The background of the magazine cover features a wide-angle photograph of a mountainous landscape. The upper half of the mountain is covered in snow, while the lower slopes transition through various shades of green and yellow, indicating spring foliage. In the foreground, a white barn with a red roof sits on a grassy hillside next to a small silo. The sky above is a mix of blue and grey clouds.

SPRING  
2023

# Our Vermont

**SEVEN MAGICAL  
WATERFALL HIKES**

**SPRING GETAWAY  
TO NORWICH**

**SWEET & SAVORY  
MAPLE RECIPES**

*Yours to experience—the traditions, people,  
and places of the Green Mountain State*

# Spring Moments

The calendar will say that spring officially begins with the vernal equinox, which this year falls on March 20. But for many of us, our spring arrives a few weeks later, with the first softening of the ground. It is when we put fresh oil in our mowers and check the blades, and we scrape off last year's dirt from our garden tools to ready them for the early plantings. Those first days putting seeds into earth—that is when we know spring.

This is a time when we notice small things: bicyclists, dressed as brightly as flowers, pedaling along on weekend rides; the first sounds of spring peepers; the sight of geese coming home. We roll down the windows now, when we drive along country roads that run past rivers, ponds, lakes—in some places, too many to know all their names—and we see cars snugged up against the tree-lined shoulders, their owners having launched kayaks and canoes into the water. Our clocks move ahead. Daylight now stretches long past 6, nudges to 7, moves onward to 8. Grills reappear on decks and lawns, and the sounds of bats hitting balls spill out from the fields that dot every village, town, and city throughout the Green Mountain State.

Our woodsheds are empty, having done their work well. New wood arrives by the cord in trucks. We stack maple, oak, birch, and ash, ready to replenish the shed come fall. This cycle of preparing, using, replenishing—we are not so different from the squirrels who race across our yards with nuts bulging from their cheeks. For months we will see the wood slowly weather, cracks appearing as it dries, nature's art.

Mountain slopes green up. Sheep, goats, and cows bear their young, and farmers bring them to pasture after a long winter in the barn. Magnolias and cherry trees make our lives seem filled with sun and light. Orchards fill up with the glorious white blossoms of apple trees; when winds pick up, the petals fall and lay a carpet of color along the ground.

We wake up early to birdsong, as loud as if broadcast with speakers. Days turn balmy, almost warm enough to ask: *Should we jump in the lake?* Trees along the river have never looked so green. We start up our mowers to tame the wild grass. Our dogs know the happiness that spring brings, rolling on their backs, paving the air in what can only be joy. We plant and look to the sky. We love the blue; we welcome the rain. It's a love of small things that spring brings.



*Mel Allen*

Mel Allen  
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# YANKEE

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*This special edition was produced by Yankee Publishing Inc. for The Vermont Country Store. Select stories and photographs are excerpted from articles previously published by Yankee.*

## Vol. 6, No. 1

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*On the cover: Dusted with late snow,  
Mount Hor rises above a spring  
landscape in Sutton.  
Photo by Alan L. Graham*

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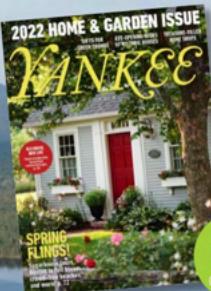
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# Starting Time

*How a clock-setting ritual carries the promise of new beginnings.*

**S**pring forward, fall behind," my mother used to say, and it was an easy way to remember this business of Daylight Saving Time. On the second Sunday in March, we advance the clock, making mornings lighter and evenings longer. Or is it darker? I get confused about the purpose of moving our clocks forward and backward. Is it to give us a longer day? If so, I can't figure out how it can do that. A day is as long as it is going to be. No moving of the clocks can make a difference in the length of our days.

I know of a local farmer who does not observe this ritual. The cows know milking time, he says, in spite of what the clock may say. He calls this Daylight Nuisance Time and lives half the year out of sync with the rest of the country. There's also a certain New England novelist who doesn't set her clocks back or forward either but keeps them on Standard Time year-round, which raises problems when she has to travel. I have contemplated doing that. It appeals to me. I like to think of time and the arrival of the seasons as something celestial, a cosmic occurrence understood only by the likes of Albert Einstein and *The Old Farmer's Almanac*.

Daylight Saving Time was first suggested by Ben Franklin in 1784, and over time we have waffled back and forth in our appreciation for the idea. The war years and the years 1967, 1972, 1975, and 1987 all show up as banner years for its evolution. In those years Congress and various presidents have gotten into the act, signing bills and changing it around, all the while justifying its existence. One theory is that it saves energy. Another is that it gives farmers more daylight hours in their fields (which, by the way, the farmers

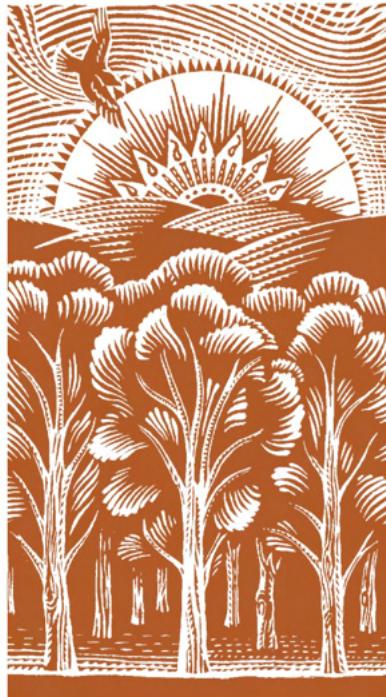
refute). The British go along with it, too, though they call it Summer Time, a nicer way of putting it. Still, the fact that all this rearranging of the calendar comes from politicians rather than astronomers (or farmers) makes me somewhat nervous.

But then, time is what we make of it. I like to get up at first light, no matter what the clock says, and often those first hours are spent in the garden. It is cooler than in the hot part of the summer, and it is time I feel is my own, rather than that of my employer. I don't think of it as an hour, but rather as daybreak or dawn or sunrise, the finest part of any day. It is also the quietest, when few cars are out on the road and I am urged on by the enthusiasm of the birds all around me.

And so if we want to work an extra hour in the garden, we can. We don't have to change the clocks to do so. Time and calendar are our own inventions, just a method to keep track of things. The sun rises and the sun sets according to that great astronomical wheel about which we can do nothing. Isn't it just like the politicians to want to get in there and change the hands of time? And when they have made their decree, no one is really sure where the benefit lies.

In spite of my objections, I have grown to like this

semiannual occasion. I look forward to it, in fact, not for what it does to my daylight hours, for I hardly notice that. But, more than New Year's Eve, I like it for the demarcation, the new beginning it offers. It's a head start on a new season, a chance to start fresh and get a little bit ahead of myself in the garden. Who cares if it's a politician's invention? To spring forward is a good idea. —Edie Clark



# The Pep Squad

*As we await the bounty of late-spring and summer produce, the zing of fresh herbs never fails to brighten the menu.*



## Rosemary Biscuit Eggs Benedict

Tender, aromatic rosemary biscuits are the foundation for this fresh take on eggs Benedict, in which the traditional hollandaise is replaced with simple cheese sauce and the whole thing is dressed up with peppery arugula and seared tomatoes. Recipe courtesy of Jennifer Cavallaro.

### FOR THE BISCUITS

- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons table salt
- 1 cup cold unsalted butter, cut into thin slices
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1½ cups buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon milk or cream

### FOR THE SAUCE AND EGGS

- 2 tablespoons salted butter
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ teaspoon plus ¼ teaspoon table salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### ½ cup shredded extra-sharp cheddar

- ¼ cup ricotta
- ¼ cup Romano cheese
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 small tomatoes, quartered
- 12 large eggs
- Minced fresh basil or parsley leaves
- 3 cups fresh arugula

Preheat oven to 400°F and set a rack to the middle position. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a nonstick liner.

First, make the biscuits: In a large bowl, thoroughly mix together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Use your fingers to work the butter into the flour mixture, smearing the butter as you do. (Stop when the mixture looks like cornmeal with lumps and bean-size bits of butter remaining. Mix in rosemary. Add the buttermilk and gently work into the dough.)

Roll the dough out to 1-inch thickness on a lightly floured surface. Using a biscuit cutter or 3- or 4-inch round cookie cutter, cut out 12 biscuits,

re-rolling scraps as needed. Place biscuits on the baking sheet, and brush their tops with milk or cream. Bake until biscuits are puffed and golden, 20 to 25 minutes; set aside to cool.

Meanwhile, make the sauce: In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter, then add the garlic and cook 1 minute. Add the heavy cream, ¼ teaspoon salt, and pepper. Let mixture come to a simmer. Add the cheeses. Bring back to a simmer and cook, stirring, until thickened, about 3 minutes. Reduce heat to low.

Cook the tomatoes: Set a small skillet over medium heat. Add the olive oil, then lay the tomato pieces in the hot oil and sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook until browned on one side, about 2 minutes. Set aside.

Put it all together: Split 6 of the biscuits in half (save the rest for another use). Poach or fry two eggs per person, and place each egg on a biscuit half. Ladle cheese sauce over eggs and sprinkle with minced herbs. Arrange a small pile of arugula on each plate, then top with tomato pieces. Serve hot. Yields 6 servings.



## Veggie & Herb Frittata

The beauty of a frittata lies in its versatility. Basil is the ideal complement to the zucchini and tomatoes here, but feel free to use different vegetables, cheeses, and herbs depending on what you have on hand.

- 10 large eggs
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium red onion, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small zucchini, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced
- 12 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 12 basil leaves, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon minced fresh thyme

Preheat the oven to 375°F. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, cream, salt, and pepper in a mixing bowl. Stir in the cheddar and set aside.

Heat the oil in a medium cast-iron skillet over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the sliced onion and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and zucchini and cook until the zucchini begins to soften, 2 to 3 minutes more.

Add tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid evaporates, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the heat and sprinkle the herbs over the cooked vegetables. Pour the egg mixture over all, then transfer the skillet to the oven.

Bake until the eggs are just set and the top of the frittata is light golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Let it sit for 10 minutes. Cut into wedges and serve warm, cold, or at room temperature. Yields 6 servings.

## Creamy Lemon-Basil Pasta Salad

This creamy, zesty rigatoni salad hits all the right notes. Feel free to dress up your dish with grilled shrimp, chicken, or white beans.

### FOR THE DRESSING

- 2 cloves crushed garlic
- 1 cup sliced fresh basil, plus more for garnish
- 1 tablespoon honey
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Zest of 1 lemon
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup plain full-fat Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### FOR THE SALAD

- 1 pound rigatoni pasta
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped roasted red peppers (fresh or from a jar)
- 1 cup sliced sugar snap peas
- 1 cup baby arugula leaves
- Fresh basil, for garnish

### FOR THE TOPPING

- ½ cup panko bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons salted butter

First, make the dressing: Combine the garlic, basil, honey, lemon juice, lemon zest, mayonnaise, and yogurt in a food processor. Pulse until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Then, cook the pasta: Put the rigatoni into a large pot of boiling salted water and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente. Drain and transfer to a large bowl. Toss with olive oil and refrigerate.

Meanwhile, make the bread crumb topping: Melt the butter in a small saucépan over medium-high heat. Add the bread crumbs and reduce heat to medium. Toast the bread crumbs, stirring often, until golden brown, approximately 3 minutes.

To assemble the salad, add the roasted peppers, peas, and arugula to the pasta. Drizzle with dressing and toss to combine. Top with bread crumbs and garnish with basil. Yields 6 to 8 servings.



KATHERINE KEENAN



## Whole-Wheat Herb Bread

*This bread is wonderful with good butter, cheese, and cured meats. Using a starter means that loaves will stay fresh for 3 to 5 days. You'll need to plan ahead, though, mixing the starter 4 to 12 hours before making the dough. Think of it as a Sunday bread you can start in the morning and serve at dinner, with little fuss in between.*

### FOR THE STARTER

- 1 teaspoon active dry yeast
- ¼ cup plus ⅓ cup hot water, divided
- 1 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

### FOR THE DOUGH

- 1 teaspoon active dry yeast
- ¼ cup plus 2 cups hot water, divided
- 1 cup starter
- 1 tablespoon kosher or sea salt
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary

¼ cup chopped flat-leaf parsley  
 2 cups whole-wheat flour  
 3–4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour, divided  
 Olive oil, for bowl  
 Cornmeal or flour, for baking stone or heavy cookie sheet

First, make the starter: Add yeast to ¼ cup hot water, and stir with a fork to dissolve. Let proof for 10 minutes. Then add ⅔ cup hot water and enough flour to make a loose dough. Cover with plastic wrap and a kitchen towel, and let rise at room temperature for at least 4 hours and up to overnight.

When starter is ready, make the dough: In the large bowl of a heavy-duty mixer, proof yeast in ¼ cup hot water for 10 minutes. Then add starter, salt, remaining 2 cups hot water, and

chopped herbs. Mix. Add whole-wheat flour and mix thoroughly, scraping down the sides of the bowl periodically. Then add all-purpose flour in 1-cup increments until dough forms a rough ball. Switch to your mixer's dough hook, or move to a wooden dough board, and knead until smooth and springy. Grease a large bowl with olive oil. Put dough into the bowl and let rise until doubled, 1½ to 2 hours. Then form dough into two loaves and let rise 1 hour.

Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 450°F. Sprinkle the baking stone or a heavy cookie sheet with a little cornmeal or flour. Place loaves on stone or sheet, and make 2 shallow slashes on top of each loaf with a sharp knife. Bake 10 minutes; then reduce heat to 400°F. Continue baking 40 minutes more, until loaves sound hollow when tapped on the bottom and are browned on top. *Yields 2 loaves.*



## German-Style Potato Salad

The "German-style" nature of this herb-brightened recipe is based on the fact that you use vinaigrette instead of mayonnaise for the dressing. You may change this recipe to suit your own taste, substituting white onion for red or using a different kind of mustard.

- 3 pounds small red new potatoes
- 2 tablespoons plus 1½ teaspoons kosher or sea salt, divided
- 1 medium-size red onion, finely diced
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup apple-cider vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

- ¾ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons capers, rinsed
- ½ cup diced green bell pepper
- 1 small (or ½ large) fennel bulb, diced
- ¼ cup chopped celery (or 2 tablespoons minced fresh lovage leaves)
- 2 tablespoons fresh oregano, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon thyme (or common thyme), chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped

Scrub potatoes; leave whole and place in a large

pot. Cover with cold water so that there's at least an inch of water above the potatoes. Add 2 tablespoons salt and place over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer until tender, about 20 to 25 minutes.

Put diced onion and minced garlic in a large bowl with vinegar, remaining salt, and black pepper. Stir to dissolve salt; then whisk in olive oil. Set aside.

When potatoes are done, drain and cut into 1-inch cubes. While potatoes are still warm, toss with onion mixture, mustard, and capers. Add bell pepper, fennel, celery (or lovage), and herbs and toss once more. Serve. *Yields 10 servings.*



## Grilled Herbed Chicken

You can prepare the marinade in the morning and let the breasts marinate up to 8 hours, or just let them sit for 30 minutes before dinner. Instead of chicken breasts, you may also want to try cubes of chicken or pork to make kabobs.

- 1 cup loosely packed mixed fresh herb leaves, such as basil, Thai basil, cilantro, mint, and parsley
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 large garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon kosher or sea salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, rinsed and patted dry

Wash and chop herbs. Put in a food processor or blender with olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and pepper. Purée until a smooth paste forms. If mixture seems dry and herbs aren't puréeing, add a little more olive oil. Put chicken breasts in a zip-top bag, pour in marinade, seal, and massage briefly. Chill at least 30 minutes (up to 8 hours).

Start your grill and get it hot. Grill chicken 10 to 15 minutes on each side, or until thoroughly cooked through (juices run clear and meat has no pink color). Serve. Yields 4 servings.

## Dark Chocolate-Mint Sorbet

This sorbet is a peppermint-fudge explosion, but other herbs—including licorice root, thyme, or anise hyssop—can be equally delicious infused in the syrup.

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 6 cups cold water, divided
- 6 4-inch peppermint, chocolate mint, or spearmint sprigs (note: increase to 8 sprigs if using bittersweet chocolate)
- ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 8 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, finely chopped

Measure sugar into a medium pot. Add 4 cups water and bring to a boil, stirring a few times. Add mint; cover and remove from heat. Let mint infuse in sugar syrup for 30 minutes.

Scoop out mint and return syrup to medium-

high heat, bringing it to a simmer. Add cocoa powder, whisking continuously. Reduce heat to a gentle simmer; cook, stirring frequently with a spatula, 30 minutes.

Put chopped chocolate in a large bowl and pour hot syrup over it. Let sit 5 minutes. Whisk until completely smooth. Add remaining 2 cups cold water and whisk again.

Refrigerate at least 4 hours and up to 2 days. (The cocoa continues to hydrate in the refrigerator, and you'll get a smoother sorbet if you chill the mixture overnight.) Churn mixture in your ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. *Yields 5 cups.*



MICHAEL PIAZZA; STYLING BY CATRINE KELTY

A collage of images featuring maple syrup and desserts. At the top left, a glass of red wine sits on a wooden surface next to a small glass. To the right, a white plate holds a slice of cake with a cream cheese frosting, walnuts, and a drizzle of maple syrup. In the center, a large white rectangular area contains the main title. Below it, a white plate on a wooden table holds a slice of cake with frosting, walnuts, and maple syrup, with a fork resting on it.

*Local Flavor*

# The Magic of Maple

Vermont's signature sweetener elevates both dinner and dessert.



There are few sights as stirring as a Vermont sugar shack in full swing on a blue-sky March day. Clouds of steam billowing out of the shack's roof seem to crack open the door between winter and spring. The sap is flowing, life returns, and sweetness is a sure thing.

To celebrate that fact, here are two recipes you can make at home: a savory salmon dish, and the delectable cheesecake bars shown on the previous page.

### MAPLE-SOY GLAZED SALMON

**¾ cup regular or low-sodium soy sauce  
½ cup maple syrup  
2 large (4 medium) garlic cloves, minced  
2 pounds salmon  
Oil, for the baking sheet  
Toasted sesame seeds and thinly sliced scallions, for garnish**

In a medium bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, maple syrup, and garlic. Reserve ½ cup of this mixture and set aside. Pour the rest into a zip-top bag and add the salmon (cut into two pieces if needed to fit). Refrigerate and let the fish marinate for at least 30 minutes and up to 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 425°F. Meanwhile,

### MAPLE OPEN HOUSE WEEKENDS

■ **Mark your calendar!** New England's biggest statewide maple celebration returns March 25–26 and April 1–2 as more than 100 Vermont sugarhouses throw open their doors for public tours, samples, and more. [vermontmaple.org](http://vermontmaple.org)



in a small saucepan, simmer the reserved ½ cup of sauce, stirring constantly, until a spatula dragged across the bottom leaves a trail, about 5 minutes. This will be your glaze.

Pour a thin layer of oil on a rimmed baking sheet. Remove the salmon from the marinade and discard the marinade. Lay the fish on the oiled baking sheet, then bake until the center is firm, 12 to 15 minutes. Brush with the glaze, then garnish with sesame seeds and scallions, and serve with rice and a side vegetable. *Yields 4 to 6 servings.*

### NO-BAKE MAPLE-WALNUT CHEESECAKE BARS

**FOR THE CRUST  
16 graham crackers, broken into pieces  
½ cup chopped walnuts  
2 tablespoons granulated sugar  
8 tablespoons salted butter, melted**

#### FOR THE TOPPING

**1 cup heavy whipping cream  
1½ pounds (three 8-ounce packages)  
cream cheese, softened  
½ cups powdered sugar  
1 cup whole-milk yogurt  
¼ teaspoon maple extract  
¼ teaspoon table salt  
Maple syrup and chopped walnuts**

Line a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with parchment paper, leaving at least a 2-inch overhang on the sides to help you lift the bars out of the pan later.

In the bowl of a food processor, pulse the graham crackers until mostly broken down. Add the walnuts, sugar, and melted butter and pulse until the mixture resembles wet sand. Pour into the prepared pan and press it down into an even layer. Transfer the pan to your freezer.

Using a handheld or stand mixer and a large bowl, beat the heavy cream on high speed until stiff peaks form. Transfer the whipped cream to another bowl and set aside. Put the cream cheese, powdered sugar, yogurt, maple extract, and table salt in the first bowl and beat on high until smooth and fluffy. Then gently fold in half of the whipped cream until the mixture is evenly combined. Repeat with the rest of the whipped cream.

Remove the crust from the freezer and pour the topping over it, using a spatula to even out the surface. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 6 hours and up to 2 days.

After carefully removing the cheesecake from the pan, use a sharp knife to cut it into 16 to 20 bars. Just before serving, drizzle with maple syrup and sprinkle with chopped walnuts. *Yields 16 to 20 bars.*



MAPLE-SOY  
GLAZED SALMON

Local Flavor

# Slipstream Farm

*As part of an ongoing series, we meet up with small producers bringing the bounty of Vermont to our table.*



In the fall of 2020, Jon and Lizzie Deloge were house-hunting in Vermont when a glitchy real estate app sent them to Newfane, a few towns over from their intended location. But along the way the couple caught sight of a small house on a rise of land with a big barn and horses roaming through a pasture. “Wouldn’t that be a perfect spot for us?” Jon remarked to Lizzie. By sheer coincidence, that night the 11-acre property was put on the market, and in early December the Deloges became its new owners. Today, Slipstream is the home not just to Jon and Lizzie and their year-old son, Leo, but also to a mushroom farming enterprise that yields a host of gourmet varieties—from blue oysters to shiitakes to lion’s mane—that they sell at farmers’ markets and to restaurants across southern Vermont, as well as producing mushroom-based medicinal tinctures. It takes a lot of exacting, technical work to grow these fungi, but the results deliver a flavor experience that can rival that of the best Vermont-made cheeses. We recently caught up with Jon to talk about the local food scene, Vermonters’ natural affection for mycology, and his go-to favorite for mushroom-cheese omelets. —*Ian Aldrich*



### **What led you to mushroom farming?**

I ran a landscaping company for many years when we were living in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and I had a lot of customers who were interested in using noncommercial fertilizers. So I started to study composting, taking classes and really looking at things under the microscope. And when you understand soil fertility, you understand that fungi are the magicians. They make so much happen. That got me started, and then when we moved here I wanted my work to be something I could do from home—and mushrooms became the way I thought I could do that.

### **What do you like about the work?**

Not having to manage people is great. [Laughs.] It's solitary work but also very solution-oriented. There's an issue, you just go fix it. And providing food—and in some cases medicine, through our tinctures—is very rewarding.

### **Tell us about what it was like to break into the Vermont food scene.**

There's just an incredibly curious culture here. And Vermonters have a big appreciation for mushrooms. If you live here you have a strong interest in being in the woods, and if you're in the woods you're going to see mushrooms. For me personally, it wasn't easy to just cold-call restaurants. They didn't know me, and I'd show up and start talking about my mushrooms. The chefs would kind of roll their eyes. But then I'd open the box and they'd see these high-end cultivated

mushrooms that I could reliably provide them, and their look completely changed.

### **How are your mushrooms different from what's typically found in supermarkets?**

To start with, mushrooms like the ones we grow have a wild array of flavors and textures. But we're also now learning more about their nutritional value. Research has shown that compounds in lion's mane mushrooms, for instance, may protect against anxiety and depression and potentially help nerve issues. So between the flavors and the nutritional value, they're doing double duty. I like to think of it as a really good way to eat medicine.

### **Do you have a personal favorite?**

Blue oysters—I basically put those on everything. They have a real meaty kind of mushroom flavor and they're also silky-smooth. They're not chewy at all. If you put them in the most basic omelet it's probably going to be the best you've ever tasted.

### **WHERE TO BUY**

■ **Slipstream Farm** mushrooms and tinctures are available at farmers' markets and food co-ops in southern Vermont, as well as on the Slipstream website. Their mushrooms are also featured at several Vermont restaurants, including The Gleanery in Putney, Tine in Brattleboro, and Barrows House in Dorset. [slipstreamfarm.com](http://slipstreamfarm.com)

# Fit for a King

*A day trip to Norwich, home to a certain famous baking company, shows there's a lot to love about this Upper Valley town.*



The lush grounds of King Arthur Baking Company's flagship campus make for an inviting al fresco dining spot.

PHOTO BY LARS BLACKMORE

In driving north along the Vermont side of the Connecticut Valley, you can dawdle along U.S. Route 5, the old way, or you can zip up on Interstate 91. Take I-91, though, and you'll miss Norwich.

You might miss it anyway, if you pass through thinking, *Oh, there's another general store, and another inn*, and mosey on, passing the trim Federalist and Georgian homes that have earned Norwich a spot on the National Register of Historic Places and helped make the town a bedroom community for faculty at Dartmouth College, just across the river in Hanover, New Hampshire.

I took the slow road into Norwich not long ago, partly to poke my head into two local institutions I'd once had a connection with, despite having never visited either. Dan & Whit's General Store and the Norwich Bookstore each used to carry a Vermont driving guide that my wife, Kay, and I had written and published; it's long out of print, but I thought it might

be fun to see the town where folks had bought quite a few copies.

I've been to more than a few Vermont general stores, but nothing had prepared me for **Dan & Whit's General Store**, which faces the lovely Norwich town green. The place is a rambling *omnium gatherum* of ... stuff. Food. Tools. Hardware. Stationery. Games. Puzzles. Red suspenders and Darn Tough socks. Sewing notions. And, in a back corner, hula hoops. I even found the book rack, with the latest round of Vermont guides. Dan & Whit's is a cross between a general store, a grocery, and a butcher shop, with a five-and-ten and a gas station thrown in for good measure. It's a great place to stop if you want to pick up a steak, a box of crayons, a wrench, and an almanac.

But is there a Dan, or a Whit? "Whit's long gone," a clerk at the register told me. "But Dan's here. He's the original Dan's grandson."

Beds of daffodils add a dash of bright spring color to the c. 1898 Marion Cross School, which looks out on Norwich's large town green.

LARS BLACKMORE





**The Norwich Bookstore** is a couple of doors down. Like most of the other shops and professional offices in town, it's discreetly housed in a chaste white frame structure. I dropped in to find two floors smartly stocked with books you didn't know you wanted to read, and probably wouldn't have been looking for online. The children's section runs broad and deep; I even saw a book on the Catalan architect Gaudi written for very young readers. It seemed, overall, like a place geared toward tots whose parents worked at the Ivy League stalwart across the river.

**The Norwich Inn**, just the other side of Dan & Whit's, has the distinction of running one of the oldest independent breweries in a state where they now seem to spring up everywhere. **Jasper Murdoch's Alehouse** is the anchor pub and restaurant of the 38-room inn, and purveyor of an extensive array of ales and beers brewed in an outbuilding connected to the tavern taps by underground pipes. As the season was turning from dark porter days to balmy IPA weather, I stopped in to enjoy a pint. President James Monroe

COURTESY OF THE NORWICH INN (BEERS); ALL OTHERS BY LARS BLACKMORE

probably enjoyed one, too, when he stayed here in 1817.

It's necessary to leave Norwich's village center to visit two of the town's most famous institutions, both of which consistently rank among Vermont's premier attractions.

**The King Arthur Baking Company**, on Route 5 south of the village, is the oldest food processing firm in New England. It dates back to a mill established in 1790, and has flourished not only as supplier of the region's most popular flour, but as perhaps the best place to see—and taste—what can be done with it.

It was a little early for lunch when I arrived at the King Arthur campus, so I headed to the retail store. There, along with flours milled for every purpose from pizza to Irish-style breads, and mixes that would make amateur bakers of panettone, lava cake, or lemon poppy seed muffins look like pros, I found tortilla presses, Fiji ginger syrup, bread proofers, sourdough



starter, pans, bowls, measuring spoons, digital scales ... props enough to make any kitchen into the set of *The Great British Baking Show*.

Hungry now (who wouldn't be?), I headed over to the café, where I enjoyed a thick, creamy slab of quiche whose light, flaky crust was made, of course, with King Arthur flour. Across the hall from the café, I stood at a big picture window to watch bakers crafting scores of the more than 100,000 baguettes that leave the ovens here each year. I bought one to take home, and seriously considered returning for one of King Arthur's baking classes. Norwich University has long since moved to Northfield, but Norwich can certainly lay claim to having its own academy of baking.

ABOVE: With a retail shop packed with baking supplies and kitchen goods plus a café turning out delectable fresh-baked treats, the King Arthur Baking Company is an essential stop for any visitor.  
BELOW: Moments of family-friendly fun at the Montshire Museum of Science.

Norwich's other big draw is the **Montshire Museum of Science**, set amid scenic, trail-laced grounds alongside the Connecticut River. It's heavily kid-oriented, and I hadn't visited since my son was small. But there's always something an old English major can learn about the real world, so I headed down River Road and joined the boys and girls among the cleverly organized interactive exhibits. In the course of my visit I learned how fog forms and how frogs see (they only recognize motion), found out how to distinguish male from female painted turtles (males have longer claws), saw how huge a moose is, and played a Theremin. Don't know about Theremins? You'll have to visit the Montshire.

And you'll have to visit Norwich, too, for a look at a town that knows how to keep store, knows what it wants to read, and knows where to find a good pint of ale. —Bill Scheller



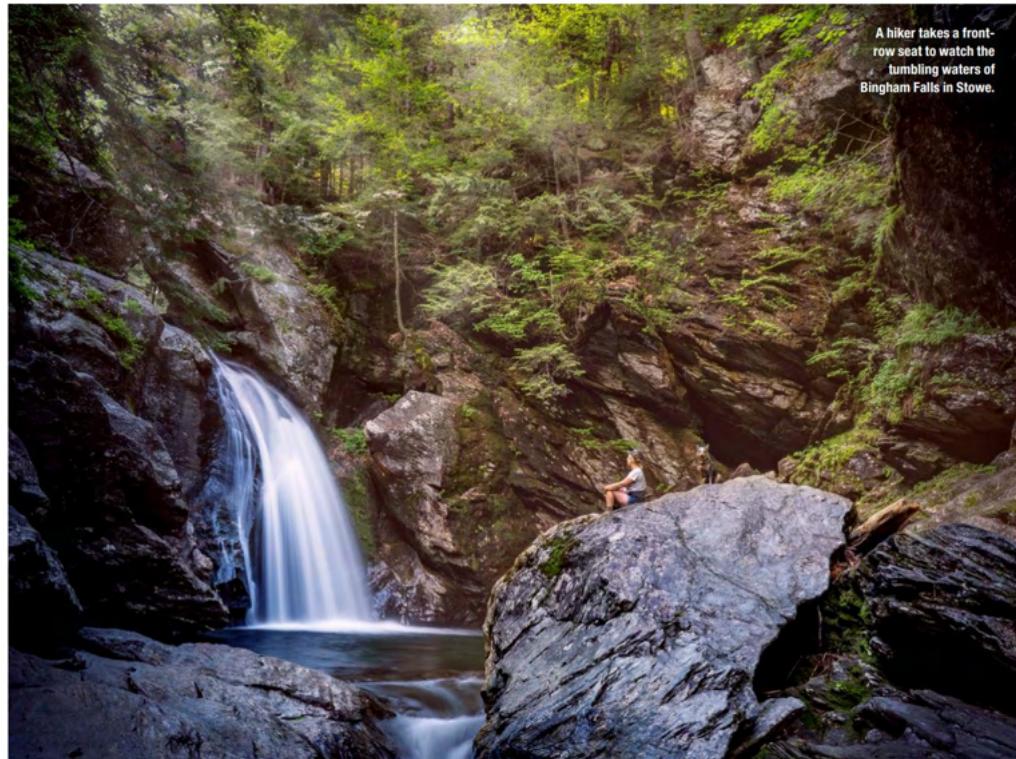
JIM WESTPHALEN/COURTESY OF TRUEXULLINS (SIGN); COURTESY OF KING ARTHUR BAKING COMPANY (PAstry & BAKER); COURTESY OF THE MONTSHIRE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE (BOTTOM ROW)

# Go with the Flow

*Looking to liven up your spring hiking? Just add waterfalls.*

Trees dotted with  
spring buds frame  
a view of Moss Glen  
Falls in Granville.

PHOTO BY  
ALAN L. GRAHAM



A hiker takes a front-row seat to watch the tumbling waters of Bingham Falls in Stowe.

**O**f all the times to chase Vermont's many thundering cascades, the most thrilling might just be spring, when a combination of rain and snowmelt transforms them into rip-roaring versions of themselves. Stand before one of these watery behemoths in April or May, and you might feel as though you're watching Godzilla awaken from months of dormancy.

Plus, as the Green Mountain Club's director of field programs, Keegan Tierney, points out, some of the most spectacular waterfalls in Vermont are found at lower elevations—precisely the type of hiking territory that's ideal during mud season, when lingering ice and bone-chilling wind can make boreal and alpine zones riskier for hikers. "In spring, weather in the valley can be 70 and sunny," he says, "but once you get up to some of the higher elevations, you might be looking at 45-degree temperatures and plenty of snow."

That said, visiting waterfalls in mud season does require some willingness to get, well, muddy. Keegan

advises hikers to be prepared for wading through muck in order to stay on the thawing trails. "When folks walk off to the side of the trail, that's when we get the most impact," he says. "It leads to a lot of vegetation damage, which in turn contributes to erosion." Spring also carries the possibility of high water crossings and lingering trail ice, which might necessitate turning around and picking an alternative hike. But with a relatively clear trail and waterproof boots, you can be among the first of the year to pay homage to Vermont's legendary waterfalls, such as these seven illustrious gushers:

### **Thundering Brook Falls | Killington**

No Vermont waterfall tour would be complete without a cameo appearance by the Appalachian Trail, and the nearly half-mile path from River Road Fork to Thundering Brook Falls uses a particularly charming section of the legendary trail. Dodge the mud and cross

an expansive, sunny bog on a sturdy boardwalk before entering the evergreen woods on the other side and climbing a couple of switchbacks to a viewing platform, where you can marvel at the horsetails of the 125-foot waterfall as they spill down a jagged rock slope.

### Texas Falls | Hancock

It's not just trails that become temporarily soupy during mud season: Dirt roads to trailheads are also vulnerable to the springtime thaw. But at Texas Falls—a Forest Service recreation area off of Route 125—you're all but guaranteed a close look at this 35-foot tall waterfall as it carves its way through a mossy gorge, forming a series of natural sluices and potholes. A wooden footbridge that spans the gorge offers prime cascade-gazing, and a 1-mile loop trail with plenty of boardwalk provides additional views from the rim of the chasm.



### Bingham Falls | Stowe

Tucked into the woods between Stowe and the slopes of Smugglers' Notch, the half-mile out-and-back trail to Bingham Falls begins by following the frothy torrent of the West Branch Little River. Then all of a sudden, the river is gone and the trail is descending a steep, winding stone staircase that you know you'll have to climb to make it back to your car. But the scenic reward that awaits—an elegant plume-like cascade that pours 25 feet into a deep green pool—is more than worth the cardiovascular price of the return journey.

### Lye Brook Falls | Manchester

Splashing down rough-hewn granite stairs for nearly 125 feet, Lye Brook Falls is one of the most cinematic-looking cascades in Vermont, and yet the gradual ascent to the waterfall along an old railroad bed is surprisingly meditative and low-key. Follow the Lye Brook Falls Trail for 2.4 miles, rock-hopping over streams, and listen for the telltale roar of water up ahead, as the trail branches off to the right and traverses a hillside where the lingering impact of Hurricane Irene can still be seen.

### Hamilton Falls | Jamaica

Slicing its way down a sheer rock face at angles that bring to mind a twisting water park slide, Hamilton Falls is a geologic wonder that regularly headlines the lists of iconic Vermont cascades. But just as impressive is the mighty West River, which you'll follow for the first two miles of the Hamilton Falls Trail. The final mile ascends through the woodlands and follows a tributary before arriving at the bubbling pool beneath the falls, which often resembles a cauldron of branches, leaves, and other forest detritus when Hamilton Falls is at its spring peak.

### Moss Glen Falls | Granville and Stowe

Vermont offers such an abundance of waterfalls that there are *two* equally spectacular cascades called "Moss Glen Falls" within an hour's drive of each other! The Granville version, located off the shoulder of Route 100 and accessible by a short boardwalk, has an elegant wedding veil-like shape. North of here, the Stowe edition is reached by a gentle quarter-mile path that delivers you to a roaring Tolkien-esque cascade that's over 100 feet tall and flanked with steep granite. —*Miles Howard*

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*Before kicking off your spring hiking season, the Green Mountain Club's Keegan Tierney recommends getting a quick refresher on safety and equipment basics here: [nps.gov/articles/10essentials.htm](https://nps.gov/articles/10essentials.htm)*

# Easy Riders

*Coast into spring with laid-back biking on the Champlain Islands.*



Hitting the road on Isle La Motte, part of the scenic 30-mile-long archipelago in the northern waters of Lake Champlain.

We were coasting toward an intersection on Route 2 on Grand Isle when I spotted a small hand-painted sign promising just the rejuvenation we needed: "Bake Shop." Soon enough, my 10-year-old son, Calvin, and I had dropped our bikes in the driveway and stepped into the prim little building that housed owner DonnaSue Shaw's made-from-scratch creations. Cookies, granola, cakes, mini loaves, and "go to" energy bars stocked the upright wooden boxes and shelves; meanwhile, a humming refrigerator held berry pies, along with iced coffee infused with maple syrup.

After rounding up our goods, we took a seat on a bench that looked onto a fenced-in yard of chickens and ducks. Late morning, a bright sun hung in the sky, songbirds fluttered about, and the apple trees and lilacs were in full bloom. Calling an end to winter can be a dicey game in New England, but on this mid-May day it finally, officially felt over.

Calvin shook his head in wonder. "I think I could live here," he said.

I knew what he meant. For two days we had explored the Lake Champlain Islands on our bikes. It's not the Vermont that many imagine: Positioned between the Adirondacks to the west and the Green Mountains to the east, this land is flat, with farms and barns and silos nestled close to cottages

edging the water. Sometimes you feel as though you're riding through the Midwest; other times, a breeze rushes up from the big lake and you swear you're near the ocean. *Is that salt air I smell?*

"My wife and I have biked all over the country, in some pretty spectacular spots," a man from New York state told me. "But this is just about as beautiful as any place we've seen."

Having made base camp at the North Hero House, an inn and restaurant that sits lakeside in its namesake town, we pedaled along the quiet shoreline of Isle La Motte. Then we headed south to Grand Isle's West Shore Road, where farmland, orchards, and mountain views intersect. Our mission was simple: to meander.



**On a prime April or May day, even a few hours of cycling on these islands can pack just the right kind of spring lift after months of winter confinement.**



A pit stop par excellence, DonnaSue Shaw's Bake Shop on Grand Isle provides both delicious homemade treats and an inviting spot to kick back and soak up the sunshine of a blue-sky May day.



From the lakeside picnic tables at Hero's Welcome General Store in North Hero, the views stretch across to Knight Island State Park and the eastern shore of Lake Champlain beyond.

through Quebec and New York—are everywhere, as is the patience of drivers, even on the busy stretches of Route 2. The islands' roads, both paved and dirt, are well maintained. At a big farm on Grand Isle, cyclists are invited to take advantage of the “free water and air.” Come summer, Local Motion, a Burlington-based cycling advocacy group, runs a bike-specific ferry that links South Hero to the mainland.

Put it all together, and on a prime April or May day even a few hours of cycling on these islands can pack just the right kind of spring lift after months of winter confinement. To finally allow some serendipity back into your life after a season of restricted movement is liberating. On the first day we covered 31 miles; on the second, 22. My son, who'd maybe hit only the dozen-mile mark in a single day before this trip, didn't spend

We picnicked at an old military fort, explored the grounds of a retired granite quarry famous for its fossils, and moseyed around the aisles at Hero's Welcome for tchotchkes, toys, and the best made-to-order sandwiches on the islands. We took a load off for kid-friendly cold beverages at Kraemer & Kin, a North Hero brewery that makes its home in an old church, and made a similar stop the following afternoon in South Hero at Snow Farm Vineyard, whose property tumbles to the water's edge. During one afternoon break, Calvin perused the titles of a book swap shop while I stretched out on the grass. Then it was time to push on to our next unplanned destination.

The cycling on these islands isn't merely a tolerated activity; it's part of the culture. Signs for the Lake Champlain Bikeways—a 1,600-mile network that runs

a second complaining about the distances.

But never was he happier than while sitting on that bench at DonnaSue's bake shop, tearing off big chunks of homemade oatmeal bread and taking swigs of cold water.

“This is pretty perfect,” he said. Indeed it was.

—*Ian Aldrich*

## IF YOU GO

- For Lake Champlain biking maps, as well as seasonal ferry information, go to [localmotion.org/bike\\_ferry](http://localmotion.org/bike_ferry).
- For a roundup of Champlain Island visitors information, go to [champlainislands.com/region-index](http://champlainislands.com/region-index).

# Out & About

*A sampling of spring events across Vermont worth the drive.*

The Champlain Valley Expo will be filled with blooming wonders this March as the Vermont Flower Show returns after a four-year hiatus.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN MEASE

# MAR

**MAR. 3–4****Burlington***Ice Bar*

Looking to shake off the late-winter doldrums? One of the coolest events in the Queen City is back with two nights of frosty festivities at Hotel Vermont. Marvel at ice sculptures, hit the dance floor, and enjoy snacks and frosty cocktails with local spirits, cider, and brews. [hotelvt.com](http://hotelvt.com)

**MAR. 3–5****Essex Junction***Vermont Flower Show*

Green thumbs, rejoice: Vermont's annual floral extravaganza returns to the Champlain Valley Expo with a 15,000-square-foot Grand Garden Display, 100-plus vendors, educational seminars and hands-on workshops, a Family Room featuring fun crafts and planting activities for kids, and a plant sale. [vnlavt.org/vermont-flower-show](http://vnlavt.org/)

**MAR. 4–5****Brattleboro***Circus Spectacular*

Step right up for this high-flying gala hosted by the New England Center for Circus Arts at the historic Latchis Theatre, featuring local students performing alongside guest artists from circuses around the world. [necenterforcircusarts.org](http://necenterforcircusarts.org)

**MAR. 5****West Dover***Jack Jump World Championships*

If you're intrigued by the idea of hurtling downhill while seated on single ski and using no poles for balance—aka jack jumping—we suggest heading over to Mount Snow to see this homegrown sport at its best. [mountainsnow.com](http://mountainsnow.com)

**MAR. 10****Manchester***"One: The Songs of U2"*

Get ready for Saint Patrick's Day with the music of the legendary Irish rock band U2 performed by Vermont's own Maxine Linehan, an international concert and recording artist, onstage at the Southern Vermont Art Center's Arkell Pavilion. [svac.org](http://svac.org)

**MAR. 18–19****Stratton Mountain***24 Hours of Stratton*

The ski lifts at Stratton Mountain will keep running all night long as hundreds of skiers and riders work together to rack up runs in this "fun-raiser" for the Stratton Foundation. Live music, fireworks, a costume contest, and games help keep the party going. [stratton.com](http://stratton.com)

**MAR. 22–26****Craftsbury***Henchey Memorial SuperTour Finals and Spring National Championships*

Come to the Craftsbury Outdoor Center to cheer on the country's best skiers at the culminating event for the 2023 National XC ski calendar. Members of local XC clubs will also test their mettle at the New England Open Club Relay Championships on Saturday. [craftsbury.com/events](http://craftsbury.com/events)

**MAR. 22****Woodstock***The Many Meanings of Maple*

The Woodstock History Center invites you to take a closer look at Vermont's sweetest export as Champlain College professor Michael Lange sheds light on how and why maple has helped to shape the identity of the Green Mountain State. [woodstockhistorycenter.org](http://woodstockhistorycenter.org)

**APR. 7****Barre***Dance of Hope*

Bringing Africa's sensational sounds and colorful choreography to audiences of all ages, Africa's leading youth-based arts education program performs at the Barre Opera House in the only Vermont stop on its U.S. tour. [barreoperahouse.org](http://barreoperahouse.org)

**APR. 7–8****Woodstock***Baby Farm Animal Celebration*

At Billings Farm & Museum's joyful salute to spring, you can take a wagon ride, enjoy tasty bites from food trucks and the scoop shop, and tour the 1890 farmhouse—but save plenty of time for the adorable lambs, kids, chicks, ducklings, bunnies, and calves who are the stars of the show. [billingsfarm.org](http://billingsfarm.org)

# APR

**APR. 6****Norwich***Poetry Reflections with Richard Blanco*

Selected by President Barack Obama as the fifth inaugural poet in U.S. history, Richard Blanco broke ground as the first Latino, immigrant, and gay person to serve in that role. The author of both stirring memoirs and acclaimed poetry collections, including 2019's *How to Love a Country*, Blanco shares his inspiring words at Norwich Congregational Church. [vermonthumanities.org](http://vermonthumanities.org)



ZAHAROVA\_NATALIA (STOCK TULIPS); GLOBALPISTOCK (GOATS); GILBERT DANIEL BWETTE, BWETTE PHOTOGRAPHY (DANCER)

# Skimming into Spring

The best part of a glorious spring skiing day comes when the sun softens not just the snow but the spirit as well. There's a giddiness in the air. Daring souls whip down the trails in T-shirts; concerts and barbecues abound.

No ski event marks the gleeful transition into spring more than **pond skimming**, in which skiers and snowboarders (often in costume) zip downhill and into a pond, trying to "skim" across instead of going into the drink. Among the Vermont resorts hosting these unusual competitions, **Burke Mountain** is one of the first out of the gate: On March 25, look for high flyers dressed up in tuxes and dresses for the "Prom



**APR. 13–16**

## Burlington

### Made Here Film Festival

Cinephiles should make tracks for the Burlington Beer Company to experience the only competitive festival devoted entirely to the work of filmmakers from northern New England and Québec. Admission is free, but donations are encouraged to help support the artists. [vtiff.org/festivals](http://vtiff.org/festivals)

**APR. 19**

## Burlington

### Our Planet Live in Concert

Netflix's Emmy-winning nature series, *Our Planet*, is reimagined for a live audience at The Flynn, as it brings together spectacular

HD cinematography and narration by David Attenborough with music from a 44-piece orchestra. [flynnvt.org](http://flynnvt.org)



**APR. 22**

## Quechee

### Earth Day Celebration

While wildlife and the environment are celebrated every day at the Vermont

Skim." That same weekend, March 25–26, **Mount Snow**'s Reggaefest features not only great music but pond skimming and the equally wacky Duct Tape Derby.

**Stratton Mountain and Smugglers' Notch** have both scheduled their pond skims for a day already dedicated to goofy fun: April Fool's Day. **Sugarbush** follows up with one of the oldest pond-skimming contests in the nation on April 8, as part of its annual Spring Fling; that same Saturday, you can also find splashy shenanigans at **Okemo's Slush Cup**. And on April 15, **Killington** welcomes back its annual spring pond skim after a long hiatus due to K-1 Lodge construction.

For links to all the state's resorts and ski areas and more information on the 2023 spring skiing season, go to [skivermont.com](http://skivermont.com).

# MAY

**MAY 5–6**

## Manchester

### Booktopia

Northshire Bookstore invites those with a true passion for reading to this intimate literary weekend, with exclusive author events, presentations, book signings, a celebratory dinner, and more. Expect more details on this year's lineup as the event draws near. [northshire.com](http://northshire.com)

**MAY 6**

## Statewide

### Green Up Day

Now marking its 53rd year, this uniquely Vermont initiative sees volunteers across the state collecting as much as 500 tons of trash from roads and public spaces. All are welcome to pitch in and make the world a little more beautiful! [greenupvermont.org](http://greenupvermont.org)



**MAY 13–14**

## Various locations

### Farmers' Market Opening Days

May is big for lovers of local food and camaraderie, with most farmers' markets beginning their summer season. Mid-month is prime time to grab your tote and hit the opening-day action in Burlington, Dorset, or Waitsfield (May 13), and Stowe (May 14). [diginvt.com/places/category/farmers-markets](http://diginvt.com/places/category/farmers-markets)



# Spring Awakening

*Amphibians' annual migration offers a spellbinding sign of the season.*

**B**ig Night comes when late winter melts into early spring. In Vermont, this typically happens in early April, as temperatures make their first-of-the-season climb into the 40s and stay there through the night, and the clouds drop rain instead of snow. It has to be warmish and wet. That's the weather for amphibian migration. That's Big Night.

Here's what happens: Rain falls onto pavement, backyards, cars, houses, and also treetops and leaves and the forest floor. This rain calls to the frogs waiting under leaf litter and to salamanders inside the hollows of downed trees. Or maybe it's the warmth that calls to them. They hear, anyway, and when the sun goes down, they emerge, moving in the direction of whatever small, seasonal pool of water was the place of their birth. That's where they'll breed, and that's why they travel over wet forest floor, through wet rural backyards, down wet

Measuring about nine inches fully grown and sporting bright yellow markings, spotted salamanders spend most of their lives underground—meaning they are rarely seen except when they emerge to travel to their breeding pools in spring.

driveways, across wet streets.

The streets are a problem. When roads run between the forests where amphibians spend the winter and the vernal pools they seek in the spring, there will be accidents. Frogs and salamanders will meet cars and

trucks. Thankfully, though, there are some humans—the Big Night volunteers—who will stand watch on those very streets. According to Montpelier's North Branch Nature Center, for instance, 83 teams of volunteers helped safeguard amphibians at nearly 100 different sites last year as part of its Amphibian Road Crossing program. Meanwhile, extra protection for spring migrants has actually been built into the infrastructure in Monkton, which installed a pair of amphibian tunnels

under busy Monkton-Vergennes Road in 2016. If not for interventions such as these, it's likely that more than half the amphibians migrating over roadways would never make it to the other side.

At my house, we eat an early dinner on Big Night. Then we dig out rain boots and slickers.

We dress in layers, test the batteries in our flashlights. We pack into the car and meet up with friends in a parking lot nearby.

There's a trail at one end of the lot, and it meanders by a vernal pool that hosts migrating wood frogs and peepers and salamanders. The kids gather at the entrance to the trail and wait for the pep talk. They shine their flashlights as far as possible down the path in front of them, desperate for a stirring in the wet leaves. I try to slow them down, remind them that we might not see migrants tonight. *The joy is in the looking*, I say. The fun is in discovering for ourselves if tonight is really Big Night.

You see, even though the amphibian migration is predictable, it's not in a way that can be printed onto a calendar. Small differences in the conditions between locations must be considered. It can be raining in our driveway, and not raining at all at our favorite vernal pool. It can be warm enough at home, and much too cool over there; even the friendliest 45-degree afternoon can drop to 10 degrees by the time the sun has fully set. Add to all this the individual personalities of the amphibians—they move when their bodies tell them to move. Some will go a bit earlier than the others, and always there will be stragglers. Migration can happen en masse over several perfect wet, warm nights or spread out over



Known for their distinctive high-pitched mating call, the tiny tree frogs known as spring peepers are one of the most commonly sighted Big Night migrants.

weeks of partly spitting, partly dry, sometimes balmy, sometimes chilly ones. Big Night can be elusive.

Still, it's a night that stays with you, a weather pattern you can teach yourself to recognize year in and year out. When

the right conditions come around, you listen closely to meteorologists and talk to amphibian-loving friends, and eventually that night arrives when you feed the kids cereal at 5 o'clock and dress them for rain. Even though it's not for sure yet. Even though it's a school night.

Hoods up, pants in our boots, standing at the trailhead, we know we might be here too early, or too late. The kids try to contain their Big Night energy, but can't. They strobe the woods with their flashlights as we walk, listening for the sounds to celebrate: the quacking call of wood frogs, the shrill pip of spring peepers. In the hierarchy of Big Night thrills, first there is the warm rain, then there is the calling of migrating frogs, and finally, the fondest wish of everyone present, there are amphibians in the flesh and on the move.

"I see one!" someone shouts.

A spotted salamander pauses, completely still, in the beam of a flashlight. He's five inches long, black and yellow-spotted. His wet skin shines. We gather around, quiet at last. "He's perfect," someone whispers.

And all around us, late winter melts into early spring.

—Loree Griffin Burns

## How to Get Involved

■ **North Branch Nature Center** runs the Amphibian Road Crossing program, in which volunteers across central Vermont give a helping hand to migrating animals and collect valuable data. NBNC focuses on equipping folks with Big Night tools through its website and training sessions; it also works with local conservation partners for even greater reach statewide. [northbranchnaturecenter.org](http://northbranchnaturecenter.org)

■ **Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center** in West

Brattleboro brings together Big Night "crossing guards" throughout southeast Vermont. On its website you can find a crossing site near you, sign up for migration alerts, and more. [beec.org](http://beec.org)

■ **Hartford Salamander Team** is a volunteer group leading amphibian crossing efforts in Hartford, Quechee, West Hartford, White River Junction, and Wilder. [hartfordsalamanderteam.org](http://hartfordsalamanderteam.org)

■ **The Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas** isn't a crossing program per se, but it does encourage folks to report migratory hot spots on its website. Plus, its Facebook page has great migration-season photos and updates. [vtherpatlas.org](http://vtherpatlas.org)

# Beauty by Design

*Julie Moir Messervy's mission is simple: Make landscapes sing.*



At Messervy's home in southern Vermont, a carefully graded and sculpted descent leads to a tiny, perfect pond that echoes the circle of Adirondack chairs above.

PHOTO BY SUSAN TEARE

**W**hen Julie Moir Messervy, one of America's most acclaimed landscape designers, gives me directions to the hillside home in southern Vermont she has shared with her husband, Steve Jonas, for almost 20 years, I pay attention. Getting there fits with one of her guiding principles: Make outdoor spaces promise "events"—since apparently the steep dirt road leading to their 206-acre homestead frequently surrenders to summer downpours. "You'll find men working on it," her email reads. "Be patient and they will let you by. Go up the hill 2½ miles until you reach a triangle of weeds. Take the left fork.... It will feel like it takes forever, so call if you feel lost."

I've come to see where Messervy incubates her ideas and "events" for city and town parks, college campuses, notable cemeteries, and public gardens, as well as the outdoor spaces of home owners around the world. She has done this work for more than 40 years, written nine books, and given countless lectures and workshops. Thousands of people can appreciate Messervy's eye for harmony and beauty when they stroll the famed Toronto Music Garden, or relax in Tenshin-en (Garden of the Heart of Heaven) at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, which she created with her former mentor, Japan's revered garden master Kinsaku Nakane.

She often writes and speaks with the lyricism of a garden mystic: *What should your garden look like? I see it as a place distilled from the elements of your imagination, your memories, and your dreams.* She talks about her work as "fulfilling longings for space." She views landscapes through the lens of seven spatial "archetypes"—sea, cave, harbor, island, promontory, mountain, sky—which she believes represent sanctuaries that people long for. Yet she accepts that she must also be useful. She says her editors have implored her to "pull it down to the ground."

"I'm trying to make it more pragmatic and practical in my old age," she says. Thus her books include *Landscaping Ideas That Work*, stuffed with 350 ideas to transform a yard from humble to beautiful.

And at her nearby Bellows Falls studio, JMMDS, a small team of landscape architects and designers created an app that lets people drag hundreds of landscape elements onto a Google map of their land; it has been downloaded some one million times. She is like a magician revealing how to do the tricks.

When I arrive at her home (and



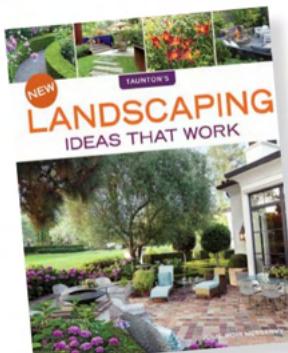
In addition to writing landscaping books and running her own design studio in Bellows Falls, Messervy launched the "Home Outside" app and online design service to help bring good landscape design to homeowners everywhere.

yes, it did seem like forever), Messervy ushers me to the screened porch that looks out to gardens, an expansive field with grasses and wildflowers that slopes to a distant circular pond and a tiny cabin, and beyond that, a shimmering

beaver meadow that shelters many of the terrestrial and aquatic wild creatures that call Vermont home. She loves water, and nearly every day when it warms, she dives off the dock into 18 feet of pond that she

shares with newts and turtles and whatever fish survive marauding mink, and swims the perimeter.

When Messervy meets clients, one of the first things she asks them is where they daydreamed as a child. That question, she tells me, is inspired by her own childhood and informs much of her work. She grew up as one of seven children in the Midwest and Connecticut, needing to find refuges from the "happy chaos" around her. She found them in apple trees, fields, woods, streams. "I would



pluck lilacs and suck the nectar," she says. She studied at Wellesley and MIT, and traveled to Japan and fell under the spell of its gardens. "I thought, this is the work I want to do," she says.

The sky is blue, and as we walk the land—what she calls her daily "stroll"—she points out how the circular pond compelled her to design curves and circles with nearly everything here, so the eye registers a soothing pattern. She says she looks at her land every day as if for the first time. She describes it as seeing the "language of the landscape," and when she talks about



this idea, her hands wave about, as if she is indeed conversing with the meadow.

We stop to sit on a natural stone by a white oak tree that she loves. She wants me to understand what is spinning in her head. "I try to see the land with my mind," she says, "but also with my heart." That is the mystical gardener speaking. But then she "pulls it down to the ground." She asks me to look at the trees near the cabin by the pond and tell her what is missing. It's the first time she notices that something feels off to her. It needed another tree, she says.

"Where would you put it?" she asks. I knew I had a 50-50 chance on this one. "To the left," I guess. "To the right," she says. "It's all about making it sing together. It's an ensemble." —*Mel Allen*

*To learn more about Julie Moir Messervy, and to see her work and that of her studio associates, go to [jmmds.com](http://jmmds.com) and [homeoutside.com](http://homeoutside.com).*

## Pro Picks for Vermont

We asked Julie Moir Messervy and Erica Bowman, senior landscape architect at JMMDS, to share a few favorite plants that work well in Green Mountain State landscapes.

### ■ *Amelanchier canadensis* (shadbush):

Reliable, multi-stemmed tree with beautiful spring flowers, gorgeous fall foliage, and lots of berries for the birds. Plant this in the woodland or regular garden setting and prune out all but 6-9 stems for a more refined appeal.



### ■ *Aster oblongifolius* 'October Skies' ('October Skies' aster):

Perennial that's beautiful from spring to autumn with mint-green foliage that erupts into blue flowers come September. Prune it back in mid-July for a tighter appearance.



■ *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower): This is a butterfly's delight that comes in a wide variety cultivars of shapes and colors. Keep your plants blooming for weeks with regular deadheading—or just leave the seed heads for the birds to feast on.



### ■ *Nepeta 'Souvenir d'André Chaudron'* (catmint):

A lesser-known but fantastically tall catmint variety that has a long season of bloom. Put this in the middle of the garden with structural plants in front for the most upright presentation.



### ■ *Polygonatum commutatum* (Solomon's seal):

This native perennial is perfect for the back of your shade garden. Its tall, clean, arching stems are very architectural in appearance, providing plenty of reliable and interesting structural appeal.



### ■ *Lupinus perennis* (lupine):

An almost iconic Vermont plant, lupine loves the cold and feels at home in the wild in lush meadows where it can reseed and colonize freely. When you see wild fields of blue in June, it is most likely lupine.





# Puzzle Masters

*Jigsaw enthusiasts find a perfect fit in Stave Puzzles' fiendishly clever handcrafted creations.*



Made in Vermont

I'm saying to myself ... is this part of the edge? Or is it part of the interior—and if so, why is it straight on one side? And this green band should continue, but why can't I find anything else with a green band?

This puzzling talk is actually *puzzle* talk—specifically, jigsaw puzzles. And I'm deep into a delicious type of torment devised by the crew at Stave Puzzles, Vermont's handcrafters of some of the most inventive and maddeningly difficult wooden jigsaw puzzles made today.

For nearly 50 years, Stave has excelled in the kind of craftsmanship that would impress a custom woodworker, pairing it with an intricacy of design that makes completing a Stave puzzle as satisfying as cracking an enemy code. Stave's secret is that its puzzles are created using actual jigsaws, rather than being press-cut like the everyday cardboard variety. No two Stave puzzles are alike, and each is made by hand at the company's surgically tidy workrooms in Wilder.

"We have 15 crafters, and they've all served apprenticeships that can last a year or more," says Paula Tardie, who, with her partner, Jennifer Lennox, purchased the company from founder Steve Richardson in 2016. (In homage to his fiendish puzzle designs, Richardson still retains the title of "chief tormentor.") The crafters work with table-mounted jigsaws whose blades are no wider than an eyelash; if they were any wider, the separation of one fancifully shaped piece from another wouldn't be possible. It's a cutting edge so fine it can't even be sharpened, says Lennox, who rose through the Stave ranks as a crafter. "A blade might last an hour."

The puzzle boards that the crafters exquisitely dismember are handsome pieces of work in their own right. Five-ply laminations are backed with a polished cherry veneer, and fronted with a heat-transferred illustration. Working from the outside in, crafters gently push board against blade, turning it to create the curlicued pieces that puzzlers will later try to fit together, hoping for that satisfying snap of a piece locking into place.

For its vibrant illustrations, Stave works with half a dozen local artists who create one-of-a-kind scenes for the puzzles. "We also have 6,000 images licensed from [other] artists," says Tardie, "as well as licensing arrangements with art museums and with publications like *The New Yorker*—hundreds of their past covers are available as puzzles."



Paula Tardie, left, and Jennifer Lennox were already longtime Stave employees when they bought the company in 2016. Today they oversee a staff of 25 that creates and ships out some 1,500 handmade puzzles a year.



Shown in the company's early days, Steve Richardson founded Stave in 1974 with Dave Tibbets but soon bought him out, as the story goes, for \$1 and a jigsaw.

No matter the image or its source, though, there's one constant with Stave puzzles that separates them from all others: No picture of the finished product appears on the box. Instead, Stave's sturdy boxes are a solid royal blue, with the company's trademark clown figure embossed in gold on the lid. The shape of that impish little fellow, by



**ABOVE:** Adorned only with the company mascot, a Stave box presents puzzlers with the extra challenge of working without a reference image. **RIGHT:** "The Mane Event," which, like all "Tormentors," has lots of pieces that are the same color or shape.

the way, will always appear as one of the pieces inside; all the other pieces are cut to the crafter's whim.

These puzzles would be tricky enough if each was somewhat similar to the next. But Stave offers different families of puzzles, each perversely challenging in its own way. Start with "Treats"—they present a lower level of difficulty—or maybe a "Tidbit," with just 50 pieces. "TroubleMakers" have a number of geometrically shaped pieces, along with a "magic piece," a keystone that can be swapped with other pieces. "Tormentors" have pieces that hardly vary in color at all. "Trick" puzzles (Steve Richardson's devilish specialty) can be fit together in multiple ways, but there's just one correct solution. And there are traditional puzzles, too—although in Stave's case, the word "traditional" shouldn't put the puzzler's mind at ease. Several have irregular borders, taking away that satisfying task of isolating straight-sided pieces. To top it off, there are four to five degrees of difficulty *within* most of the puzzle families.

There are even custom puzzles, for which puzzlers send in photographs to be reprinted and transferred for cutting. An order can specify what size the pieces should be—standard, mini, or "grande"—depending on how much difficulty the puzzler opts for. Custom orders might contain individuals' names, cut in script, or include shapes called "silhouettes" that refer to a gift recipient's hobby or occupation. They might be crafted to order for a special occasion—and in fact, Tardie says, Stave puzzles have been used more than once to pop the



question. "We've had many successful proposals!"

Stave's heirloom-level handcrafting doesn't come cheap, though: Puzzle prices begin in the low hundreds and can reach into five figures. But as Tardie points out, puzzlers can pack a lot of solving fun into a set price by opting for Stave's rental program, in which the firm sends out six puzzles in succession, to be completed one at a time. "And when you're done with them all," she says, "you get to keep one!"

I'm still working on one of the two puzzles I took home on loan from Stave, still sorting colors and figures that look like they belong together. It's turned out to be a baseball scene, with bleachers full of fans and a field alive with players in every possible pose. When I'd barely begun, pleased with myself for getting a dozen pieces to snap together, I found out from Tardie that my puzzle was what Stave calls a "Teaser," meaning that there are void spaces—not all the guys on the field are necessarily going to fit together.

It's going to be a long week. —*Bill Scheller*

## IF YOU GO

- Want to get a behind-the-scenes look at **Stave Puzzles** and meet its puzzle experts? Tours are available during business hours, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. weekdays (call ahead to confirm). 163 Olcott Dr., Wilder; [stavepuzzles.com](http://stavepuzzles.com)



Suggesting both the majesty and vulnerability of nature, Jim Sardonis's "Whale Dance" rises up from a swath of conserved land in Randolph.

# Whales' Tale

*How a Randolph artist brought an environmental vision to life—twice.*

**M**ore than 40 years ago, a powerful dream came to Randolph sculpture artist Jim Sardonis. "I was standing on a beach looking out [at the ocean] and saw these two whales' tails emerge from the water," he recalled in a 2019 interview with *Seven Days*. "I woke up thinking, *I'd like to make that.*"

It was a dream Sardonis simply couldn't shake. He envisioned it as the centerpiece of a proposed project for a museum in Anchorage, Alaska, but as things turned out, it would be in his own hometown of Randolph that the whale tails first came to life.

Sardonis was commissioned to create a grand entrance piece for a planned conference center on a patch of Randolph farmland overlooking Interstate 89. While construction on the center never commenced, Sardonis's sculpture of two massive whale tails, standing about 13 feet tall and carved from 36 tons of African black granite, was installed on the site in 1989.

Named "Reverence," the sculpture of two whales diving into the Vermont landscape was meant to be a symbol of Earth's environmental fragility. Its grand scale, however, also made it a local landmark—and Randolph

residents felt a deep sense of ownership of the whale tails, even after they were sold in 1999 and relocated to a 177-acre business park off I-89 in South Burlington.

So it was with considerable fanfare that in 2017 the Preservation Trust of Vermont and the Vermont Community Foundation purchased the original site of "Reverence" and commissioned Sardonis to make his dream a reality once more.

Installed in July 2019, the 16-foot sculpture is the tallest piece ever completed by Sardonis, whose other work can be seen at such places as the New England Aquarium, Yale University, and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. But unlike "Reverence," this new version, called "Whale Dance," is made of bronze. And in his view, that gives these whales a slight advantage over their South Burlington brethren.

"Bronze is strong, so I could make things bend and twist and lean a little more than I could with the stone," he said. "I could make the whales dance." —*Ian Aldrich*

*To learn more about Jim Sardonis and to see a short documentary about "Whale Dance," go to [sardonis.com](http://sardonis.com).*

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