

Compliments of Dan Shanner

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 66



Dan Shanner, CFP®
Direct: (866) 458-4226



The Shanner Group
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King of Prussia, PA 19406

PAGE 44

Gourds as Art

Carving Out Creativity



PAGE 6

Bog Heaven

How to Grow Cranberries

ISSUE 66 \$5.95 US
CANADA/FOREIGN \$6.95



678

678



American Lifestyle magazine

Dear Bill and Judy,

Harvest is a gathering of ripened crops, a time to celebrate what you have nurtured and grown for a season. It is part of a cycle that repeats again and again. This season of gathering is taken quite literally in Massachusetts, where over 400 farm attractions are open to the public. Let farm manager Heidi Thunberg tell you about her 235 laying hens at Green Meadows Farm and how to become certified organic. At Valley View Farm, happy goats frolic, and good cheese is made. Check out the newest venture: a cheese cave! Pick some crunchy apples in the sunshine at Russell Orchards, and watch the ducks laze on the pond.

Ever wonder how cranberries end up floating on water in those Ocean Spray commercials? Jeff LaFleur of Mayflower Cranberries talks bogs, vines, and all things cranberry. He even offers Be the Grower tours, where visitors can don waders in the actual bog and help harvest the berries.

Artist Marilyn Sunderland takes a different approach to harvest, choosing to see gourds as an art medium rather than a food group. They are quite versatile, and can be carved like wood, burned with wood-burning tools, painted in almost any paint medium, and embellished with beads, stones, and wire. Sunderland loves using the carving tool to create intricate details.

Celebrate what you've cultivated in your own life, or simply enjoy a delicious meal. As always, it is a pleasure to send you this magazine. Thank you for your continued support through recommendations and referrals.

Dan Shanner



Dan Shanner, CFP®
Financial Advisor

Toll Free: (866) 458-4226
Office: (610) 878-5000
E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
Fax: (610) 878-2000
www.remindermedia.com

The Shanner Group
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King of Prussia, PA 19406



Front of Tear Out Card 1



FOOD DONATION SHOPPING LIST

Curious about what type of nonperishables you should collect for your local food drive? Use this checklist of high-demand items the next time you are food shopping, and help curb hunger in your community.

American Lifestyle
magazine



Dan Shanner, CFP®

Toll Free: (866) 458-4226
Office: (610) 878-5000
E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
www.remindermedia.com

The Shanner Group
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King of Prussia, PA 19406

Securities and advisory services offered through The Shanner Group.
Member FINRA/SIPC and a registered investment advisor.

Back of Tear Out Card 1

FOOD DONATION SHOPPING LIST

FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROUP

- Canned vegetables (low sodium, no salt added)
- Vegetable juice
- Spaghetti sauce
- Canned fruit (in light syrup or its own juices)
- 100 percent fruit juice
- Dried fruit

GRAIN GROUP

- Oatmeal
- Whole grain crackers
- Quinoa
- Macaroni and cheese
- Pasta
- Multigrain cereal
- Whole grain rice

PROTEIN GROUP

- Canned tuna fish
- Canned chicken
- Canned salmon
- Canned chili
- Canned beef stew
- Peanut butter
- Canned beans
- Hearty soups, like split pea, chicken noodle, or turkey and rice
- Nuts

MILK GROUP

- Dry milk
- Evaporated milk



FOR MORE FESTIVE RESOURCES, VISIT:
www.americanlifestylemag.com/holidays



CONTENTS

6 **Bog Heaven**

HOW TO GROW CRANBERRIES

Cranberry grower Jeff LaFleur knows the ins and outs of the tiny, versatile fruit, from the vine to your juice glass.

12 **Potluck Palooza**

THE MAKINGS OF A CASSEROLE

*In her latest cookbook, Denise Gee likens making casseroles to jazz: Learn the notes, then improvise, honey. Try four yummy recipes excerpted from *Southern Casseroles: Comforting Pot-Lucky Dishes* (Chronicle Books, 2013).*

20 **Project Puffin**

FROM NEWFOUNDLAND TO MAINE

Stephen Kress, a biologist and director of the Seabird Restoration Program, made it his personal mission to return puffins to the islands in the Gulf of Maine.

24 **Sowing Massachusetts**

NOURISHING THE HARVEST

From goat cheese to green beans to cozy afghans, Massachusetts lets us in on the secrets of nourishing both body and mind.

32 **Marika Meyer**

A FRESH TAKE ON THE CLASSICS

Designer Marika Meyer takes inspiration from her clients' travels and mementos, crafting classic rooms with an updated aesthetic.

38 **Tree to Toy Box**

WOODEN TOYS FOR CHILDREN

Wooden toys are a great choice to entertain and enchant children, to promote coordination skills, and to serve as educational tools.

44 **Carving Out Creativity**

GOURDS AS AN ART MEDIUM

Marilyn Sunderland waxes poetic on gourds as an art medium, capable of being carved, painted, stained, and embellished in a myriad of ways.





Bog Heaven

HOW TO GROW CRANBERRIES

text: SHELLEY ROSE | photography: SHELLEY ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Cranberry grower Jeff LaFleur knows the ins and outs of the tiny, versatile fruit, from the vine to your juice glass.

LaFleur is one of approximately 700 farmers that make up the co-op that is Ocean Spray. Prior to being a cranberry grower, he worked in the industry for twenty years doing policy and regulatory work. As he explained while surveying his bogs in Plympton, Massachusetts, “This was my chance to put my money where my mouth is.”



THE ENDEARING DUO WHO APPEAR IN THE Ocean Spray commercials are not real farmers, but the bogs they stand in are real cranberry bogs in Massachusetts. Henry Strozier (the stodgy one) and Justin Hagan (the flaky one) have been filming these commercials since 2005, and have made this the most successful advertising campaign for Ocean Spray. Jeff LaFleur, owner of Mayflower Cranberries in Plympton, Massachusetts, remembers how much the growers hated the campaign when it first came out. “It made us all look dumb!” he laughed. But when the growers saw the response from the public, they quickly reconciled the hilarity of the commercials.

LaFleur is one of approximately 700 farmers that make up the co-op that is Ocean Spray. Prior to being a cranberry grower, he worked in the industry for twenty years doing policy and regulatory work. As he explained on our tour of the bogs in Plympton, Massachusetts, “This was my chance to put my money where my mouth is.” Wisconsin is the number one producer of cranberries, with Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, and Oregon being the other major cranberry growing states in the United States. Quebec and British Columbia are the major growing areas in

Canada. And the country of Chile also grows the antioxidant-rich berry, producing about 200,000 barrels, compared to Massachusetts’ 2 million barrels. Ocean Spray requires its farmers to grow to export standards, meaning certain pesticides cannot be used. Almost 30 percent of the crop is now exported to the European Union compared to only 10 percent fifteen years ago.

Jeff’s young son, Cameron, appointed himself chauffeur, and deftly (at a higher rate of speed than I’d prefer) maneuvered the golf cart full of visitors to and from the bogs. Along the way, we passed a woman soaked halfway up her shirt. I later found out there’s a ditch cut around the perimeter of the bog which holds the water in when flooding the vines for harvest. These ditches are also used as roads of sorts for fertilization and other maintenance activities. The ditches become invisible when the bog is flooded with water, and a step too far toward the bank means wet clothing. Ah, the exciting adventures of the Be the Grower tours offered by Mayflower Cranberries! I have to hand it to Jeff—this idea is genius. Visitors to the bog pay him for the opportunity to put on waders and help harvest cranberries. The popularity of these tours makes





reservations sell out months and months in advance. I opted to keep my camera on higher ground, documenting the process from the sidelines.

Despite the commercials that may lead one to think cranberries grow in bodies of water, they actually grow on vines in impermeable beds layered with sand, peat, gravel, and clay, commonly known as bogs. Mayflower Cranberries employs two methods of harvesting—dry harvesting and wet harvesting. Dry harvesting is done with a mechanical picker that resembles a large lawn mower. Metal teeth comb the berries off the vine. These berries are sorted by color and are sold as fresh berries. For wet harvesting, the bogs are flooded with water six to eight inches above the vines, which typically takes a day. Cranberries have pockets of air inside the fruit, which makes them float. Water reels, nicknamed eggbeaters, have a wheel on the front that spins and knocks the fruit off the vine, which then floats to the surface. A boom, which floats on the top of the water and has a cable in a skirt, goes about five inches under water and forms a moving pouch all the way across the cranberry bed. After they are corralled at the



THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE BE THE GROWER TOURS

became miniature versions of themselves, smiling and laughing with pushers in hand as they helped to steer the red berries toward the pump truck.



end of the bog, a pump truck sucks the berries up and into the truck where they will be transported to a receiving station to be cleaned and processed. Jeff motioned to the spiral steps on the truck, and I hesitated until he said the four magic words: “Great spot for photographs.” Up the slippery stairs I went, hugging my camera in tight and away from the railing. He was right; it was an amazing vantage point to capture the crimson curves of the cranberries corralled on the bog. The participants of the Be the Grower tours became miniature versions of themselves, smiling and laughing with pushers in hand as they helped to steer the red berries toward the pump truck.

Harvest season is anywhere from mid-September to mid-November. Ocean Spray has a color incentive, so growers watch their crop for the minimum color requirement, and then can pick anytime after that. White cranberry juice is simply juice made from



Harvest **season** is anywhere from mid-September to mid-November. Ocean Spray has a **color incentive**, so growers watch their crop for the minimum color requirement, and then can pick anytime after that.

cranberries that have been harvested before they turned red. All cranberries that are wet harvested are either made into concentrate or frozen. There are massive freezers in Bedford, Gloucester, and Worcester—all full of cranberries. To make craisins, the berry must be frozen all the way through, and then they are sliced and seeds removed before drying in big ovens. At Decas Cranberries, they press the oil out of the tiny seeds, which is high in Omega-3, and then spray the oil back over the craisins. Ocean Spray can also make craisins taste like strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, oranges, and cherries. “The bakery industry prefers to use craisins in that format because they don’t bleed into the other ingredients. Dunkin’ Donuts’ blueberry bagels are made with craisins. You feel cheated now, don’t you?” Jeff exclaims with a loud chuckle.

Harvest time is a very busy time, but managing the vines in the summer months requires equal diligence. There is frost, irrigation management, and insect and weed issues. Says Jeff, “We’re out scouting the bogs every week, identifying insects, determining if they are friend or foe.” Another major production is the pollination of the cranberries, as they cannot self-pollinate. Jeff rents bees at a cost of \$5,000 for four weeks, making it the most expensive component of growing the tiny fruit. They are currently trying to enhance the native pollinators that are near the bog already, planting different species of plants that will bloom throughout the summer and into the fall that will provide habitat and food source for bumblebees and leaf-cutting bees. Jeff continues, “Native bumblebees are much better pollinators. They will work in cloudy weather, wind, and drizzle. Honey bees, on the other hand, stay in the hives in bad weather. Bumblebees will stay out on the bog when it gets dark, but honey bees immediately go back to the hive.” Eventually Jeff hopes to reduce the number of managed bees for a less expensive pollination season.

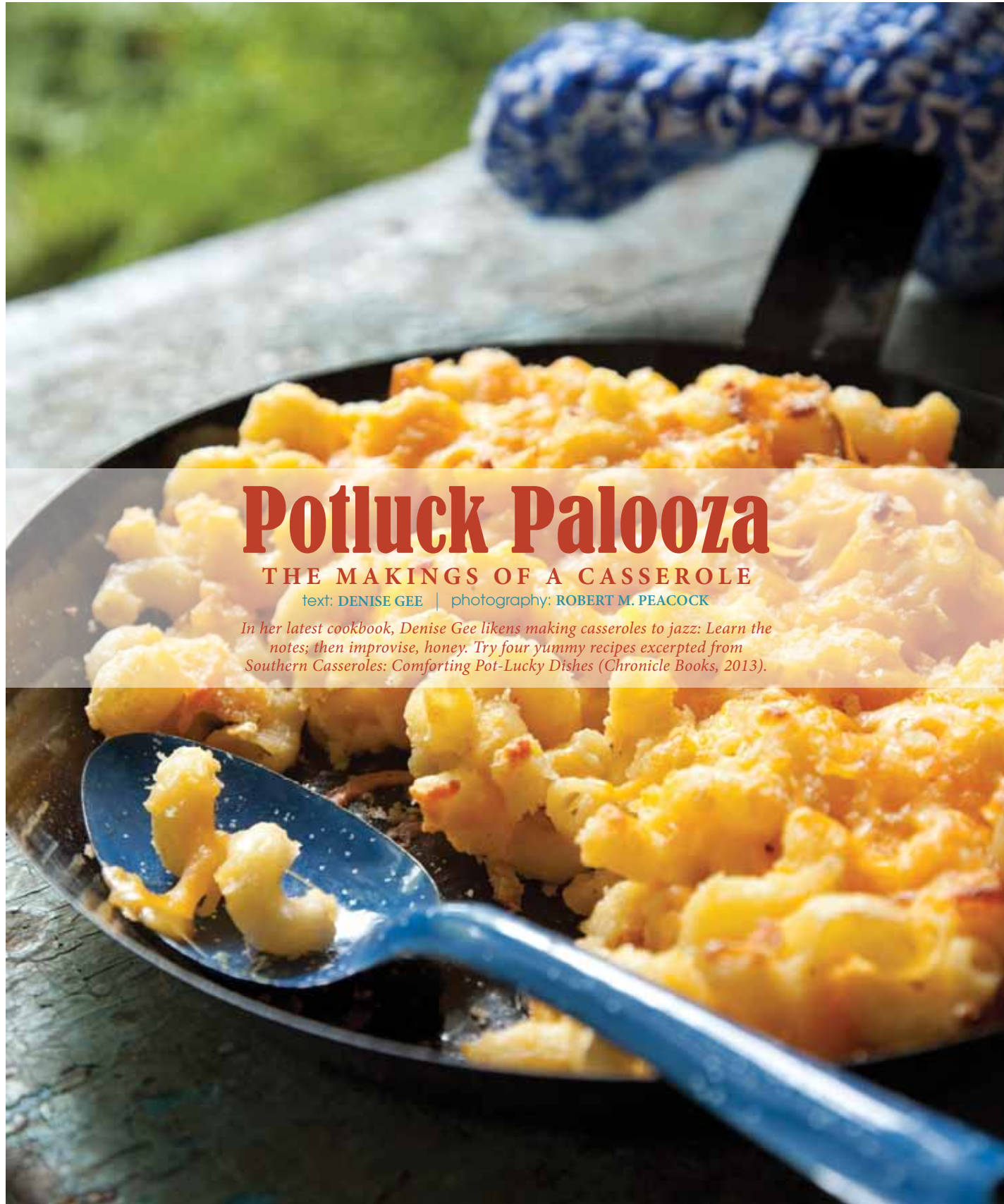
A visit to the bogs wouldn’t be complete without a weekend stay at the delicious bed and



breakfast known as On Cranberry Pond. I say delicious because innkeeper Jeannine LaBosiere is a magician when it comes to culinary feats of cranberry perfection! Breakfast is a gourmet affair at this tucked away, scenic spot in Middleboro, Massachusetts. Attentive and warm, Jeannine makes guests feel instantly at home, and you will find yourself promising to come back and visit soon. There’s even a Keurig in each room, with an assortment of yummy coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. In the refrigerator, you’ll find sparkling cran-lemonade from Ocean Spray—bubbly, berry bliss in a slender can! Come for the cranberry bogs; stay for the cranberry tart!

AL :: www.mayflowercranberries.com





Potluck Palooza

THE MAKINGS OF A CASSEROLE

text: DENISE GEE | photography: ROBERT M. PEACOCK

In her latest cookbook, Denise Gee likens making casseroles to jazz: Learn the notes; then improvise, honey. Try four yummy recipes excerpted from Southern Casseroles: Comforting Pot-Lucky Dishes (Chronicle Books, 2013).

Over the years that I've pursued macaroni-and-cheese perfection, this recipe has come pretty darn close to it. It's airy and elegant and just-right creamy, making you dream about any leftovers that might await in the refrigerator. The nutty, slightly salty flavor of Gruyère adds a sophisticated flavor that's irresistible.

divine mac and cheese

ingredients:

1 pound dried cavatappi, elbow, or penne pasta
 5 tablespoons butter
 12 ounces Gruyère, grated
 1 quart half-and-half
 4 egg yolks, lightly beaten
 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 1 cup panko or plain bread crumbs

cooking instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F.
2. Cook the pasta in boiling water. Two minutes before its suggested cooking time, check to see if it's al dente; if so, drain the pasta (but don't rinse it with water).
3. In a medium bowl, melt 3 tablespoons of the butter in a microwave on defrost for 1 to 1½ minutes, until just melted. Set aside to let cool slightly.
4. Set aside ½ cup of the Gruyère. Put the rest in a large bowl. Add the half-and-half, egg yolks, melted butter (reserving that bowl for the next step), and nutmeg; whisk to combine well. Add the pasta, and stir to thoroughly combine.
5. Using the same butter bowl, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons butter on defrost for 1 minute, until just melted. Add the bread crumbs, and combine well.
6. Add the macaroni and cheese mixture to a greased 3-quart casserole dish. Top with the reserved Gruyère, and sprinkle with the buttery bread crumbs.
7. Coat aluminum foil with nonstick spray. Cover the casserole, with the spray side facing down. Bake for 30 minutes. Uncover, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes more. If the macaroni isn't golden enough, use the broiler set to low to brown it, and watch closely for the desired appearance. Let it stand for at least 10 minutes before serving.



As an impressionable Mississippi lass who wanted to absorb (literally and figuratively) everything I could about cooking, one of the kitchens in which I was most in awe was that of Sissy Eidt, mother of my friend Margaret. Sissy was constantly making casseroles, not only for her family, but also for others in need of edible TLC. And man, could she cook.

sissy's spicy shrimp and cheese grits

ingredients:

- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 1 ½ cups quick-cooking grits
- 1 ½ cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1 can (10-ounce) original (medium spiced) or mild diced tomatoes with green chiles (such as Ro*tel), drained
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil or olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 to 1 ½ pounds medium (41/50 count) shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 teaspoon cajun seasoning

garnishes:

- Crisp and crumbled bacon
- Sliced green onions
- Hot sauce for serving (optional)

cooking instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium heavy-bottom saucepan, bring the broth and half-and-half to a boil. Gradually stir in the grits. Reduce the heat to low, and cover, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes or until the grits are tender. Add the cheese, and stir until melted. Remove from the heat, stir in the tomatoes, and set aside.
3. In a large skillet, heat the vegetable oil over medium-low heat. Add the garlic, and sauté for about 2 minutes, until tender. Increase the heat to medium, and add the shrimp and Cajun seasoning, stirring constantly until the shrimp are coated with seasoning yet not cooked through, about 1 minute.
4. Pour the grits into a lightly greased 2½-quart casserole dish. Fold in the shrimp, ensuring the grits cover them (to keep them tender while baking).
5. Cover, and bake for about 40 minutes, or until the casserole is set and the edges are golden. Garnish with the bacon and green onions, and serve with hot sauce on the side, if desired.



This Tex-Mex quick pick-me-up is perfect for nights when you're hungry for flavor—and fast. Plus, it'll make your kitchen smell like you've been cooking for ages.

lil' tamale pies

ingredients:

- 1 pound ground bulk pork sausage (see note)
- 1 can (10-ounce) diced Mexican-style or regular tomatoes, with their juices
- ½ cup pitted, sliced green or black olives
- 1 packet (1.25-ounce) reduced-sodium taco seasoning
- 1 package (8.5-ounce) corn muffin mix
- ½ cup shredded Cheddar Jack cheese blend, or more as desired

garnishes:

- Sliced olives
- Sliced cherry tomatoes
- Sour cream
- Cilantro

cooking instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. In a large skillet, brown the sausage; remove it to a colander to drain while reserving 2 tablespoons drippings. Add the tomatoes with their juices, olives, and taco seasoning to the skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally, until heated through, about 5 minutes. Return the cooked, drained pork to the skillet, and stir to combine. Adjust the seasoning as desired.
3. Prepare the corn muffin mix according to the package directions.
4. Divide the spiced pork mixture between four 12- to 16-ounce or 1½- to 2-cup casserole dishes. Top each with equal amounts of muffin mix; sprinkle with equal amounts of the cheese.
5. Bake the casseroles on a rimmed baking sheet for 15 minutes, or until the topping is light golden and cooked through. Garnish, if desired, before serving.

Note: Substitute 1 pound of ground beef for a milder or leaner filling. For a vegetarian option, use vegetable-blend crumbles or a mix of seasoned beans.



Others may think of this dish as a slap-together concoction of leftovers, but down South, it's taken quite seriously. It's a mainstay at fundraisers, potlucks, and church suppers. This is a layered version, which is more attractive, but you can easily just do it up mix-and-melt style. If you plan to use commercially made sauce, just make sure it's good quality, since it'll have a big effect on this dish's flavor.

baked spaghetti

ingredients:

- 12 ounces dried spaghetti
- 1 pound ground bulk Italian sausage
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 2 jars (24-ounce) marinara sauce
- ½ teaspoon Italian herb seasoning
- ⅓ cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 2 eggs
- 3 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 cups ricotta cheese
- 3 to 4 cups shredded Italian blend cheese

garnishes:

- Dried red pepper flakes
- Fresh parsley leaves

cooking instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Break the spaghetti into smaller pieces (perhaps three 4-inch sections), and cook it in boiling water. Two minutes before its suggested cooking time, check to see if it's al dente. If so, drain the pasta (but don't rinse it with water), and set it aside.
3. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook the sausage and onion over medium heat until the meat is no longer pink; drain, and return it to the skillet. Stir in the marinara sauce and Italian herb seasoning; set aside.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together the Parmesan, eggs, and butter. Add the spaghetti, and toss to coat.
5. Spread half of the coated spaghetti mixture into a lightly greased 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Top with half of the ricotta, sausage-marinara sauce, and Italian blend cheese. Repeat the layers once more.
6. Cover loosely, and bake for 40 minutes. Uncover, and bake for 15 to 20 minutes longer, or until the cheese is melted and bubbly. Garnish with red pepper flakes and parsley leaves, if desired, before serving.

Project Puffin

FROM NEWFOUNDLAND TO MAINE

text: ELLIE LAWRENCE | photography: AS NOTED

Stephen Kress, a biologist and director of the Seabird Restoration Program, made it his personal mission to return puffins to the islands in the Gulf of Maine.

RESEARCHERS FROM THE NATIONAL AUDUBON

Society monitored the moves of the Atlantic puffin they've named M when he returned to Eastern Egg Rock Island a few months ago after the long winter at sea, much like they did the year before when they witnessed this same seabird and his unbanded mate take care of their baby puffling for the summer before it fledged from its burrow. Although the activity of M isn't out of the ordinary—in fact, over 1,000 puffin pairs return to this same area every year to nest—the steps of every puffin at Eastern Egg Rock Island are worth documenting to the National Audubon Society because they symbolize success for Project Puffin, an Audubon initiative that began forty years ago as a learning attempt to restore the Atlantic puffin to their historic nesting islands in the Gulf of Maine.

HATCHING PROJECT PUFFIN

Project Puffin developed in the early 1970s from the curiosity and concern of Stephen Kress, a young biologist at the time and birding enthusiast who came to the Hog Island Audubon Camp on the coast of Maine to teach. Upon learning that the Atlantic puffin, a once-flourishing species at Eastern Egg Rock, never reclaimed its stance on these coastal islands after being nearly wiped out in the nineteenth century, Kress was motivated to help these seabirds take back the habitat that was once theirs. Since there was no rule book to follow to do so—restoring a puffin colony had never even been attempted

Upon learning that the Atlantic puffin, a once-flourishing species at Eastern Egg Rock, never reclaimed its stance on these coastal islands after being nearly wiped out in the nineteenth century, Kress was motivated to help these seabirds take back the habitat that was once theirs.

before—Kress embraced a little ingenuity in his quest to beat all odds.

The premise of his unprecedented experiment was based upon a puffin's natural homing instinct: since puffins return to their natal islands to breed like many other seabirds do, he wondered if puffin chicks would return to Eastern Egg Rock if they were transplanted there from another colony at a very young age. Putting this theory to the test, Kress and his team scooped up a half dozen two-week-old pufflings from Newfoundland before they imprinted on the Canadian province, and placed them into artificial sod burrows on the boulder-strewn island eight miles off the coast of Maine. These biologists then reared the babies with handfuls of fortified fish until their birds (now banded for identification purposes) reached fledging age and left the burrows to spend the next few years at sea. Uncertain about the outcome, the team continued to translocate chicks over the next four years, all the while keeping an eye out for their adopted offspring to return.

Puffins naturally spend most of their time on the open ocean far from land. With their waterproof feathers and superb ability to swim underwater, they are wonderfully adapted to spend months at sea and only return to land to nest. Puffins can dive underwater for up to a minute (though they typically only last a half minute); and they swim by using their wings to push them along—almost as if they

were flying—while their feet act as rudders. When springtime comes, the ten-inch birds pair up with mates and fly back inland.

But it wasn't until 1977 that Project Puffin's seabirds began making their re-appearance at the seven-acre island. These young puffins were certainly a sight for sore eyes, but the researchers didn't celebrate the homecoming quite yet. The puffins remained apprehensive about exploring a nesting habitat that sported no other puffin. Since puffins are naturally social creatures that find security in being in large colonies, Kress came up with another innovative plan to entice his seabirds inland: carved, wooden decoys.

Positioned atop large boulders, these decoys caught the attention of curious young puffins who would come to sit next to and nuzzle up with the wooden look-alikes. Billing the decoys as a sign of affection, the puffins started feeling at home at Eastern Egg Rock. The number of puffins visiting the island continued to increase every year, and in 1981, biologists saw the first fruits of their labor: four puffin pairs successfully nested beneath the boulders at the edge of the island. Kress' colony at Eastern Egg Rock has been growing steadily ever since.

PROTECTING THE PUFFINS

With now over 2,000 puffins nesting on five Maine islands, it's easy to claim Project Puffin as a success; however, for Kress, now

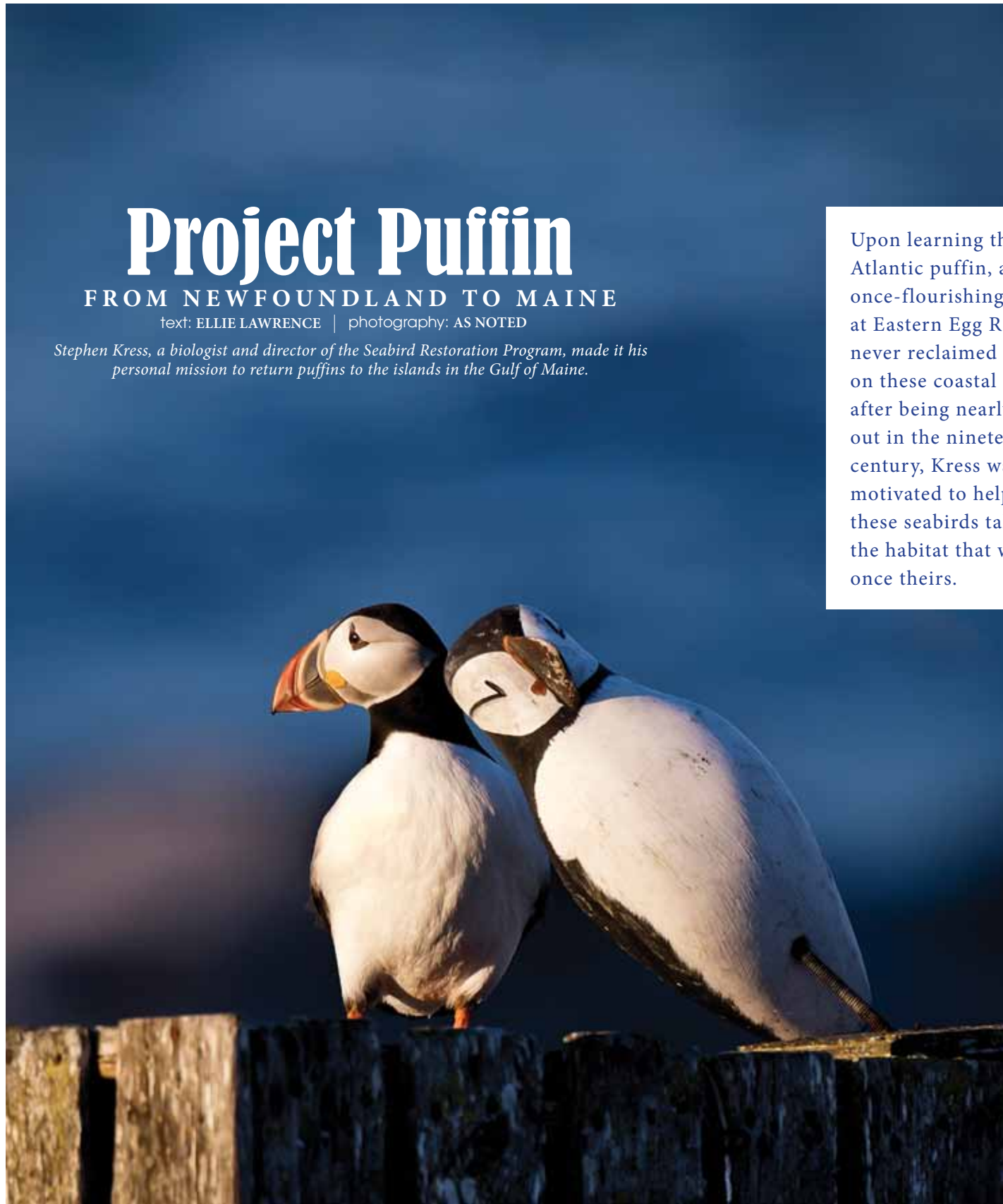


photo | SANDY FLINT

Puffins naturally spend most of their time on the **open ocean** far from land. With their waterproof feathers and **superb ability** to swim underwater, they are wonderfully adapted to spend months at sea and only return to land to nest.



photo | BILL SCHOLTZ

sixty-eight years old and the director of the Seabird Restoration Program and vice president for Bird Conservation of the National Audubon Society, his work with Project Puffin is still far from complete. Although the researchers have successfully learned how to revive Atlantic puffin colonies to their historic nesting islands—in fact, the innovative techniques pioneered throughout the life of Project Puffin have set the standard and now serve as a model for restoration projects around the world—Kress and his team are still entrenched in figuring out how to step out of the equation without jeopardizing the future for their newly colonized friends.

Their current concern is figuring out how to create a natural balance of wildlife that also offers puffins protection. Over the years, the team turned their attention to terns as the answer: since the two species naturally tolerate each other as nesting neighbors, the biolo-



photo | BILL SCHOLTZ

gists encouraged common and Atlantic terns to nest harmoniously with puffins on these Maine islands, which in turn meant these notoriously tough defenders would flock together to attack black-backed gulls, which prey upon puffins. But as the researchers soon realized, every action has an equal and opposite reaction. With the menacing black-backed gulls driven away, smaller laughing gulls have moved in their place—which as a result is wreaking havoc on the islands' vegetation and threatening to choke out tern

nests. Fortunately, Kress and his team are never deterred by new setbacks—after all, most of Project Puffin's lessons have been learned through trial and error. This is just another learning opportunity.

While remaining busy implementing and monitoring new experiments, Project Puffin also makes an effort to keep the world inspired by the charismatic seabird affectionately referred to as the clown of the sea. At the Audubon Camp on Hog Island

in Muscongus Bay, Maine, for instance, the team opens up the doors for six-day environmental education programs throughout the summer and early fall months where adults, families, and teens who have an interest in birds and nature can actually visit the puffins to learn about the Maine coast. Participants travel from across the country to experience the profound beauty, ecological significance, and hands-on lessons the island has to offer; visitors always seem to then return home as stewards of wildlife and wild lands.



photo | SANDY FLINT



photo | BILL SCHOLTZ

far left
Stephen Kress holds a puffin in Maine.

For those who are unable to travel the distance, Project Puffin also encourages people to open their homes to Atlantic puffins through its Adopt-a-Puffin program. While you won't actually obtain an adorable puffin as a pet, this program encourages monetary donations (which goes toward supporting Project Puffin's decades of work) in exchange for a certificate of recognition, a keepsake book, and a current photo and detailed biography about your puffin. Some of these adoptable animals have been studied

for thirty-five years or more, so researchers are able to supply history about individual puffins from the time they hatched to the present as well as a summary of their most recent behavior, nesting, and other activities.

AL :: www.projectpuffin.org

Sowing Massachusetts

NOURISHING THE HARVEST

text: SHELLEY ROSE | photography: SHELLEY ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY

From goat cheese to green beans to cozy afghans, Massachusetts lets us in on the secrets of nourishing both body and mind.



THERE IS SOMETHING UNIVERSAL ABOUT the need to create—musicians pen songs; artists make art; writers craft stories; chefs chop, bake, grill, and sauté. By creating, we nurture, grow, and offer something to the world. This harvest of sorts can be intangible, like a melody that strikes an emotional chord, or it can be seen and tasted, like sun-ripened apples. Massachusetts's offering is both concrete and abstract, from the numerous farms and orchards that yield everything from chicken eggs to fresh flowers to goat cheese as well as the contagious community bond that slings

an arm around your shoulders and says, “Come in, stay a while”

GREEN MEADOWS FARM

The first person to offer words of welcome was Heidi Thunberg, farm manager of Green Meadows Farm in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Located forty minutes northeast of Boston, and a half hour from the coast, this rural-suburban town is home to the oldest, family-owned organic farm in the region. The property was originally purchased by General George S. Patton Jr. as a family

vacation spot in 1928. In 1980, his son George moved to the Homestead permanently, with his wife and their five children. He wanted the land to be made useful for the community, and sought to learn the art of farming.

Heidi and I sat outside at a café table a short distance from the the pick-your-own vegetables field, where a mother and her two young daughters soaked in the afternoon sunshine. Green Meadows currently grows over forty types of vegetables, as well as small fruit like blueberries and strawberries. They also have

235 laying hens. As Heidi explains, “Hens have a laying life of three to four years.” In the winter time, when daylight hours get shorter, they go through a molt, which is a process of renewing their feathers. During the molt, they stop laying eggs in order to save up nutrients in their body required for regrowing feathers. If supplemental light is added to the coop, the hens will continue laying eggs through the winter. For the safety and health of the hens, they are given time to molt every twelve to eighteen months.

Community supported agriculture is the main business of Green Meadows, which is pretty typical for Massachusetts, according to Heidi. The idea of CSAs in this country actually got its start in western Massachusetts at Indian Line Farm. Green Meadows is certified organic, which means no genetically modified organisms, no treated seeds, no synthetic fertilizers or pesticides, and the farm must rotate crops. They offer a summer produce share, a fall produce share, an egg share, a flower share, and a fruit share.

VALLEY VIEW CHEESE

Just fifteen minutes away in neighboring Topsfield, you will find Valley View Farm. The farm dates back to 1852, when it spanned 130 acres and was a traditional farm. In 1904, it became a gentleman's farm, meaning the house became a second home for the owner, and it was also moved up the hill and enlarged. The land, now seven acres, belongs to Mary Brown.

As I stand there in the sunshine, feeling slightly out of my element, a frequent patron of the farm gently pushes a fresh egg into my hand. "Feel this! It's still warm." There is no pretense here—only immediate inclusion and conversation. I'd never held a newly laid egg before. This was only the beginning of the firsts, I'd soon discover.

The current talk of the town is an exciting new project that is unfolding—a cheese cave! Goat cheese aficionados Elizabeth (Mary Brown's daughter) and Peter Mulholland built a cave into the hillside on their land, in close proximity to where they currently make cheese. Concrete bridge arches were dropped into place with a crane in four sections, and a concrete floor was subsequently poured. The arched ceilings allow the air to flow around more gently. Why a cheese cave? Peter explains, "We tend to have a lot of excess milk in the springtime, and the places we sell to locally aren't ready to take the volume. It's a good idea for us to make a hard style cheese, age it, inventory it, and save it for when people are eating a lot of cheese—typically late summer up until Christmas."

"Stand here," Elizabeth instructed. "This will be the best place to take a picture as the goats head toward the milking parlor." Slightly apprehensive at the thought of a herd of goats running toward me, I positioned my camera, peering through the viewfinder for approaching creatures. She opened the gate, and the goats tumbled out of the pastures in a joyous skipping motion, right past me, along a path up to the entrance of the milking



parlor. Once inside, their personalities became very apparent in this setting. Most good-naturedly allowed their udders to be connected to the milking claws. A couple particularly spunky goats flailed their legs, requiring a bit of finesse and dodge tactics from Megan, a strikingly pretty English major with dreadlocks from the city of Beverly, who fell in love with farmwork. One sweet goat lingered in the milking parlor instead of running back into pasture, securing her own bowl of water and an extra bit of attention.

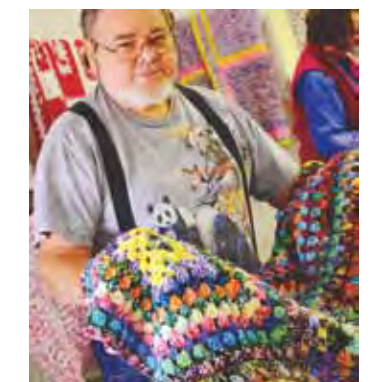


The goats come into heat and are bred in the fall. After a five-month gestation period, they kid, each having one to four kids. Every time they are bred and kid, the females come into a lactation. In the fall, their milk production is cut in half, and the butterfat in the milk goes way up. In the spring, the butterfat goes down, but production goes up. It's a balancing act when it comes to making the cheese, taking into consideration the changes in milk composition.

GREEN HARVEST ORGANIC FARMERS' MARKET

This small group of vendors operates out of the Barnstable County Fairgrounds in Falmouth. There's a bit of everything—hand-made jewelry, jams and jellies, baked goods, alpaca wool apparel, and even organic doggie treats. Pixel, the dog, greeted me at the entrance to the fairgrounds, as did his very welcoming owner, Stanton. On the far side of the room, I encountered Richard Heath, surrounded by afghans and scarves. He had stumbled into crocheting, and was quickly hooked, pun intended. He proudly flipped through his photo album of designs for his business, Gramps Granny Stitch. I blame my commitment issues on walking away from a really cozy and colorful afghan I loved.

The current talk of the town is an exciting new project that is unfolding—a cheese cave! Goat cheese aficionados Elizabeth (Mary Brown's daughter) and Peter Mulholland built a cave into the hillside on their land, in close proximity to where they currently make cheese.



Six miles of paths and **farm roads**, including horseback riding opportunities, mean hours of strolling and marveling at nature and daydreaming about building a **fairy house** in the middle of a tree-lined path and asking friends to visit you there from now on.

HERITAGE MUSEUMS AND GARDENS

A hidden gem of sorts in Sandwich, Massachusetts, the Heritage Museum and Gardens is a hundred-acre sprawl of flowers, outdoor art, antique cars, a 1903 Coney Island carousel, and an outdoor discovery center, among other exhibits. Everything is connected by a series of walkways for easy navigating. The giant two-story treehouse in Hidden Hollow, the outdoor discovery center, is something to marvel at. High school students from the carpentry program at Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School built the Treehouse under the supervision of their teachers. Founded in 1969, the Heritage Museum and Gardens celebrates American culture through nature trails, public gardens, and changing exhibits. One hundred acres is a lot—leave yourself plenty of time to wander around. I spent fifteen minutes simply watching a pair of swans float on Shawme Pond.



APPLETON FARMS

If you want to feel like you are walking through a storybook in Autumn, there are few places in New England more picturesque than Appleton Farms in Ispwich. A gift of Colonel Francis R. Appleton Jr. and his wife, Joan, this is one of the oldest continuously operating farms in the country. Six miles of paths and farm roads, including horseback riding opportunities, mean hours of strolling and marveling at nature and daydreaming about building a fairy house in the middle of a tree-lined path and asking friends to visit you there from now on. There are also cows to check out, vegetables to pick as part of the CSA program, and eggs, cheese, and other dairy products to purchase.





A lovely man on a golf cart fielded questions from visitors searching for specific apples. When he spotted my camera, he insisted on driving me to a view he had scouted earlier that week. “I’m not a photographer, but I noticed this view a few days ago. If you don’t like it, I won’t be offended,” he reasoned diplomatically. He gestured with his hand when we reached the top of a slope, and I agreed with his vision, snapping a few photographs.

RUSSELL ORCHARDS

The Russell family is the third family to own this Ipswich farm since its creation in 1920. Current owners Doug and Miranda are the second generation of Russells to farm the land. Doug’s father, Max, purchased the farm in 1979 with his wife, Meredith. Armed with family baking recipes, she was soon turning out pies and scones for customers. She tweaked a donut recipe to create the well-known cider donuts that are served to rave reviews at the orchard. Max had a vision for the orchard, planting countless apple trees, peaches, plums, strawberries, plums, raspberries, and blueberries.

I knew friends who made this orchard a yearly tradition, so it was on my list of places to go. It’s a quintessential fall day trip—strolling up and down the rows of apple trees, guided by signs outlining which varieties are located where. A lovely man on a golf cart fielded questions from visitors searching for specific apples. When he spotted my camera, he insisted on driving me to a view he had scouted earlier that week. “I’m not a photographer, but I noticed this view a few days ago. If you don’t like it, I won’t be offended,” he reasoned diplomatically. He gestured with his hand when we reached the top of a slope, and I agreed with his vision, snapping a few photographs. Oh, Massachusetts, with your warm and helpful residents—if you weren’t so wickedly cold in the winter, I’d pack up my house right now. The satisfying thwap of an apple plucked from its branch is an experience I highly recommend. Recipes for apple crisps and pies danced in my head as I joyously plopped fruit into my paper bag, the sun warming the tops of my shoulders.

IPSWICH BED AND BREAKFAST

Ipswich Bed and Breakfast owner Ray Morley will offer life wisdom and anecdotes, and silverware so you can eat your Chinese takeout in front of the television in the living room. If you are lucky, he will recite you a poem he wrote. He is also an excellent cook. His wife, Margaret, is often in the kitchen



and dining room, helping meal times run smoothly. Becky is Ray’s right-hand woman, good-naturedly entertaining his jokes and making the guest experience seamless. They were my family for two nights, and I hugged them tightly when I left, wishing I could pull Massachusetts a bit closer to Pennsylvania so I could stop in every week for breakfast and a chat. The inn is cozy, but not smothering, with eight guest rooms to choose from. Breakfast is served in a spacious dining room that doesn’t force community dining. A refrigerator, microwave, and a kitchen sink made in-room eating a breeze. I heated up my leftovers the next day for an evening snack.

Not all of us have the skill set or desire to buy a farm or run an orchard, but there is a fundamental appreciation for those that do. Growing food means creating something universal—sustenance. And if there’s one thing that will never change, it’s the great common denominator of food. It’s the glue of family reunions, the reason we love holidays, and sometimes even the saving grace of an awkward date. Food brings people together, and the farmers and growers who devote their time to creating it connect us all.

AL :: www.ipswichbedandbreakfast.com



Marika Meyer

A FRESH TAKE ON THE CLASSICS

text: MARIKA MEYER | photography: ANGIE SECKINGER

Designer Marika Meyer takes inspiration from her clients' travels and mementos, crafting classic rooms with an updated aesthetic.

GIVE US AN ANECDOTE FROM CHILDHOOD THAT YOU ASSOCIATE WITH YOUR PASSION FOR DESIGN:

There's not one particular anecdote that I can pinpoint. Much of my creativity is driven by my heritage. My grandmother was a decorator, and I have been around creative people all my life. My aunt and uncle are an artist and sculptor, respectively, so I grew up with an appreciation of the arts. Having that access to the arts and creative people helped me pursue my own individual creativity.

EXPLAIN YOUR PROCESS TO BECOMING A DESIGNER:

My first foray into design was working at the Washington Design Center. This was where I had my first glimpse into the business side of the industry. I moved into a corporate position outside of design, which made me realize how much I missed being around creative people. I have a fine arts degree in cultural anthropology, as well as a degree in painting. Once I left the corporate world, I went back to school to study interior design at the Corcoran School of Art and Design. During that time, I worked for two local interior designers and then started my own business, Marika Meyer Interiors, in 2007.

WHAT DO YOU FIND FULFILLING ABOUT BEING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER?

I enjoy the problem solving involved. Reconciling tastes between couples and having clients excited about the finished outcome of their own unique home are among the many fulfilling aspects of being a designer.

WHO DO YOU ADMIRE IN THE DESIGN WORLD?

Historically, Elsie de Wolfe for being at the forefront of the design industry. She embraced design that was not the traditional, Victorian

aesthetics of the time and encouraged fresh and inviting rooms and homes. Her approach is still as relevant today as it was almost a century ago. As for designers today, I love Mary McDonald for her great taste and the way she injects her unique style into each project.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Clients serve as my greatest inspiration. They inspire me with their stories of travels around the world, how they want to incorporate their mementos into design, and using different patterns or colors than what I naturally gravitate toward. Beyond that, I find great inspiration from nature, looking out the door seasonally, such as spring's chartreuses and greens. In the fall, I'm blown away by the orange and brown colors. It's as easy as looking out the door. I also keep an eye out for what's coming next, what's new and fresh in materials and products. I'm always looking for inspiration all around me.

ONCE YOU'VE SELECTED A DIRECTION FOR THE DESIGN, HOW DO YOU GO FROM IDEA TO CHOOSING DESIGN ELEMENTS AND PULLING THE PICTURE TOGETHER?

I start with rugs or textiles; they're great jumping off points. Also, I look at how rooms interact or intersect. I find inspiration in fabrics or patterns that can be repeated for a sense of cohesion.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR DESIGN AESTHETIC?

I like to combine classic elements with clean and tailored upholstery, giving spaces a collected feel. It's important to look to elements of the past to capture some sense of tradition, but then update it and make it fresh for the way we live today.

EXPLAIN WHAT YOU MEAN BY PRACTICAL LUXURY, FUNCTIONAL BEAUTY:

The majority of my clients have young families, so I'm always thinking about the way their spaces function—it's as important as how they look. My clients are sophisticated and have high expectations of what the home should look like. I like to merge form and function so each has equal importance. By use of certain materials (such as durable indoor-outdoor fabrics) and thinking about the finish of the table (for instance, distressing it a bit or selecting round surfaces instead of hard corners), I can establish a comfortable, kid-friendly aesthetic so that any wear of the furnishings is not so evident.

The way I **reoriented** the floor plan in the living room and used pieces and side tables makes the space flexible so that they have **conversation areas** whether the gathering is large or small.

TELL US ABOUT PROJECT ONE:

This was a spec house, so I wanted to create warmth in the spaces and bring some of the owner's individual character into the home through wallcoverings, flooring, and drapes. Through layering, every surface adds to the overall uniqueness of each space, creating a warm and inviting home.

DESCRIBE THE SPACE BEFORE YOU BEGAN:

The owner did have some existing furniture that we moved from original locations into new spaces. From there, I added side tables to blend with existing living and dining room furnishings. For instance, I took a console that had been in an upstairs hallway and placed it in the dining room and moved sconces there that had been someplace else. I took an inventory of existing furniture and kept what worked.



WHAT DESIGN TRICKS/TRENDS DID YOU INCORPORATE INTO THE LIVING ROOM TO PREPARE THEM FOR ENTERTAINING AND THE HOLIDAYS?

The way I reoriented the floor plan in the living room and used pieces and side tables makes the space flexible so that they have conversation areas whether the gathering is large or small. A side table doubles as a stool that can be pulled up to the fireplace when there are many guests. The concept of flexibility was important throughout the home. In the dining room, the idea was to keep it simple so there was space to walk around, making it functionable to entertain large and small groups.

WHAT SORT OF FEELING DID YOU HOPE TO EVOKE WHEN GUESTS ENTERED THE SPACE?

One of welcoming. I created a very warm environment with layering of wallpaper, use of grass shades, and textured floor covering. We wanted to make it cozy and inviting.

GIVE US AN OVERVIEW OF PROJECT TWO. WHAT WERE THE CLIENTS LOOKING FOR, AND HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE IT?

The piano needed to stay in the living room, so I changed the space from a traditional living room into an updated, transitional music room. We addressed how to make the space function well, while also being beautiful. The millwork was existing, so I covered the doors with wide-frame grillwork to make decorative displays to draw you into the room. The decorative door treatments also add a touch of elegance to the room. By creating a beautiful space and incorporating the piano in the right spot within the room, the living room is an ideal space to gather with family and friends for entertaining.

Originally, the dining room had no focal point—nothing to ground it. It had a small table and adjacent banquet. I worked with existing furniture and edited it by taking away some items and grounding what was there by adding a floor covering, chandelier, and console at the far end. This gave them

a nice functional space that works for large scale entertaining or quiet, intimate gatherings. By grounding the space with abundant seating and a buffet, the dining room is now a comfortable place to entertain during the holidays. There's space to expand for larger gatherings as well.



WHAT WERE THE CLIENTS LOOKING FOR IN PROJECT THREE, AND HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE IT?

The clients do a great deal of entertaining on a grand scale for up to seventy-five guests. They also entertain smaller groups of twelve or less. We wanted to make the spaces functional, durable, and inviting, and also work with their entertaining needs. Making sure the spaces felt intimate while also providing enough seating and a sensible entertainment flow for up to seventy-five guests was certainly a challenge.

First and foremost, I incorporated materials, such as floor coverings, that would be durable. The house has that sensibility of functional beauty. In the living room, flexible stools can be pulled up and out. I kept the plan simple so there were nice walkways from room to room including to the outdoor spaces. There's a fine line when making an inviting environment that also works for twelve to seventy-five guests. In the dining room, I included a table that expands to seat fourteen people. It's large but can also be made smaller to seat ten or less.





A round table grounds the dining room. I used an existing buffet, and painted it to establish contrast with the dining table. The space is softened with light colors and textures, including the Phillip Jeffries wallpaper.

WHAT WERE THE CLIENTS LOOKING FOR IN PROJECT FOUR?

The homeowners wanted really beautiful spaces. They weren't as concerned about function as they were about entertaining in style. They do a fair amount of entertaining, so having enough seating was important as well as using comfortable, worry-free indoor-outdoor fabrics that were very light in color and fresh in design. The owner has a transitional aesthetic that I incorporated into a traditional center hall colonial through the use of the color palette.

WHAT KINDS OF DESIGN TRICKS DID YOU INCORPORATE INTO THE DINING ROOM TO PREPARE THEM FOR ENTERTAINING?

The design of this space started at the first meeting with a plate the owners had and loved. We worked with the colors in the plate to create a fresh palette for the space. Adding a table and stools under the front bay window, providing plenty of lighting and side tables, as well as dressing up the existing built-in shelving prepared the living room space nicely for entertaining.

A round table grounds the dining room. I used an existing buffet, and painted it to establish contrast with the dining table. The space is softened with light colors and textures, including the Phillip Jeffries wallpaper. For architectural interest, I added wainscoting, which reinforces the worry-free, kid-friendly design approach the owners requested for their home.



GIVE US AN OVERVIEW OF PROJECT FIVE:

This is a smaller scale house, so I had to work with the floor plan and accommodate the storage needs, as well as incorporate a piano into the plan (the piano was by far the most difficult item to incorporate). I looked at the flexible function of the living and dining rooms for not only entertaining, but also for daily needs.

In the living room, I added millwork—in the way of custom built-ins—to provide a place to display family photos and mementos as well as provide a lovely focal point in the space. The piano and collected maps add interesting details on the opposite side of the room. The owner had a collection of antique maps that I framed and grouped above the piano to balance the height and weight of the millwork. Around the living room fireplace, the chairs and sofa face one another to soften the space and encourage conversation. The seating can be moved or expanded to accommodate guests.

The step-up dining room is a central room with no windows, so lighting was important. The ceilings are high, so the chandelier grounds the space that includes a round table and hardwood flooring with no rug (the rug was intentionally left out so as not to worry about spills). Above the chair rail, I added texture with wallpaper. The side table was found at a neighborhood yard sale and was custom painted in a Gustavian finish with a faux marble top. The plates on the wall continue that collected look of the combined living and dining room spaces.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE STYLE SECRET?

One of my favorite style secrets is to line the back of bookcases with wallpaper or paint them a bright color. In general, I always pay attention to forgotten places.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES AND INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF INTERIOR DESIGN?

My two sons: Colin is one year old, and Grayson is four years old. My children keep me on my toes full time. My life consists of work, kids, and sleep!

AL :: www.meyerinteriors.com





Inspired by her own children and her understanding of Montessori and Waldorf methodologies, **Jessica Perkins** began making all of her creations with the belief that children make sense of their world through sensing their world. In 2009, Mama May i was launched. mamamayishop.com



Colored Sorting Bowls

wood, soy-based pigment, organic beeswax, and jojoba oil

These are the perfect little bowls for color sorting. Sort a rainbow of handheld items like marbles, gemstones, rainbow cereal, beads, flowers, or wooden acorns—the possibilities are endless.

www.etsy.com/shop/applenamos



While I was home, in an effort to save money, I learned to sew, bake, and make wood toys for my son, Henry. Fast forward a few years, Henry is now in school, and we find ourselves taking care of our newest member, Baby Amelia. It is so much fun creating all new toys for her."

www.etsy.com/shop/applenamos

Wooden Push and Pull Rattle

solid maple and birch woods, beeswax, and oil

Four wooden balls make a fun clacking noise when the child pushes the toy around. It also encourages kids to be creative as they imagine vacuuming the house, mowing the lawn, or mopping the floor.

www.etsy.com/shop/KeepsakeToys

Tree to Toy Box

WOODEN TOYS FOR CHILDREN

text: AS NOTED | photography: BY WEBSITE

Wooden toys are a great choice to entertain and enchant children, to promote coordination skills, and to serve as educational tools.





Giddy up horsie! This classic handmade wooden stick horse will make a lovable addition to your child's playroom. Crafted from maple wood, this horse is ready to hit the open trails! It features a beautifully detailed head with expressive eyes and prominent eyelashes, a bridle, and a mane of thick yarn hair.
www.etsy.com/shop/KeepsakeToys



Natural Wooden Eggs
 soy, paint, wood, beeswax, olive oil
 6 beautifully realistic hen eggs, hand painted in shades of blues, browns, whites and natural wood will delight any child. Decorate your home or start a new eco-tradition and use these in lieu of plastic eggs.
www.etsy.com/shop/applenamos



“We started to make some of these wooden toys for our kids while they were growing up because we knew how important it is for the kids to play with physical and natural toys in order to nurture their innate curiosity and creativity.”
www.etsy.com/shop/woodentoystudio



Ferris Wheel
 various hardwoods including walnut, maple, mahogany, oak, cherry, and alder
 Durable enough to stand up to toddlers, yet beautiful enough to be a family heirloom, this intricately crafted, super fun toy will be a family favorite for decades to come. It rotates around easily, and the people can be removed or replaced with ease!
www.asummerafternoon.com

At Little Sapling Toys, Nick and Kimber Christensen are committed to quality toys and a healthy earth. They plant a tree for every toy sold, use FSC-certified hardwoods, recycled content packaging, and participate in their local green power program. Each toy is handmade in their workshop in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The most important toy any child can have is his or her caregiver. For this reason, their educational toys are most effective with interactive play.
www.littlesaplingtoys.com



The pattern board is such a simple but engaging game of matching colors. Watch your little explorer delight in fitting the tiny balls onto the pattern board. Watch as problem solving becomes a part of play; children are challenged to find a way to mimic what's seen on the pattern card. This board is also great for building fine motor skills. Pinch. Grab. Balance. Place.

mamamayishop.com



Your child can create many different variations of the classic bowling game for many hours of fun and imaginative play. Choose to line up the pins, place them in a circle, or set them in order by letter. Practice problem solving and hand-eye coordination as you aim to knock the pins down. There are countless hours of fun, imaginative, and educational play in this game set.

www.etsy.com/shop/hcwoodcraft

Puppy Pull Toy

cedar and maple woods, beeswax, and food-grade oil

This adorable little puppy would make a loyal companion for your little one. The puppy will happily come along with a child for exiting adventures and explorations. This heirloom-quality toy features a beautiful design with a large heart cutout and a string attached to the front of the toy so that children can pull the toy wherever they go.

www.etsy.com/shop/KeepsakeToys



Hardwood Work Bench and Tools

walnut wood and beeswax

This toy is perfect for helping your toddler or child develop their motor skills and coordination! Your kids will have hours and hours of fun screwing and unscrewing the bolts and nuts and using their wrenches. The bolts screw into the workbench, or you can screw them into the nuts apart from the workbench.

www.asummerafternoon.com



First you start with the softest homemade play dough—it is velvety, natural, and feels excellent in your hands. Then you add a rolling pin, and the imagination really starts to kick in. Throw in a dash of colorful wooden hearts, and you've got baking time!"

www.etsy.com/shop/applenamos



Carving Out Creativity

GOURDS AS AN ART MEDIUM

text: ROBIN RYAN | photography: MARILYN SUNDERLAND

Marilyn Sunderland waxes poetic on gourds as an art medium, capable of being carved, painted, stained, and embellished in a myriad of ways.



IT'S EASY TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THE beauty of nature in autumn, when green leaves have given way to vibrant yellow and orange-hued crinkles that dance through the air as they descend one final time. But as gourd carver Marilyn Sunderland attests, the resplendence of nature can be inspiring all year round.

“I have always felt the love of nature since I was a child. Being raised on a farm in Columbia, Missouri, and now living in a valley surrounded by mountains, I have become motivated by the nature around me. I am inspired by its beauty and its ever-changing seasons,” explains the Utah-based artist. “I love to see the horses and animals roaming the farmlands and wilderness. I love to go to the mountains to see the trees and leaves in all their splendor. I always find something new and inspiring to draw.”

Marilyn channels this interest into her art, using elements of nature as both her muse and her medium. “My motto has always been, ‘Draw what you love. Design what inspires you,’” she explains. “Since I love drawing things from nature, the gourd seemed like the perfect medium since it was created from nature itself. I consider my gourd art as an extension of nature; I try to recreate nature through my own designs.”





Although she has dedicated a lifetime to her art, gourds have not always been her primary focus. Marilyn has branched into all sorts of art avenues over the years after earning her Bachelor's degree in art education from the University of Missouri and completing a two-year art course from the Art Instruction School of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Pencil, acrylic, watercolor, oils, pen and ink, clay, glass engraving, creative woodcarving—you name it, she has tried it. However for over ten years now, Marilyn's passion lies in gourd carving. "I hope one day art critics will see gourd art not only as a craft, but as a piece of fine art," she exclaims.

Marilyn stumbled upon this niche art form by chance: While meandering through a home and garden show, she got wrapped up in the demonstration of a vendor's ultra high speed engraving tool. "I fell in love. I was so excited to learn what I could do with it. They showed me how to engrave on glass, carve on wood, and even carve on a gourd," recalls Marilyn, who was intrigued by the endless possibilities. "I decided to take a class in gourd carving. I loved the idea of the gourd being already shaped and formed, and all I had to do was carve on it."



While the carving tool adds even more detail and depth to the design, I use both the carving and the design to give each its own uniqueness. To me, the design is as important as the carving. If you don't have a good design, the carving will not enhance the design.

Because it is such a versatile medium, Marilyn notes that many new artists have incorporated gourds into their work. "It can be carved like wood, burned with wood-burning tools, and painted in almost any paint medium such as acrylics, oils, water colors, wood stains, and dyes to name a few," she elaborates. "The gourd can be embellished with beads, precious stones, wire, leather, fibers, pine needles, or even left unpainted to show off its own natural color. The possibilities are endless. The gourd is truly a great canvas for the artist to create whatever his imagination can bring forth."

The gourd has since become the go-to canvas for Marilyn's creative expressions. On any given day, you can find Marilyn in her studio—a room she affectionately refers to as her creative garden—where she's busy carving intricate nature compositions onto the hard shell vessel.

But before she grabs her carving tool, there's prepping to be done—from purchasing gourds directly from farms to selecting the right shape for the particular project at hand, from scrubbing the outer skin of the shell to sanding the surface to prep for painting, from figuring out a direction for her design to drawing the artwork directly onto the gourd.

"I put as much detail into my designs as possible. Many of my gourds are carvings of leaves, but if you notice, they are all very different in their own design. I love stretching my imagination to see how many designs I

can create using just one leaf," says Marilyn, who prefers to wear headphones to listen to music or the television as she works her magic. "While the carving tool adds even more detail and depth to the design, I use both the carving and the design to give each its own uniqueness. To me, the design is as important as the carving. If you don't have a good design, the carving will not enhance the design. I may add paint to add highlights or a touch of color. I feel all of these elements combined give a rich and elegant look to my work. This takes the art from a craft to a fine art."

When Marilyn is not busy making masterpieces, she enjoys taking photographs of scenery and subjects for future projects as well as attending classes and galleries where she studies other artists' work. "The most valuable lesson I have learned over the years is to share your knowledge with others," notes the grandmother of six. "To show and teach others are just as important as the art itself. I strive to learn more, create more, and to enjoy each day to the fullest. When I attend seminars or lectures, I always come away excited to dive into a new project.

"I enjoy the excitement of each day with what my imagination can bring forth in each gourd. In the future, I hope to find new ways to make my art more creative and exciting," Marilyn wishes. "I may venture into other mediums, but gourds will always be a part of my work. Gourd art is here to stay."

AL :: www.marilynsunderlandstudio.com

art to feather




Front of Tear Out Card 2

"A simple item can be used to create something extraordinary with just a little attention to detail"

chic solutions for the holiday host

festive decorations

DRIED CITRUS ACCENTS

Dan Shanner, CFP®

Toll Free: (866) 458-4226
Office: (610) 878-5000
E-mail: info@remindermedia.com
www.remindermedia.com

The Shanner Group
 1100 First Avenue
 Suite 200
 King of Prussia, PA 19406

Securities and advisory services offered through The Shanner Group. Member FINRA/SIPC and a registered investment advisor.

Back of Tear Out Card 2

Dried Citrus Accents

DRY CITRUS IN THE OVEN:

- Preheat oven to 200°F.
- Using a sharp knife, slice citrus fruits, such as lemons, limes, oranges, or pink grapefruit into thin slices (less than 1/4-inch thick).
- Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper, and arrange sliced fruit about 1/2-inch apart.
- Dry your citrus for 2-3 hours, or until there is no more moisture. (The varying thickness of the slices along with the sugar content in each fruit will cause uneven drying times. Remove dried slices as they finish, returning the tray to the oven to let others finish.)

NOTE: A food dehydrator is much more energy efficient, and is worth the investment if you see a lot of fruit drying in your future.



Materials: Citrus fruit, ribbon, and floral wire

Once your fruit is dried, create festive accents with ribbon and floral wire. Run floral wire through the flesh of the fruit near the rind and create a hook for an all-natural ornament. Thread ribbon through the fruit and around a napkin or wine glass for a fresh twist on your holiday place settings.

Store extra citrus slices in an airtight container, and use them to add a fresh twist, incredible flavor, and pop of color to water, iced tea, or hot tea all season long.

TABLESCAPES TO FALL IN LOVE WITH

Create a tablescape that guests will fall in love with by following these simple, yet festive tips.



1 SEASON OF LAYERS

Fall is a season of colors and textures, whether in a casserole or a centerpiece. Layers create visual interest and are easy to produce.
Tip: Dress up a clear vase with your favorite fall colors using nonperishable items from your pantry.



4 CREATE HEIGHT

Creating a visual hierarchy adds interest and depth to your tablescape. Whether you purchase at a local craft store or cut it from your backyard, a tree stump can help complete your fall tablescape.
Tip: Place under your centerpiece to add height to your table, or use it to feature your favorite dish.



2 SPICED TEALIGHTS

Candles create an intimate tone for a comfortable meal. Use ordinary items to add flavor to your most basic candles and holders.
Tip: Use an apple as a candle holder, line the rim of a tea light glass with brown sugar, or dress up a candle holder with cinnamon sticks.



5 PAINTED PUMPKINS

Decorating with pumpkins this season? Paint something simple on your pumpkin or gourd to make it more interesting.
Tip: If you're going for a modern look, try simple stripes; for a more traditional look, paint a leaf or acorn on it.



3 WRAP WITH TWINE

Need a festive candle holder in a pinch? Simply wrap twine around an ordinary bottle or can until it is covered, and secure both ends with glue.
Tip: Use the festive vessels with or without candles to add a fall feel to your table.

FOR MORE FESTIVE RESOURCES, VISIT:
WWW.AMERICANLIFESTYLEMAG.COM/HOLIDAYS

The Shanner Group

Dan Shanner
1100 First Avenue
Suite 200
King of Prussia, PA 19406

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Harrisburg, PA
Permit No. 478

Bill and Judy Smith
123 Main Street
King of Prussia, PA 19406

FROM SWEET TO SAVORY

apple appetizers

Nutty Gorgonzola Rings

- 6 apples, cored and thinly sliced into rings
 - Juice of ½ lemon
 - 2 tbsp. water
- 8 oz. Gorgonzola cheese
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
 - 1 tbsp. honey

1. Combine lemon juice and water. Add apple rings, and toss to coat completely. Drain and discard water mixture.
2. Place apple slices on a serving dish in a single layer, and top with crumbled gorgonzola and chopped pecans.
3. Drizzle with honey. Serve immediately.



Sweet & Spicy Apple Chips

- 4 apples, cored and thinly sliced into rings
- 1½ tbsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
 - ½ c. caramel

1. Combine apple rings, cinnamon, and cayenne pepper. Toss to coat completely.
2. Place apple slices on a baking sheet, and bake at 250°F for three hours until they're crunchy, flipping halfway through.
3. Let apple chips cool, and serve with warm caramel dip.



Maple Syrup Dip with Bacon

- 4 slices bacon, cooked and chopped into bits
- 8 oz. cream cheese
 - ½ c. sour cream
- 2 tbsp. maple syrup
 - 1 tsp. cinnamon
 - 1 tsp. nutmeg

1. Mix softened cream cheese and sour cream. Add maple syrup, and mix together for another 30 seconds.
2. Add cinnamon and nutmeg to cream cheese mixture. Fold in bacon bits, reserving a handful for garnish.
3. Transfer to a serving dish, and garnish with additional bacon bits.
4. Refrigerate for one hour before serving with fresh apple slices.



FOR MORE FESTIVE RESOURCES, VISIT: americanlifestylemag.com/holidays