to plant in this ground, it produces acids that flavor the apples. You can try an apple from basalt soil versus one from limestone soil and taste the difference.

What are your oldest apple varieties?

The orchard really is kind of a beautiful museum of old antique varieties, but the really old ones are very interesting in their own right. A lot of the apple varieties that are imported from Europe are present, along with apples imported from around the world. America didn't have apples as we

know them; instead, the varieties present were mostly crabapples, some of which were poisonous. We have some European varieties that go back to the 1500s, for example, like the Calville Blanc d'Hiver. We also have an apple that goes back even further, maybe to the 1200s, that looks like a small peach; it's called Court Pendu Plat (the flat apple).

What are some surprising apple flavors?

The apple is the most diverse of all the fruits. We have an apple that originally came from Oregon called the Apricot Apple, and it tastes like an apricot. And then there's

the Winter Banana, which, if you eat it raw, tastes like a fairly ordinary apple, but if you fry it, the smell of bananas is everywhere, and it has a banana-like flavor. There is an apple called the Pixie Crunch that breaks into chunks in your mouth like a cookie. Each chunk is extremely succulent: it's not sweet, it's not sour, but it's extremely satisfying. One of my favorites is called the King David, which has a maraschino cherry flavor to it. There's also the Russian Raspberry, which has a raspberry taste and even looks like a giant raspberry, and another variety, Chenango Strawberry, that smells and tastes like roses. We have one couple in Chicago who buys them just for their scent. They put them in a bowl, slice them, and use the apples' fragrance of roses.

We also have a number of wild varieties that I've preserved. I don't think anyone would consider keeping these things, but I did because I thought they were quite unique. Overall, most wild varieties are not useable—they have no flavor, and they don't cook well—but for some reason we were very lucky. We have about five different delicious wild varieties, one of which is the Lemonade Apple. You'd be fooled by the looks: it's green and turns light yellow when it's ripe and has a wonderful flavor. We have another one coming out that I just discovered recently. It's a small reddish apple that doesn't get very big, but it has a cherry-like flavor. A number of clubs and church groups visit us, and I offered this to them as a treat. They loved it—they picked the whole tree clean!

You said that one of your favorite apples is the King David. Do you have any other varieties that are personal favorites?

I have a number of them. One is the Pixie Crunch, which I can devour like candy. The Golden Russet is another one I very much like. My favorite, if you like the taste of cashews, is the Ashmead's Kernel, which has

the flavor of cashews mixed with honey. I've read that this apple is very popular in the Queen's gardens in Britain as well. They've had parties that rate these apples, and this has been rated number one on several occasions.

Do you sell apple products like ciders?

We have a cider mill on the property. Making cider is an art form in and of itself. What most people don't know is that different varieties produce different colors when they come off the press. For example, the Pink Pearl is pink when it first comes off the press. It's gorgeous, as is the flavor. The Spitzenberg produces a crystal white fluid; however, the cider quickly oxidizes and turns brown.

When the ciders come off the press, they go into a deep freeze; we don't add preservatives. When it comes from the press, it's sharp and flavorful, but after we freeze it, it becomes mellower and the flavor seems to increase. It's the darnedest thing I've ever seen.

Do you ship your apples?

We ship apples all over the country. We have shipped to California and Massachusetts, for example. But we mostly sell to people in Wisconsin, Iowa, and the Chicago area.

Can people visit the orchard all year round?

It's a city park, so there are no restrictions to when people can visit, except during spraying time (which ends at the beginning of July). Visitors have to be aware, though, that we don't allow picking. These are not pick-your-own apples; to pick these apples requires a great deal of care.

For more info, visit westonapples.com





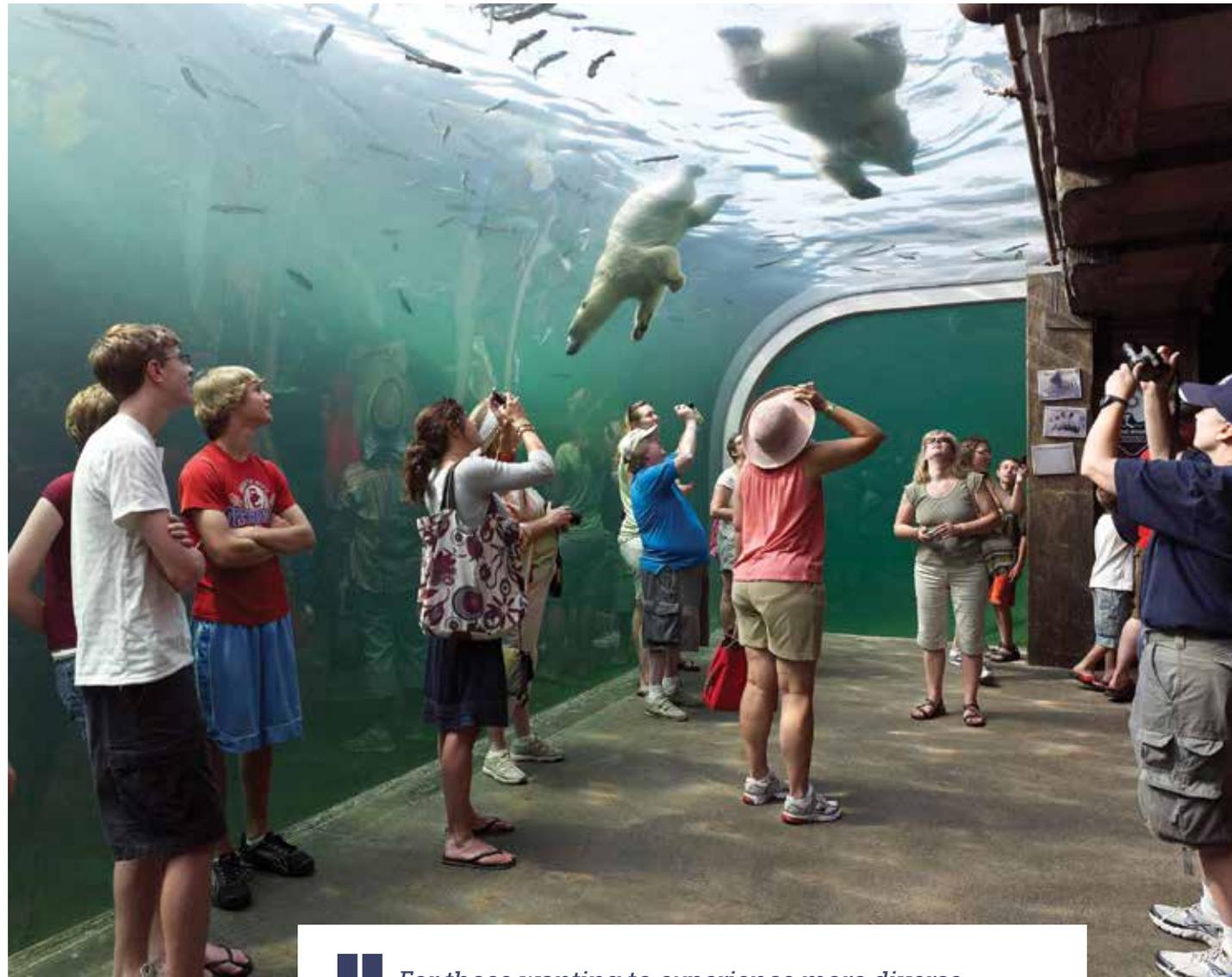
A GREENER SIDE OF COLUMBUS

written by [abby feinknopf](#) | photography by [brad feinkopf](#)

Mention Columbus, Ohio, to people and one word will likely pop into their heads: football. The Ohio State Buckeyes are a legendary squad with a longtime stature as a college football dynasty. However, the cultural side of Columbus is equally impressive, as writer Abby Feinknopf discovered when she moved to this Midwest mecca.

The city of Columbus, Ohio, centrally located in Franklin County, is the undeniable home of The Ohio State University and its national championship-winning football team, the Buckeyes. For over a century, Ohio State has been making football history with famous coaches taking them to numerous postseason bowl games and winning eight national championships. Here, names like Woody Hayes, Earle Bruce, John Cooper, Jim Tressel, and Urban Meyer are revered with an almost religious zeal, by saints and sinners, believers and nonbelievers, old and young alike. Ohio State fanaticism is so established, though, the fact that Columbus is the capital of Ohio sometimes gets sidelined.

In moving here after college, this West Virginia native traded in her quiet, green rolling hills for a job in the bustling, flat, concrete grid of Columbus. I have been living here for twenty-five years, and, though swearing up and down that I would never convert, I now consider myself a Buckeye. My weekend wardrobe, once Mountaineer blue and gold, has evolved to Brutus's scarlet and gray; this non-football follower now frequents The Shoe (Ohio State's horseshoe-shaped football stadium), can make a mean buckeye (the chocolate-dipped peanut butter confection that is a must-have at our tailgates), and can sing all the songs played by The Ohio State University Marching Band.



“For those wanting to experience more diverse wildlife while in town, they merely need to drive to the northwest suburb of Powell, Ohio, home to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.”

Despite this confession, there is an old saying that somehow still stands true for me: “You can take the girl out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of the girl.” Believe it or not, this city, the fifteenth largest in the United States, is more than just a football town; it is a glittering, cultural hub with an often overlooked green oasis that is bound to impress anyone who visits.

My envious relatives back home have called me a spoiled Columbusite because of the endless dining options and cultural offerings the city affords me. We do indeed have a large foodie following and farm-to-table movement that pair nicely with craft breweries, distilleries, artisanal coffee roasters, bakeries, and ice cream shops. Plus, those with an ear for music can be entertained by Columbus’s own opera, symphony, jazz orchestra, and bands of all genres.

Let’s not forget the artsy types, either. Those with an artistic eye can saturate themselves in color and all types of art by visiting the newly expanded Columbus Museum of Art (CMoA) and The Ohio State University’s Wexner Center for The Arts galleries. Local art collectors know to frequent the city’s Short North neighborhood for its boutiques and galleries, especially during Columbus’s monthly Gallery Hop. Art advocates and aficionados, alongside the well-dressed fashionistas, tap into the Columbus College of Art & Design (CCAD) to experience their

annual student art exhibitions, art sale, and senior runway fashion show occurring on campus, only mere blocks east of the city’s epicenter.

When you are a country girl like me, it is easy to be smitten with the sophistication and scintillating sights and sounds of this city, but it isn’t long before a yearning arises to hear a solitary bird’s song while strolling out in the open, breathing in fresh air with blue skies overhead and green grass underfoot. (I can assure you that I am not the only one.) One mile south of the heart of downtown is the Grange Insurance Audubon Center, where I have come to find Columbus’s ecocraving urbanites convening on their lunch breaks, specifically to absorb some nature before beating it back to their cubicles and offices.

This roughly 18,000-square-foot facility is an award-winning, economical, and stylish model of sustainable design. Constructed with recycled materials, the Audubon Center relies on alternative energy sources to heat and cool itself as it sits atop a reclaimed and renovated brown field, which migrating birds have established as their stop or layover during their long journeys.

The Audubon Center also serves as an educational facility to local schools and the homeschooled communities, offering the use of three classrooms, a library, a nature store, an observation deck with bird feeders

and rocking chairs, outdoor habitat areas, rotating exhibits, and a natural playground area for kids. Guests can listen to recordings of migratory birdcalls in the library and can rent the two-hundred-seat multipurpose room for special occasions.

When I am not whistling along with the birds, I am often hiking alongside the bison in another of Columbus’s free gems: the Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park. Located in a Columbus suburb called Galion, which is approximately twenty minutes west of downtown, sit 7,000 acres of forest, prairies, and wetlands that define Battelle Darby Creek. Stretching for thirteen miles along the Big and Little Darby Creeks, this area is known by the locals as another exceptional, yet often overlooked, opportunity for a flora-and-fauna fix. This particular park has had bison reintroduced to the land, and visitors can get closeup views either from the gravel trails that circumvent the bison’s two enclosed pastures or from the observation deck of the nature center. Young children can explore the indoor nature exhibits, participate in special programming, and later picnic outdoors, while older naturalists can go fishing, kayaking, biking, and hiking in the area.

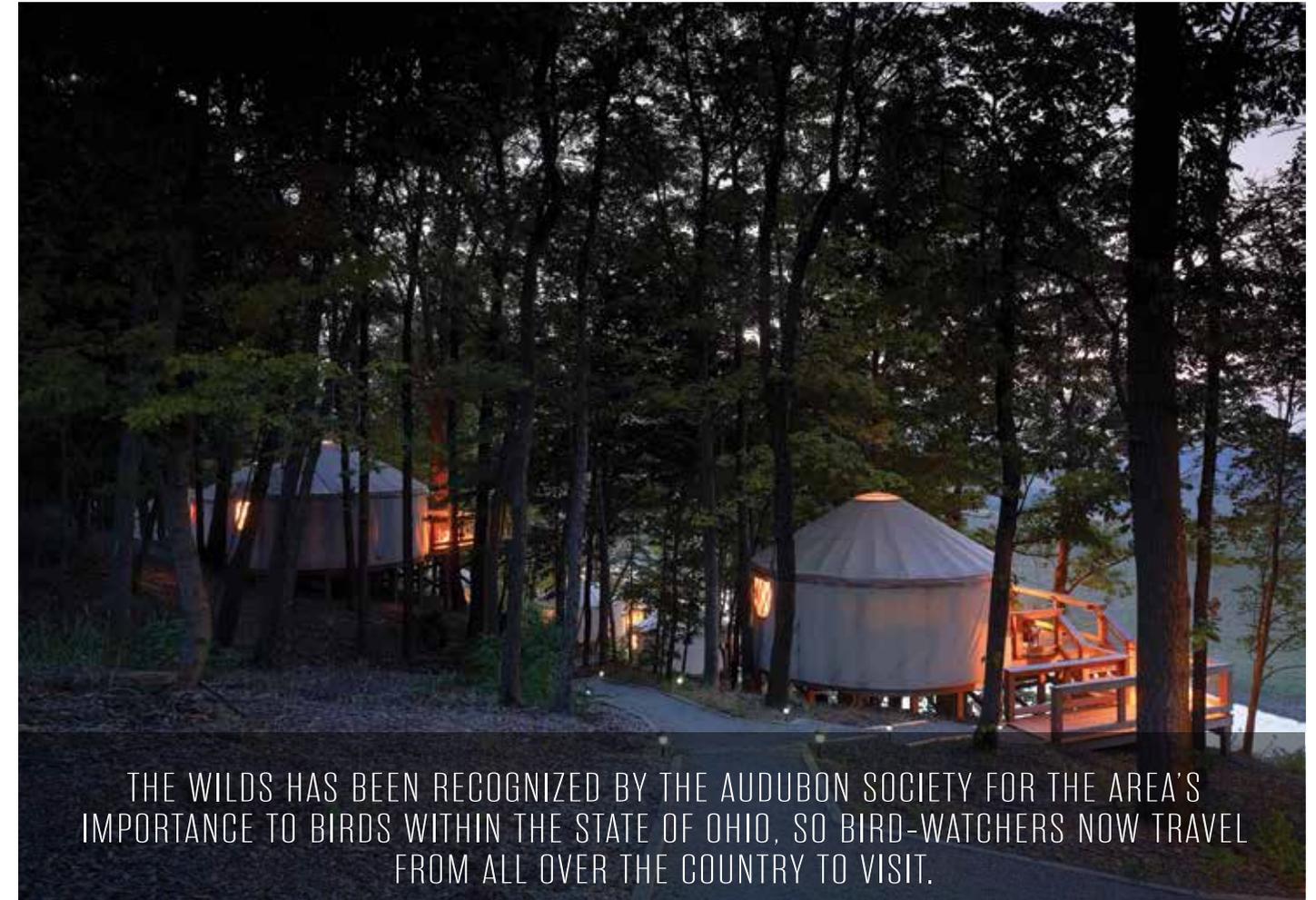
For those wanting to experience more diverse wildlife while in town, they merely need to drive to the northwest suburb of Powell, Ohio, home to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. In 1978, a charismatic

man named Jack Hanna took the helm as director of the Columbus Zoo, and, with undeterred enthusiasm and vision, he grew what then was a small zoo into a globally recognized center for conservation, education, and public interaction with wildlife. To date, Hanna has donated \$4 million of privately raised funds to assist with seventy conservation projects in thirty different countries. He further proved his commitment to bettering the world for animals by hitting the national talk-show circuit with zoo critters in tow. Various species, endangered or not, got their fifteen minutes of fame when they were featured on television, early morning to late night, where Hanna could maximize his audience and educate it on the animals' behalf.

Since the 1980s, improvements have been consistently made to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, to the point that, today, it cares for 10,000 animals representing 575 species—forty of which are endangered and thirty-three of which remain threatened. This favorite destination spot now houses animals from around the world, which you can view in exhibits like Asia Quest, Heart of Africa, and Australia and the Islands, as well as our own animals at the North America trail.

For those who want a break from the ever-immersive wildlife experiences at the zoo, there are many other fun things to do. For example, kids can ride an old-time carousel in the Shores and Aquarium section and can enjoy thirteen rides—including a log flume and a wooden roller coaster—at Jungle Jack's Landing. You can also splash around the adjacent 22.7-acre water park, Zoombezi Bay, or hit the links at the nearby 18-hole Safari Golf Club.

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium also operates The Wilds, a conservation center and safari park just one hour east of Columbus on I-70. It sits nestled in the hills



THE WILDS HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE AUDUBON SOCIETY FOR THE AREA'S IMPORTANCE TO BIRDS WITHIN THE STATE OF OHIO, SO BIRD-WATCHERS NOW TRAVEL FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO VISIT.

on 9,000 acres of reclaimed and restored strip-mining land, which boast grasslands, wetlands, prairies, woodlands, and lakes. Established with the mission of furthering conservation through science, education, and experiences, the initial planning of The Wilds began in the late seventies, finally coming to fruition in 1992, when wild horses called Przewalski's horses were first released into the park. Today, The Wilds features both well-known animals like rhinos, cheetahs, and giraffes, as well as more exotic, lesser-known creatures, such as African painted dogs, dholes, and scimitar-horned onyx.

Tours began in 1994 and have grown to include daily open-air vehicle safaris and

behind-the-scene experiences, called Wildside Tours, where visitors shadow the animal management team and see the center's inner workings. More recently, zip-line safaris have been added for those guests seeking a more adventurous view, and visitors can also explore the adjacent trails for mountain biking and hiking.

The Wilds has been recognized by the Audubon Society for the area's importance to birds within the state of Ohio, so bird-watchers now travel from all over the country to visit. Since the design and planting of the Butterfly Habitat, which features an array of flowering plants winding throughout The Wilds's acreage,

butterflies are abundant in the warm weather, allowing guests to enjoy close encounters with them.

Whether you live in town and are seeking a new adventure or you live elsewhere and have a family with varied interests that you are trying to accommodate for a long vacation, simply don some scarlet and gray, grab your hiking boots, and head to Buckeye Country: Columbus, Ohio, where the gridiron is just one of many areas you'll find greatness.

For more info, visit experiencecolumbus.com



building boats CRAFTING CONFIDENCE

written by [elizabeth bellizzi](#) | photography by [elizabeth bellizzi](#)



The nonprofit ASF offers at-risk youth ages eighteen to twenty-four an opportunity to reset their future course. It began in 1982 as an organization to preserve Alexandria's maritime history. Eleven years later, it recognized that boatbuilding could be a vehicle for improving lives.

By age seventeen, Darrel had hit some troubled waters. He found himself locked up and spent the next two years incarcerated. While at a halfway house, his parole officer recommended a different path. He followed it. "I came here the day after I left there," Darrel recalls.

The place he landed was the Alexandria Seaport Foundation (ASF) boat shop in Alexandria, Virginia. The work he was tasked with involved tools and techniques uncommon to most people his age. Words such as plumb, epoxy, and loft become part of their lexicon. "It was overwhelming," Darrel says, "because there's so much stuff you have to figure out."

It can be grueling and, after working for hours on a project, sometimes mishaps occur, such as a curved piece of plywood snapping. It isn't fair. But achieving fairness here takes on multiple and significant meanings. Young people like Darrel who are accepted into ASF's apprentice program learn that making their work "fair" in boatbuilding means each plank is smooth and flush. It's a long and tedious process, yet it's an exercise that is necessary to develop confidence in boat construction—and in life.

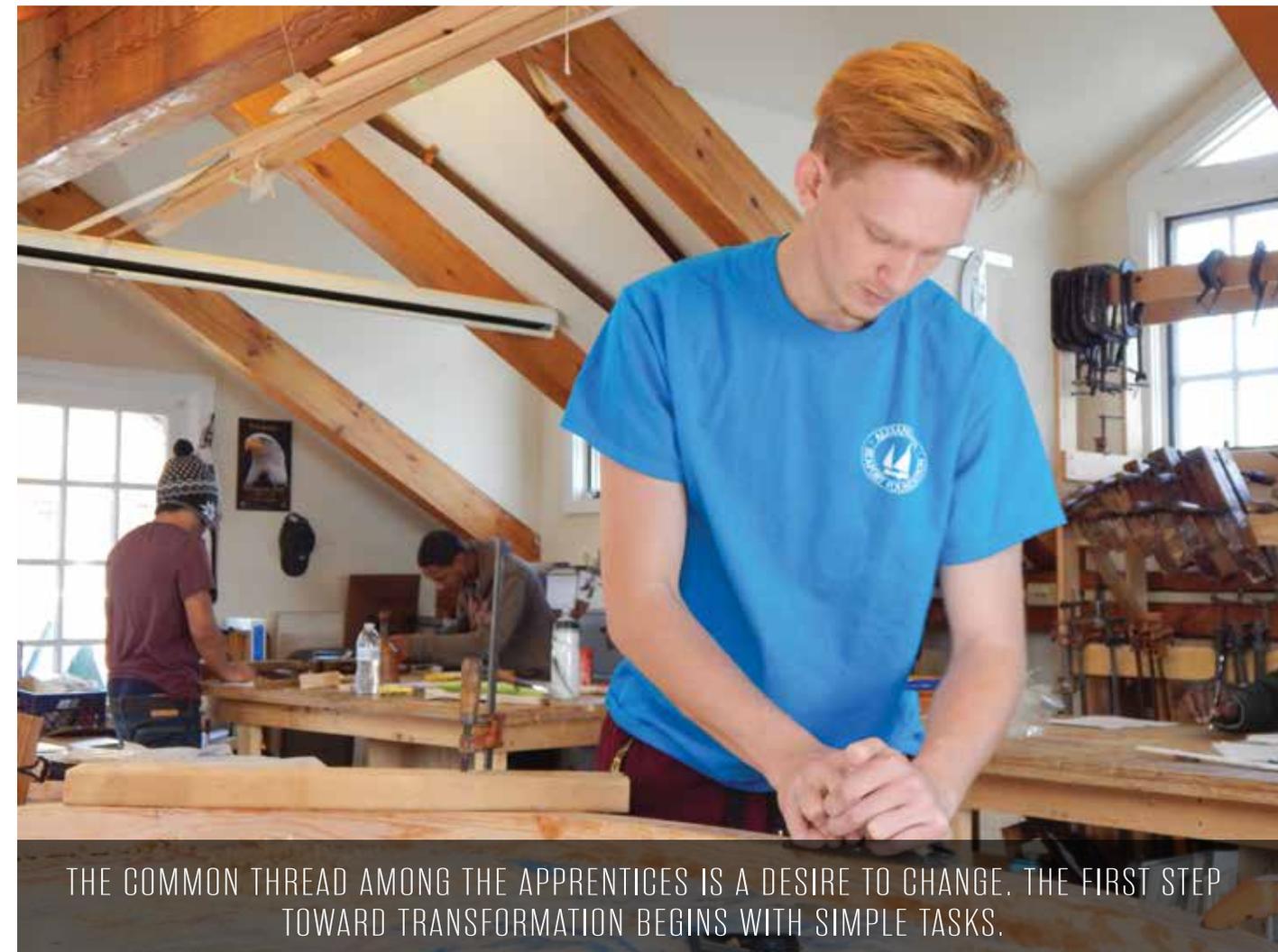
The nonprofit ASF offers at-risk youth ages eighteen to twenty-four an opportunity to

reset their future course. It began in 1982 as an organization to preserve Alexandria's maritime history. Eleven years later, it recognized that boatbuilding could be a vehicle for improving lives. According to executive director Steve Mutty, its mission remains "to instill discipline, academic knowledge of the craft of boatbuilding, and very importantly, life skills."

Most apprentices complete the full-time program, which provides a stipend, in six to eight months. They learn the basics of various woodcuts and wood science, and then they progress to a final project. For some, that capstone project involves boatbuilding or boat refurbishing.

While ASF is focused on the future for its apprentices, so much of what it does is rooted in its past. In a nod to the city's waterfront significance, its primary boat of choice to construct is the dory. After the Civil War, the oyster industry along the Potomac River boomed, and local watermen sought a stable vessel that could navigate shallow water. The flat-bottomed dory boat was the solution.

To some, this mode of transportation is more than part of a profession. For example, French anthropologist and author Jacques Ivanoff believes "the boat is the most living



THE COMMON THREAD AMONG THE APPRENTICES IS A DESIRE TO CHANGE. THE FIRST STEP TOWARD TRANSFORMATION BEGINS WITH SIMPLE TASKS.

cultural object ever known.” Despite this significance, Mutty and his staff are realistic about the market for traditional boatmaking skills. Therefore, they dovetail this training with lessons that will help the apprentices to be not only job ready but also, as he says, “life ready.” This approach means that ASF takes a glass-half-full premise with every new apprentice. “We receive these kids with the assumption that they are as good as the next person, but that goodness is locked away, and we unlock it,” Mutty says.

With approximately seven hundred apprentice graduates to its credit, ASF’s method for nurturing potential works

In traditional boatbuilding, the lofting process—drawing the lines of the hull at full size—must be done every time. Each boat is different. So, too, is every apprentice. Thus, each is afforded the opportunity to progress at his or her own pace.

In woodworking, as in life, there will be mistakes and bumps along the way. Some apprentices are quicker to adapt to the routine and time management needed to be a successful boatbuilder. Others deal with personal relationship issues. However, it’s these “teachable moments,” apprentice program lead Evan Waksler says, that keep apprentices on track. Other job-readiness

areas, such as résumé writing and going on interviews, are also part of the program. “It’s all about helping them help themselves,” Waksler says.

The common thread among the apprentices is a desire to change. The first step toward transformation begins with simple tasks. Longtime volunteer Jay Creech knows just what to say to help the apprentices appreciate the value of starting small. Holding a maul completed by an apprentice, he explains how this determination takes shape: “If you look at the joinery in here, he’s taken a piece of hardwood that mates the side. Then he’s got a split down the middle

in both directions where he drives wedges in there with a little glue, so this isn’t going to come apart. That’s equal to professional joinery. That’s building your confidence. You’ve done a craftsman’s job by learning those steps.”

In 2014, this craftsmanship garnered the attention of the nation’s leading maritime museum, Mystic Seaport, in Mystic, Connecticut. ASF apprentices, volunteers, and staff constructed one of the ten commissioned whaleboats that equipped Mystic’s 1841 whaleship, the Charles W. Morgan, a National Historic Landmark, as it embarked on its thirty-eighth voyage.

This level of recognition by the historic maritime community was made possible in large part because of the quality of ASF volunteers. In addition to Creech, the apprentices train with professional craftsmen, some of whom create custom work on high-end homes. Mentorship of this caliber helps the apprentices become valuable hires in not just carpentry but other trades as well.

For Creech, reminding the apprentices of each day’s effort is part of the formula for success. “What I like to do with these kids is take them aside, walk back to what they worked on that day, and say, ‘This was yours.

This plank fits like a charm, the way it’s supposed to fit,’ and make them think about what they’ve accomplished and encourage them to take pride in getting it done right,” Creech says.

Sometimes that is easier said than done. Given the amount of math in the apprentice program, a project can have more knots than expected. While some might have a creative plan, it’s the measuring and the fractions that give them pause. ASF recognized this hurdle and responded by creating a middle school math initiative to reach kids before they are impacted later in life.

“Statistically, when kids at the middle school level start to slip in math, it’s a slippery slope for everything else,” Mutty says. “They start to lose confidence and begin failing other classes, and that can be a gateway to a whole variety of negative events, such as dropping out of school or getting involved in gangs or drugs. So, by getting in there and using project-based learning in the shop classes, we’re really able to improve their math proficiency,” he says.

In collaboration with teachers from Alexandria City and Arlington Public middle schools, an ASF middle school math instructor works two days a week with students who are struggling with the subject. The aim is to provide them with hands-on woodworking projects designed to strengthen their math and critical-thinking skills. According to Mutty, “Better than 90 percent of the kids who we work with improve their math skills.”

During the thirty-five years since its inception, ASF, too, has progressed. As Alexandria supported its maritime industry hundreds of years ago, that same community spirit is helping to bolster a new generation of builders today.

One night a week during open shop, everyone is welcome. It’s a chance for the public to work on projects with the apprentices or bring their woodworking creations that might require ASF’s machines and tools. It’s about giving back, learning from others, and offering support.

The altruism shown to local woodworkers is not a one-way street. The commitment of the apprentices to their work, to their community, and to their future is recognized



“In collaboration with teachers from Alexandria City and Arlington Public middle schools, an ASF middle school math instructor works two days a week with students who are struggling with the subject. The aim is to provide them with hands-on woodworking projects designed to strengthen their math and critical-thinking skills.”

with every job offer they receive from area businesses. “The apprentices really do help comprise the fabric of Alexandria by virtue of the fact that they’re working in our community,” Mutty says. “We’re helping to make them productive, job-ready citizens who are out in the community not only working but also volunteering. One of our aspirations is to make sure that the apprentices are leaving with an appreciation for going out and doing their own good works in the community.”

A twenty-year redevelopment plan is underway for the city’s waterfront district. “Alexandria,” it states, “should be understood as an expression of the American story.” This same summary could be applied to ASF’s work. Its efforts to find a local solution to a national problem is typical of American ingenuity.

One person who appreciates this sentiment is Darrel. With a pleasant demeanor and a genuine smile, he recounts with pride

refurbishing a boat prior to graduating from the apprentice program. A commissioned project, it is part of the decor in Chadwicks restaurant, an Alexandria fixture since 1967. “That was my last important project I did before I left,” he says.

Sometimes the most significant acts occur through everyday moments. In Darrel’s case, it was a conversation between two acquaintances. While catching up with regular clients, Chadwicks owner Trae Lamond mentioned his desire to have a nautical-themed item hang above the grand wooden staircase, and one of the patrons had a friend who worked at ASF. The connection was made.

Lamond selected a boat in the ASF warehouse that had seen better days. Longtime ASF supporter and volunteer David Painter, who also was a Chadwicks regular, worked with Darrel on this project. Its owner described the final product as “a beautiful little boat.” Sadly, Painter passed

away shortly after the boat was completed, so in tribute to this much-loved volunteer, Painter’s friends at ASF added his initials on nautical flags to the bottom of the boat. It was, as Mutty strives for, an opportunity for the apprentices to do good works in the community.

When Darrel is asked about his future, the expected response is that he would continue his successful start in the carpentry field. Yet, just as he was given another path in life a few years ago, once again, he is taking a different turn. “I’m hoping to go to school for social work. I really want to work with at-risk youth, like teens with troubled backgrounds,” he says. His selflessness is the result of what all apprentice graduates receive from the Alexandria Seaport Foundation program—confidence.

For more info, visit alexandriaseaport.org



designing for a cure

holiday house nyc

written by alexa bricker | photography by alan barry, unless noted



© BFA



above left
Designer and organizer of Holiday House NYC, Iris Dankner, speaks to fellow designers.

above right
Campion Platt's "Black Friday" dining room features midnight black walls and a mirrored sideboard.

After a breast cancer diagnosis at the early age of forty, artist and interior designer Iris Dankner began devoting her life to combining her two passions—design and putting an end to breast cancer. Dankner's most successful charity event, Holiday House NYC, now in its ninth year, has brought together some of the world's most famous designers, as well as newcomers, to raise awareness and help eradicate the disease.

Some people are born artists. They sing, or dance, or paint, and yearn to make the beautiful images in their minds come to life. Not all of us have this gift, but for those who do, it seems that even from an early age there is no choice but to pursue the path of invention and creativity that they are called to. Iris Dankner is an artist—in mind, body, and spirit. As the middle child of three, raised in a household she describes as the spitting image of the world of Betty and Don Draper, Dankner's free-spirited nature was always encouraged, even if it was a rebellion against the midcentury suburban life in which she was brought up on Long Island, New York.

In fact, when other girls her age were required to take typing classes in preparation for secretarial careers, Dankner protested. "I was adamant that I was not

going to be a secretary. I didn't need to learn how to type," Dankner remembers. "I even took Spanish to anger my mother, who was a French professor. And I regret that, but those are the things I did then. I was the creative little quirky child."

Dankner continued her artistic pursuits at Carnegie Mellon University, where she earned a fine arts degree, followed by a position as a freelance designer with the department store Lord & Taylor. Before the age of computerization, Dankner was responsible for making sure that every ad leaving the store for publication had the Lord & Taylor signature on it—the same signature that has since made its way onto every product and storefront of the company. "I worked there before there were computers, and we had forty-seven stores," Dankner discloses. "Every single night, every



single ad needed a logo on it, so I worked with the artists to put the Lord & Taylor logo—my signature—on those ads.”

Dankner continued to work for the company for another thirteen years before becoming a stay-at-home mother to care for her two young girls, and it was during this time that she began to take an active interest in decorating her family’s New York City home. She found a passion for figuring out the color palette to use in each room and the style of furniture that best matched her personality—and friends and family began to take notice. Dankner had discovered a true calling and a second career opportunity in interior design, and she even chose to return to school at the New York School of Interior Design, though she ultimately did not complete her degree.

Just as everything was going well in Dankner’s career and family life, a mass was discovered at her first routine mammogram; she would later be told the mass was cancerous. “It was early detection that saved my life,” Dankner urges. “Through that whole period of time, through my treatments and my surgeries, my inspiration and my strength came from looking at my two little girls.”

Though the doctors had managed to help her physically—what she refers to as “the

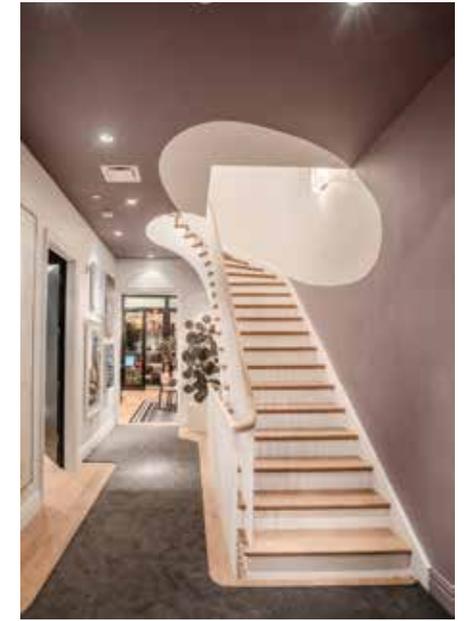


new and improved Iris”—Dankner knew in order to return to full mental health, she needed to use her newfound knowledge of the disease to help others. “My normal had to be redefined,” Dankner says. “I wanted to raise awareness and help other women so they didn’t have to experience what I experienced, and I wanted to save lives. That was how my journey started.”

The journey Dankner has been on since her diagnosis began with her forming a team for the Race for the Cure. The team, aptly named Iris’ Bosom Buddies, managed to grow tremendously in just a few short years—from four team members to more than one hundred members in 2001. Her efforts for the race became a springboard for founding her own event with her daughters called Tickled Pink. The fashion show, backed by designer Diane von Furstenberg, became a huge success for survivors and their children, who finally had an outlet to come together.

opposite page
Sasha Bikoff’s dining room design for Holiday House was awash in pink and rose tones.

above
Interior designer Patrick McGrath melded modern vibes and eighteenth-century pieces to create a gentleman’s dressing room that was masculine and refined.



left and above
Tori Golub was envisioning the winter solstice when she designed her living room, which featured dramatic artwork and a panel made from compact discs.

In contrast, her hallway design was clean and minimalist.

"It was one of the most meaningful things, because we were helping women and children who felt like they were alone and powerless," Dankner says. "We were helping them to see that they weren't alone, and that they had other people to talk to—especially the children. Because a lot of times, if a parent is going through cancer and she is losing her hair or things like that, there is a lot she wants to talk about. And at the same time, the moms would get together and talk about their scars and their bras, and it just opened up a vocabulary between moms and their kids."

When Tickled Pink came to an end after eight years, Dankner began to notice a glaring lack of breast-cancer-related charity

events in her own industry—and decided that there was something she could do to combine her passions. Dankner's largest (and certainly most successful) event was born: Holiday House NYC, which has been going strong since its founding in 2008. The event, which is now sponsored by the Breast Cancer Research Foundation, became the first designer show house in New York to benefit breast cancer research, and, although Dankner admits to having a rocky start, Holiday House has grown more than she could have ever imagined.

Holiday House kicked off during difficult economic times. The recession of 2008 was in full swing and undeniably put a less-than-ideal number on the amount of money raised. "I was happy to say that we didn't lose money," Dankner confesses. "But we didn't raise as much as I had hoped. And the next two years were going to be crucial because everybody was saying that they didn't think I could do it—that I couldn't make it happen."

For the first few years of the showcase, Dankner says she reached out to her colleagues in the design community, sometimes begging them to participate. Nowadays things are quite different, as the event brings countless A-list and up-and-coming designers pleading for the opportunity to show off their best work. When choosing which designers will be a part of the showcase, Dankner looks for a combination of raw talent and style, and she attempts to highlight as diverse a bunch as possible—something that's noticeable in the variety of colors, textures, and overall impression of each room.

Holiday House 2016, in particular, proved to be a uniquely exciting year, with fashion icon and fellow Iris, Iris Apfel, serving as honorary event chair. The event also moved from its former Upper East Side address at Sixty-Third and Park Avenue to the newly



opposite page
Bradfield & Tobin's living room featured art by Jean-Marie Fiori, Hugo Vastidas, and Francesca Pasquali.

this page, from top to bottom
Alec Gunn, Aaron McIntire, and their landscape team at Vert Gardens dubbed their spa-like design the "Evergreen Winter Garden," a mix of live greenery like Japanese holly and black pine.

Yorgos A. Scarpidis named his design "The Wilde Study" in honor of Oscar Wilde, the famous playwright. He used black painter's tape to mimic architectural paneling.

renovated SoHo Mansions—creating the necessity for a more youthful and eclectic blend of designers. "I thought it was important not to go the traditional route, but to follow the vibe," Dankner says. "It's a little bit edgier, and you can see all the designers were very edgy."

Unlike other years, the 2016 event brought an additional challenge of working in arduous conditions—as the mansions had not yet been completely renovated. Two of the five-story complexes were still in need

of working elevators, as well as railings on the stairs, and, in some places, flooring. The team also had just nine days to paint, furnish, and perfect their rooms—and each designer took full responsibility for gathering all of his or her materials. "They were really given an empty palette, and whatever they brought in, their own trades or furniture, that was all on them," Dankner says. "That was the only way I slept at night. It's because I knew the designers didn't want to fail, so they would get it done."

And the 2016 team indeed managed to get it done—fully designing two five-story mansions from top to bottom—with each room more mesmerizing and inspired than the last. Some of the top designers in the world led the showcase, including singer Lady Gaga's fashion guru, artist Bradley Theodore, whose imaginative rendering of Apfel hangs in the foyer of the house. Other featured pieces included the work of world-famous fashion designer Brandon Maxwell, interior designer Harry Heissmann, and the luxury outdoor design firm Couture Outdoor.

The hard work of all thirty designers paid off immensely, as the 2016 opening-night event brought in some of the biggest names Holiday House has ever seen, including Martha Stewart and Nicky Hilton.

Always striving to make a difference, Dankner has already begun a second leg of Holiday House—Holiday House Hamptons, which took place for the first time in the summer of 2016—and expanded the event even farther by scheduling their first event overseas in London.

For more info, visit holidayhousenyc.com

carving out an art niche

interview with marc evan
written by matthew brady
photography by maniac pumpkin carvers



Art comes in an endless array of mediums, both traditional and nontraditional—even food. The masters at Maniac Pumpkin Carvers in New York are a prime example of unconventional artists, using pumpkins as their canvas to create stunning works of seasonal art. Cofounder Marc Evan discusses how he and Chris Soria's mutual love of art morphed into a gourd-centered business, the unique challenges of pumpkins, and how they earned the Maniac moniker.

What's your background? Have you always been friends? When did you first realize that you wanted to create art?

Chris and I have been artists and friends for as long as we can remember. We first met in sixth grade, and by high school we were best friends and already frequently collaborating on various art projects, including some large murals. We also were responsible for creating an annual Halloween haunted house in our high school for all the kids from the community. Creating super scary and fun things for Halloween is something we've been doing together a really long time now.

Was pumpkin art a fun goal of yours, or was it a hobby that became a career for the two of you?

We kind of stumbled onto pumpkin carving as a form of art. We were both studying illustration at Parsons School of Design and paying our way through school by working at bars and restaurants in New York. In the early 2000s, we started to mess around with carving pumpkins. They were initially things we would make for the places we worked at, and as gifts for friends and clients. As we started to develop our style, we received more requests from different businesses. Before we knew it, we were getting press requests and drawing attention from people like Martha Stewart, Food Network, *Wired*, and the New York Yankees. We've always had a deep love for all things Halloween, so it was a perfect fit as we expanded our business. It's still very much a labor of love for us, even though our business and client list have steadily grown over the years. It's an honor to have carved for so many incredible companies, TV shows, and events.

Did other artists influence you? Are you big fans of any another artists' work today?

We have a pretty diverse range of artistic influences. We draw inspiration from many places, including comic books, animated films, album cover art, as well as so many masters throughout history up through today, including many of our friends and contemporaries. We are also really lucky to be friends with many incredible artists, who we get to collaborate with on both pumpkin projects and more traditional art. We draw inspiration from everywhere around us, including New York City.

What's the process for creating your amazing pumpkin art?

We first have to decide on the artwork to be carved. Oftentimes, our clients supply us with specific art to be rendered, and other

times we have to create images first that will translate well to a pumpkin. We then sketch out the art on the pumpkin and start carving using a variety of carving tools, knives, and sculpting tools.

How does lighting add to the impact of your creations?

Light is such a major part of what we do. We often describe our style of work as painting with light, more so than carving. We only use candles for traditional jack-o'-lanterns; most of our lit pumpkins have LED bulbs installed in them. Not every pumpkin we create gets scooped out and lit, but when we do turn pumpkins into lanterns, we like saving that moment for late in the process. It creates a magical moment when the design lights up.

How long does it take to carve basic pumpkin designs versus your most detailed pumpkins?

It can take anywhere from a couple of hours to a whole day. Many of our detailed works of art take between six to twelve hours, and our pumpkins are often passed back and forth between our artists for hours until they are absolutely perfect. And that does not include all the time prior to carving, going back and forth with clients, picking pumpkins, washing and prepping the pumpkins, or the time involved after carving, when we deliver them or ship them out.

How much of your year is taken up by carving? What do you do for a living when you're not making pumpkin art?

We work year round on planning out and prepping for our projects, but pumpkins are only available (and in demand) in the fall. Between September 1 and Thanksgiving, we carve hundreds of pumpkins. During the rest of the year, we work on our personal artistic practices, which include fine arts, illustration work, and a lot of large-scale murals and street art, which we post on Instagram.

“ At first, it was some friends to help scoop pumpkins; then we began adding carvers. Now our team includes over twenty artists, as well as administrators, project managers, delivery people, and shop assistants.



At what point did you have to bring in people to help with the demand?

For many years, it was just Chris and me. As we expanded, we started to bring in our support staff. At first, it was some friends to help scoop pumpkins; then we began adding carvers. Now our team includes over twenty artists, as well as administrators, project managers, delivery people, and shop assistants.

You also do pumpkin-carving demonstrations. Do people find it easy or difficult to learn how to create pumpkin art?

There are always challenges in creating a work of pumpkin art. It's not about easy or hard. It shouldn't be easy. The process should always be fun, though. It takes time and patience to create something you are

proud of. We have always enjoyed teaching, and we do a lot of art education in various types of artwork, including pumpkins.

What kinds of tools do you use?

Our favorite tools include sculpting tools like ribbon loops, X-ACTO knives and other hobby or craft knives, and linoleum cutters. Other helpful items we have found are lemon zesters, toothbrushes, awls, and scouring pads. Many items around the house, kitchen, or workshop can be repurposed to use on pumpkins.

Speaking of favorites, what pumpkins stand out as being the ones you're most proud of?

We have an artist series of pumpkins that we add to each year. We take a work of art that inspires us and recreate it in a pumpkin. Over the years, these have been based on

contemporary artists like Alex Grey, Tara McPherson, and Alex Pardee, as well as past masters like Picasso, Magritte, Mucha, Klimt, and Dali. For the past several years, we have created one of our artist series pumpkins each Halloween for the Museum of Modern Art. We're also incredibly proud of the works we have done for Marvel, Google, BMW, and many other amazing clients.

What creates more of a challenge: the texture or the shape of a pumpkin?

Misshapen pumpkins can be a gift. We like to find creative uses for them. The texture of a pumpkin can be a challenge, though, especially considering that we don't know if the pumpkin has a favorable texture until we've started carving. Because it is a fruit that we work with, some years the crops are not as good due to a variety of factors. Also, later in the season, when the pumpkins aren't as freshly cut from the vine, the texture is noticeably different and more difficult to work with.

How long does your pumpkin art last? Are there ways you can preserve it?

A pumpkin is a fruit, so once we begin to carve, they begin to rapidly degrade. Our pumpkins last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Many of the things that we have tried over the years only prolong the pumpkins for a few days at most, but some of the things people recommend actually speed up the pumpkin breaking down. The most effective thing we have found is really to treat the pumpkin like cut fruit: when it's not on display, keep it wrapped in plastic wrap and refrigerated or as cool as possible without freezing.

Does all this work you do on pumpkins affect how you personally enjoy pumpkin-themed items?

We embrace it all. We love eating pumpkin seeds and freshly baked pumpkin goods. We are always happy to try a few new pumpkin beers, too. We aren't really into all the super sweet pumpkin spice stuff, though. But whatever it takes to get people in the spirit of the holiday makes us happy.

People will probably say, "Wow! What a great job!" What are some downsides that people may not realize?

We work long hours to get all our pumpkins out on time and before they rot. We get very little sleep during pumpkin season and pull many all-nighters. (Our sleep deprivation is actually what earned us the title "Maniac.") We rarely see our friends or families during the fall, which can be extremely emotionally draining. And, physically, the long hours carving and even carrying and moving all those heavy pumpkins around really take a toll on the body. Carpal tunnel and back and shoulder pain are just part of the pumpkin season for us. Yoga, meditation, and massages all help, but by the end of the season we tend to be pretty beaten up.

Your pumpkins are elaborate, but your business is not. Do you work best that way? Has much of your success been word of mouth?

We've built our business from the ground up by word of mouth from the beginning. We were artists first and then businessmen. We have learned a lot along the way. We were lucky to find a niche that we excelled at, and

we gained recognition by being pioneers in our field and by putting out our best work at all times—we are our own harshest critics and constantly strive for excellence. We're always trying to see how we can take our work to the next level, and our clients and fans recognize this. We have also turned down traditional marketing opportunities in favor of embracing social media. When one of our works goes viral, it has much more impact than advertising dollars.

Are you content with where this business is, or do you have plans to grow it even further?

We are always looking for ways to grow our business and expand the services and products we offer, and there are plenty of projects that we are excited to bring to light. It's always been important for us to grow at a manageable pace, though. Each year, we get better at expanding our business, but new stresses and new pressures come along with that. It's been important to our growth to never take on a project if we don't feel we can do our best; because of this, we make sure that we don't take on more than we can handle. Our growth has to come naturally, so we can continue to deliver our best work.

For more info, visit maniacpumpkincarvers.com.



art to feather your nest

Front of Tear Out Card 2

pickled fig, pistachio & ricotta canapés

American Lifestyle
magazine



FOR THE PICKLED FIGS

- 12 dried Black Mission figs, sliced into thin disks
- 1 c. red wine vinegar
- ¼ c. sugar
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme

FOR THE CANAPÉS

- 1 c. whole-milk ricotta cheese
- 24 of your favorite crackers
- Olive oil
- Sea salt
- Honey, for drizzling
- ½ c. pistachios, lightly crushed
- Fresh thyme leaves, for garnish



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Back of Tear Out Card 2



pickled fig, pistachio & ricotta canapés

MAKE THE PICKLED FIGS:

In a small pot, combine the figs, vinegar, sugar, thyme, and ½ cup water and bring to a simmer over medium-low heat, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover, and let the figs steep for 2 hours or overnight in the fridge.

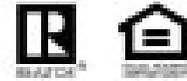
ASSEMBLE THE CANAPÉS:

Spread about 1 heaping teaspoon of ricotta on each cracker. Gingerly place the pickled figs (about 1 or 2 per cracker) atop the ricotta, then top with olive oil, sea salt, a drizzle of honey, and a hefty sprinkle of crushed pistachios. Finish with fresh thyme leaves and serve immediately.

MAKES ABOUT 24 MINI TARTINES

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