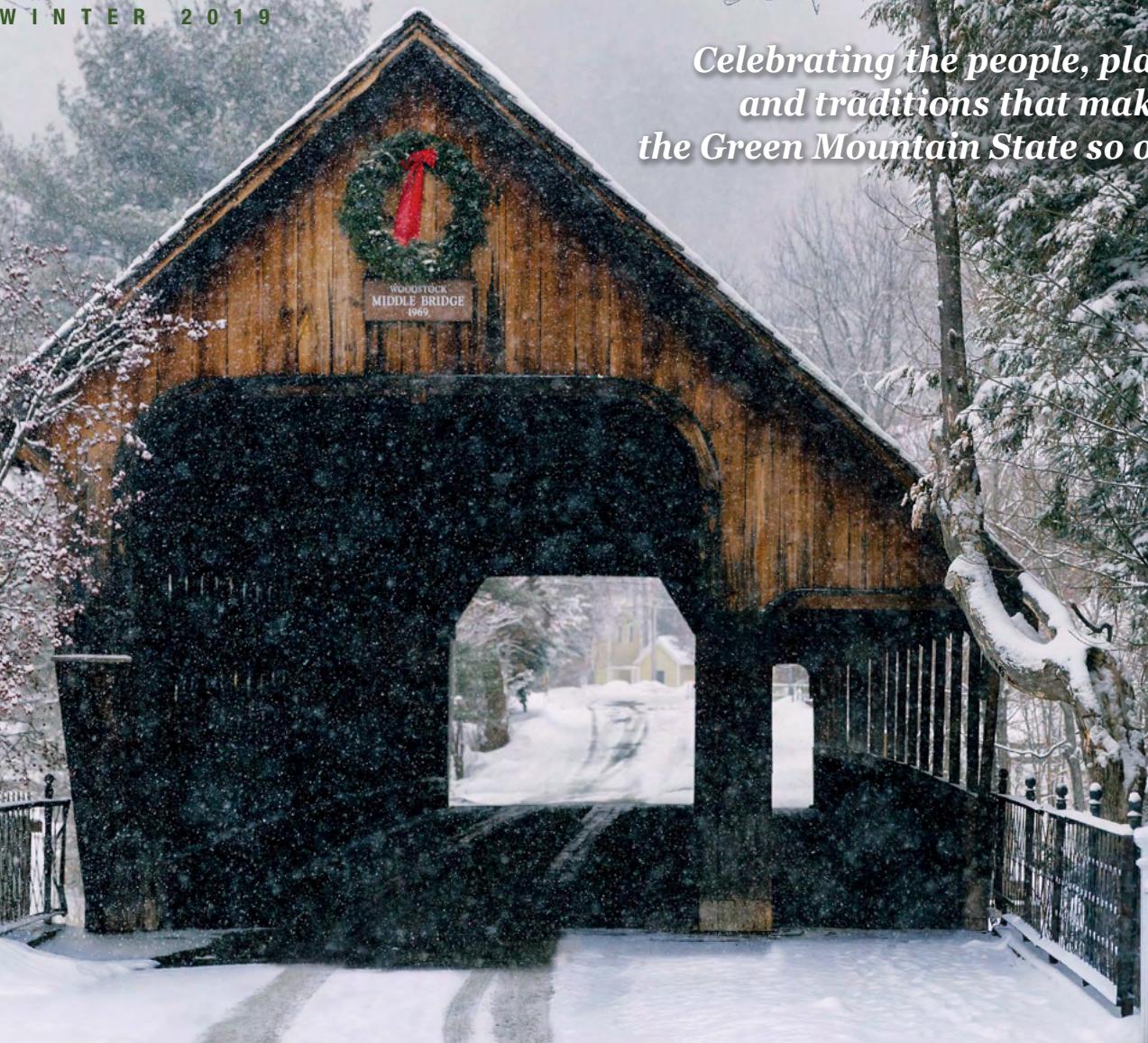


# Our Vermont

WINTER 2019

YANKEE

*Celebrating the people, places,  
and traditions that make  
the Green Mountain State so original*



BEST RECIPES FOR  
HOLIDAY COOKIE SWAPS

SNOWY FUN IN THE  
MAD RIVER VALLEY

MADE-IN-VERMONT  
CRAFTS FOR GIFT GIVING

# Three Seasons of Snow

**T**here may be no way to prove this, but I believe that no other populace in the East welcomes the first nights below freezing more than the citizens of Vermont. I do not think it's a coincidence that a Vermont native first showed the world the beauty of a single snowflake through his camera lens, or that one of the most famous ski racing training schools in the country calls the Northeast Kingdom home, or that the father of snowboarding took his first turns at Mount Snow.

In Vermont, we don't simply have ski season—we have three distinct ski seasons. The first arrives even before Halloween, when as



soon as temperatures drop below freezing at night, we hear reports of snowmaking at Killington, where it's not unusual for top-to-bottom trails to open when the last foliage stragglers still remain in the valleys. By Thanksgiving, trails at Okemo and Sugarbush and Mount Snow and Stowe are nearly always white and inviting, and at Christmas, Vermont has fully embraced the thousands of passionate skiers, snowboarders, and snowshoers who do not understand how people in other places don't actually wish for snow days.

The second season begins with the snows of January and February, those great falls that leave behind a foot or more that will not melt but rather becomes the bedrock for all that comes after. This is when talk about the skiing to come fills the week ahead, and talk about the actual skiing fills Mondays. It is when the best days of all are midweek, when the parking lots fill with Vermont plates. When Northeast skiers think of glades and steeps and meandering runs perfect for intermediates and newbies, Vermont is what they see.

This is the reason why, when you spend time in the North Country, in the Mad River Valley, or in Jay, or in the towns around Mount Mansfield or Bromley, Mount Snow or Stratton, winter is not so much a season as a lingering adventure. Which is why the third season of snow often is the sweetest: Even as maple tree farmers are boiling sap into the world's best syrup in February and March, the snow, by then often 20 feet or more in depth, is softening, and the sun invites you to sit outside the lodge as jackets come off and you look up the slopes and wonder how anybody could not want this feeling to last forever.

A handwritten signature of "Mel Allen" in cursive script.

Mel Allen  
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PEST THE NEW MAKERS OF MODERN MELODRAMA  
HITTING THE STOKE - PANCAKES AND LOVE  
PLUS: SWIM TO EAT, STEP IN STORE, VT

# Fruitcake Weather

*As winter returns, so does a traditional holiday treat that can conjure sweet memories.*

**I**t seems that the word *fruitcake* can no longer be spoken in polite society. You wouldn't dare serve it. Referred to as a "doorstop" or a "boat anchor," fruitcake has become the object of jokes on late-night television, where chainsaws and welding torches are suggested as successful cutting tools.

One jokester somewhere out West apparently hosts an annual fruitcake toss, with the current record being 420 feet. Another man claims to have found in his attic an old fruitcake that he estimated to be pre-World War II. I believe he said he ate it. A woman put an ad in her local paper after the holidays, soliciting unwanted fruitcakes, which she then added to her compost, expecting a rich result.

When fruitcake was added to the list of items that might provoke questions from baggage inspectors at the airport (it's so dense that the scanner equipment can't tell it apart from plastic explosives), it only added fuel to the fruitcake fire. How has this once-exalted holiday staple become such a target?

When I was growing up in New England back in the 1950s, we would often receive fruitcakes in the mail in the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. This powerful confection came to us from bakeries in Georgia or Texas, where pecans are plentiful and fruitcakes are still big business. From inside the rugged mailing carton, the dark cake would emerge, crimped red paper gripping the circle of candied cherries, citrons, pecans, and apricots. On nights leading up to Christmas, my mother would slice the cake thickly and serve it to us on holiday plates, an exciting prelude to what lay ahead.

During the holidays, for many years, I've read Truman Capote's *A Christmas Memory* aloud, with



my cousin George or with whomever I can coax into listening. The set-off line to this wonderful, evocative memoir is: "Oh my, it's fruitcake weather," spoken by a woman in her 60s to her 7-year-old cousin and best friend. Thus begins the story of their annual ritual of gathering the ingredients for 30 fruitcakes to present to friends—such as Eleanor Roosevelt. Included in all this is a perilous journey to obtain a bottle of whiskey for the cake from the local bootlegger, Mr. Haha Jones.

Early last December, I gathered with new friends who love Capote's story as much as I do. They'd just put up their tree and begun to trim it. They, it turns out, always read *A Christmas Memory* aloud at this time of year, a fact that automatically endeared them to me. Along with their two young sons, we all settled in front of a big hearth fire, each of us taking a turn reading. The fire crackled and popped and spat sparks, and, if we looked outside, it might have been Alabama in the 1930s. We were stuck in a time that none of us had ever known or remembered.

Just before Christmas, my new friend baked me a fruitcake, the first one I can remember receiving in my adult life. It was plump and heavy—yes, capable of being a doorstop (though I'd stop short of the boat anchor concept). Later, I opened the tightly wrapped loaf. The wheat-colored cake was dense with citrons and candied cherries, walnuts and dried cranberries, and lots of raisins. The fragrance was somehow just as much of Christmas as a balsam tree and a roasting turkey. "It's fruitcake weather," I thought to myself, and dropped back to a time when bootleg whiskey was a secret ingredient and cousins were the best kind of family. —Edie Clark

# A Batch Made in Heaven

*Get set for Christmas cookie swaps with these Yankee favorites.*

**T**is the season of baking, most specifically of baking cookies, which is just one more reason to love the festive weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. In this happy time, cookies become a kind of currency, meant to be gifted or exchanged, which means that a certain volume is required. But no need to stress: As long as you keep expectations realistic—i.e., no hand-painted trompe-l'oeil mistletoe cookies—you'll be able to bake in large batches at your leisure. You can make the dough ahead of time, freeze it, then bake the cookies right before serving, which always produces the best flavor. Or you can bake them all the way through and then freeze them. Either way, your friends and family will be delighted. The following recipes are some of Yankee's favorites for holiday eating and giving, and they're all quite easy to make. Happy holidays! —Amy Traverso



## Split-Second Jam Cookies

*These cookies take less than 20 minutes to put together and another 20 minutes to bake. They're tender and buttery, with great contrast from the tart jam.*

- 2 cups all-purpose flour**
- ½ cup granulated sugar**
- ½ teaspoon baking powder**
- ½ teaspoon table salt**
- 1½ sticks unsalted butter, softened**
- 1 large egg**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- ½ cup good-quality jelly or jam**

Preheat oven to 350° and set a rack to the middle position. Whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add butter, egg, and vanilla, and beat until the dough comes together.

Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and divide into quarters. Shape each into a loaf about 13 inches long, and transfer to an ungreased cookie sheet with about 4 inches between them. Press down to ¾-inch thickness. Use a knife handle to make a depression about ½ inch deep down the center of each loaf and fill it with jam. Bake, rotating halfway through, until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Cut each loaf into a dozen bars while warm. *Yields about 4 dozen cookies.*

## Greek Nut Crescents

*Called kourabiedes, these can be made with any nuts you like: hazelnuts, pecans, almonds, or walnuts.*

- 2 sticks unsalted butter, softened**
- ½ cup plus 2½ cups powdered sugar**
- 2 teaspoons kosher or sea salt**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 1¾ cups plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- 2 cups very finely chopped nuts**

Using a standing or electric mixer, beat the butter until very creamy, 2 minutes. Add ½ cup sugar, salt, and vanilla, and beat well. Add flour and nuts; beat until combined. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350° and position racks in the middle, with space in between. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

Break off a tablespoon-size piece of dough, roll it into a cylinder, turn it into a crescent shape, and transfer it to the baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough.

Bake, rotating pans halfway through, until browned on the bottom, 20 to 25 minutes. While cookies are still warm, toss them gently with the remaining 2½ cups of powdered sugar to coat. Repeat once cookies have cooled. *Yields about 4 dozen cookies.*



## Chocolate-Hazelnut Tartlets

*Though not hard to make, these treats—with their chocolate ganache and raspberry garnish—pack a real “wow” factor.*

- 1½ cups whole hazelnuts**
- 1 stick salted butter, softened**
- ¼ cup firmly packed light brown sugar**
- 1 cup all-purpose flour**
- 2 cups miniature semisweet chocolate chips**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- 1 pint fresh raspberries**
- Powdered sugar, for garnish**

Spray two mini muffin tins and set aside. In a food processor, chop the hazelnuts to the texture of coarse sand. Using a standing or handheld mixer, beat the butter and brown sugar in a large bowl 1 minute. Add flour and hazelnuts and mix briefly until the dough forms a ball. Wrap in plastic and chill at least 30 minutes, or up to a day.

Pour the chocolate chips into a heat-safe bowl. In a heavy saucepan, heat the cream on medium-high until it begins to simmer. Remove from heat and pour over the chips. Stir steadily until all the chocolate is melted. Keep warm.

Preheat oven to 350° and set a rack to the middle position. Remove dough from the refrigerator. Form 2 teaspoons dough into a ball, and press into a mini muffin cup, creating a well for the filling with your thumb. Repeat with remaining dough. Bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes.

If the dough has puffed during baking, gently press down with a spoon. When the shells are cool, remove carefully from the pans. Using a pastry bag, pipe the chocolate ganache into the shells until almost filled.

Press a whole raspberry, upside down, into the ganache. Dust with powdered sugar. Yields 2 dozen tartlets.



## Treasure Chest Bars

Here's a fruitcake variation that people actually love: tender frosted bars studded with dried fruit, nuts, and chocolate (that's the "treasure").

**For the bars:**

- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened,  
plus more for pan
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon table salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped pecans
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped dried cherries, apricots, cranberries, or fruit of your choice

**For the frosting:**

- $\frac{1}{2}$  stick unsalted butter
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch table salt

Preheat oven to 350° and set a rack in the middle. Line a 9-by-13-inch baking pan with foil, draping it over the sides to make the bars easier to remove. Grease foil with butter.

Using a standing or handheld mixer, cream together butter and sugars until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat 1 minute.

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. Add this to the butter mixture in three batches, alternating with milk. Add the chocolate, pecans, and fruit, and stir to combine.

Spread in the lined pan and bake, rotating halfway through, until golden brown and beginning to pull away from the sides of the pan, about 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the frosting: In a skillet over medium heat, melt  $\frac{1}{2}$  stick butter and stir until it begins to brown. Pour into a bowl and add the powdered sugar, milk, vanilla, and salt. Beat until smooth.

Let the bars cool in the pan for 10 minutes; lift by foil to remove. Frost while still slightly warm, then cut and serve. *Yields about 20 bars.*



MICHAEL PIAZZA

## Chocolate-Peppermint Sandwich Cookies

*This recipe takes the "homemade Oreo" idea a step further, adding crushed candy canes for a little holiday pizzazz.*

### For the cookies:

- 1½ sticks unsalted butter, softened**
- 1 cup granulated sugar**
- 1 large egg, at room temperature**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour**
- ⅔ cup Dutch-process cocoa powder**
- ½ teaspoon table salt**

### For the filling:

- ½ stick unsalted butter, softened**
- ¼ cup vegetable shortening**
- 2 cups powdered sugar, plus more for work surface**
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract**
- ¼ teaspoon table salt**
- 1 cup finely crushed candy canes or peppermint candies**

Line two baking sheets with parchment and set aside. Using a standing or handheld mixer, cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in the egg and vanilla. Sift in the flour, cocoa, and salt, and beat at low speed until the dough comes together, about 1 minute. Turn out onto a counter dusted with powdered sugar and knead a few times. Flatten into 2 disks, wrap in plastic, and chill at least 30 minutes.

To make the filling, cream together butter, shortening, powdered sugar, vanilla, and salt. Gather, press into a disk, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate while you prepare the cookies.

Preheat oven to 350° and position two racks in the middle with space in between. Dust the counter with sugar again and roll out a disk of dough to 1/8-inch thickness.

Use a 2-inch round cookie cutter to cut circles, gathering and re-rolling scraps as needed; then transfer to baking sheets, about an inch apart. Repeat with remaining dough. Bake until firm, rotating halfway through, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove and let cool on trays.

While the cookies are cooling, dust counter with more sugar and roll out the filling until it's about 1/8 inch thick. Use the same cutter to cut out frosting rounds the same size as the cookies. Refrigerate the disks of filling as needed to keep them firm.

When the cookies are cool, sandwich a piece of frosting between two cookies, and press gently. Roll the edges in crushed candy. *Yields about 3 dozen cookies.*



## Chocolate–Date Brownie Bars

*Chopped dates add a terrific caramel flavor and some extra chewiness to these classic bars.*

- 1 stick salted butter
- 2 squares (2 ounces) unsweetened baking chocolate
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- 1 cup finely chopped pitted dates
- Powdered sugar (for dusting)

Preheat oven to 350° and set a rack to the center position. Line an 8-by-8-inch baking pan with foil, draping it over the sides of the pan to make it easier to remove the bars later. Grease the foil with butter.

Set up a double boiler and bring the water to a simmer. Put the chocolate and butter in the top and stir until melted. Remove from heat and stir in the sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, stirring well after each. Add flour, baking powder, salt, and dates, and stir to combine.

Pour into the pan and bake, rotating halfway through, until the brownies are just beginning to pull away from the sides and a tester inserted into the center comes out clean, 35 to 45 minutes. Cool 20 minutes, then lift the foil to remove. Dust with powdered sugar, cut into squares, and serve. *Yields 12 to 16 bars.*

## Cranberry–Honey Walnut Drops

*We've updated this no-fail 1940s recipe with a combination of honey and maple syrup (for flavor) and added lots of chopped cranberries and walnuts for both flavor and texture.*

- 1½ cups walnut halves (preferably local black walnuts)
- 3 cups fresh cranberries, plus 2 cups for garnish
- 1¾ sticks unsalted butter, softened, plus more for pans
- ¼ cup honey
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1 large egg
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Preheat oven to 350° and position two racks in the middle, with space in between. Grease two baking sheets or line with parchment.

Put walnuts and 3 cups cranberries into a food processor and pulse until the mixture looks like coarse, chunky meal. Set aside.

Using a standing or handheld mixer, cream together butter, honey, and maple syrup until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add egg and vanilla and beat 1 minute.

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, and baking soda. Add the dry mixture to the wet, and beat until combined. Add the cranberry/nut mixture and stir with a spatula until evenly distributed.

Drop the dough onto the baking sheets a heaping tablespoon at a time, 2 inches apart. Cut the cranberries for the garnish in half and decorate each cookie with a few halves, cut side up. Bake until lightly browned, rotating pans halfway through, 15 to 17 minutes. Repeat with any remaining dough. Cool on wire racks, then serve. *Yields about 4 dozen cookies.*



MICHAEL PIAZZA

## Congo Bars

Like soft chocolate chip cookies? You'll love these bars, since the ratio of chewy center to crisp edge is more in your favor.

- 2 cups** all-purpose flour
- 1 cup** shredded coconut, unsweetened
- ½ teaspoon** baking powder
- ½ teaspoon** table salt
- 1½ cups** firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1½ sticks** salted butter, melted and slightly cooled
- 3 large** eggs
- 1 teaspoon** vanilla extract
- 1 cup** semisweet chocolate chips
- ¾ cup** finely chopped toasted pecans

Preheat oven to 350° and set a rack to the middle position. Line a 9x13-inch baking pan with foil, draping it over the sides to make the bars easier to remove. Grease the foil with butter.

In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, coconut, baking powder, and salt. In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar, then add eggs and vanilla and beat until smooth. Add dry ingredients and stir just until combined. Fold in the chips and pecans.

Pour into the pan, and smooth with a spatula. Bake until a tester comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes, rotating halfway through. Serve warm or room temperature. Yields 12 to 15 bars.



MICHAEL PIAZZA

## No-Bake Chocolate Rum Balls

These delicious chocolate nut balls with a heady lashing of rum will have your guests reaching for "just one more."

- 2 cups** chocolate wafer crumbs
- 1 cup** powdered sugar
- 1 cup** finely chopped toasted almonds or hazelnuts, plus more for rolling
- 2 tablespoons** cocoa powder
- 3 tablespoons** maple syrup
- ½ cup** rum (any kind)

In a large bowl, stir together crumbs, sugar, 1 cup nuts, cocoa, maple syrup, and rum. Form into 1-inch balls and roll in chopped nuts. Refrigerate until firm. Serve cold or at room temperature. Yields about 3 dozen balls.



Ginger Cookies  
Ginger Cookies II  
Our Vermont 11

*Local Flavor*



# Food for Thought: Someday Farm

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



**S**cout Proft has known only farming for a way of life. On a hillside property that covers 120 acres in Dorset, she runs Someday Farm, working the same land that her grandparents and parents once did. Including a farm it rents in East Dorset, where the family raises meat birds, Someday is what Proft calls a “full plate” farm: Big greenhouses grow vegetables throughout the year, and there’s homegrown fruit, hens, and pheasants. Come Thanksgiving, Proft and her son, Eben, will deliver some 400 fresh turkeys to residents throughout the Dorset region. The free-range Nicholas Whites feed largely on millet, sorghum, corn, and pumpkin, all of which comes from Someday itself. “It’s an incredible opportunity and an incredible responsibility to feed our community,” says Proft, whom we recently caught up with during a break between farm chores one afternoon.



Scout Proft

### Tell us a little bit about your farm.

We've been a full-time farm since 1983, but we've had the home farm, which my grandfather started, since 1937. We're really designed to meet the needs of the community. If the community says it needs something from us, we grow it.

### How has that changed over the years?

It made us get into greenhouse crops—spinach and kale, for example—and doing a lot of root crops so people have local food to eat all year long. We started raising turkeys because that's what people said they wanted. [Laughs.] Darn it all! They're not an easy thing to raise.

### How did your family get into farming?

Barbara Ketchum, who along with her husband, Richard, started *Country Journal*, was the one who really helped us get started. She lived in Dorset, knew us, and knew we didn't have much money. We bartered for everything—we couldn't even afford our own chainsaw. We lived on what we grew. So, we started selling what we raised, and in 1986 we opened one of the first CSAs in the state. There wasn't even a word for it back then. We called it a “shared program.” And as we began to diversify, nobody knew what to make of us. The big-time growers were scratching their heads, and the homesteaders were like: *What are you doing? Come back to us.* But we made it work.

### Where do you sell most of what you raise?

For the last 20 years we've had a pretty sweet farm stand at The Kitchen Store at J.K. Adams [see p. 25]. It's been wonderful. We increase their

production, and they increase ours. We used the wood off their property to build the farm stand. We also have a self-service store at our farm that's open year-round.

### You've spent pretty much your entire life farming. Why does it call to you?

It's like being a minister, because you feel like you're helping your community and making a difference. It's an incredible honor to be invited into people's kitchens with your food.

## Talking Turkey

Someday Farm's Thanksgiving birds may already be spoken for, but it's not too late to put in an order for Christmas dinner (802-362-2290; [somedayfarmvt.com](http://somedayfarmvt.com)). Other Vermont providers of naturally raised turkeys include:

- **Back Beyond Farm:** 9 Glen Road, Chelsea.  
802-272-4648
- **Highfields Farm:** 854 Tatro Hill Road, Randolph.  
802-728-6024; Facebook
- **Maple Wind Farm:** 1148 E. Main St., Richmond.  
802-434-7257; [maplewindfarm.com](http://maplewindfarm.com)
- **Misty Knoll Farms:** 1685 Main St., New Haven.  
802-453-4748; [mistyknotfarms.com](http://mistyknotfarms.com)
- **Philo Ridge Farm:** 2766 Mount Philo Road, Charlotte.  
802-539-2147; [philoridgefarm.com](http://philoridgefarm.com)

# Tapping into Winter

*Brewers save some of their tastiest offerings for when the snow flies.*

Vermont is home to nearly a dozen breweries per 100,000 residents—more per capita than in any other state—earning it the title of craft beer capital of the United States. Vermonters are blessed not only with abundance but quality, too, and in every part of the state: from world-famous Hill Farmstead Brewery in the Northeast Kingdom to acclaimed newcomer River Roost Brewery in White River Junction to perennial favorite Long Trail in the heart of the Green Mountains.

And as if that weren't enough, these top-notch producers sweeten the deal with limited-time offerings tailored to winter, making the season a great time to explore Vermont's beers and ciders as well as its ski slopes and cross-country trails.

In all such explorations, it helps to have an expert guide. In our case, that's Jim Hsieh. A native Vermonter, Hsieh is the beverage director at Burlington's Farmhouse Tap & Grill, which has been singled out as the state's best beer bar by the likes of Thrillist and CraftBeer.com.

Winter and holiday beers tend to have a few qualities that set them apart, Hsieh says, like a higher alcohol content (ABV), more dark malts in the mix, and often a slightly sweeter taste. "The main idea is that the combination of these qualities helps fortify us from the cold on dark winter nights," he says, adding that some brews up the ante with "cinnamon, clove, molasses, bourbon barrel aging, etc.—these all can help achieve the warming character." Cider makers likewise tend to release winter varieties with a higher ABV or holiday-friendly spices and flavors like ginger and cranberry.

Hsieh was kind enough to recommend some seasonal pours to look for this winter, both returning favorites and new debuts:

• **Hill Farmstead (Greensboro):** "Twilight of the Idols is a great winter porter that's only for sale at the brewery. It's dark and rich and has coffee, cinnamon, and vanilla to bring in the winter flavors."

• **Zero Gravity (Burlington):** "They do a gruit for the winter solstice that's served in their American Flatbread Burlington Hearth taproom. Unlike most modern beers, gruits don't use hops—instead they use herbs. It's a rich, herbal, malty brew that I make sure to enjoy when it arrives."



• **Long Trail (Bridgewater Corners) and Switchback (Burlington):**

"More widely distributed in bottles, Long Trail's Hibernator and Switchback's Dooley's Belated Porter are malt-forward beers that come out every winter. Hibernator has toffee and caramel notes; Dooley's is a dark porter with more roasty chocolate notes."

• **Von Trapp Brewing (Stowe):** "Their Trösten (a word that means comforting) is built for cold winter days with dark, roasty malts and round, soft notes of roasted chestnuts. It's a lager, which is a von Trapp specialty."

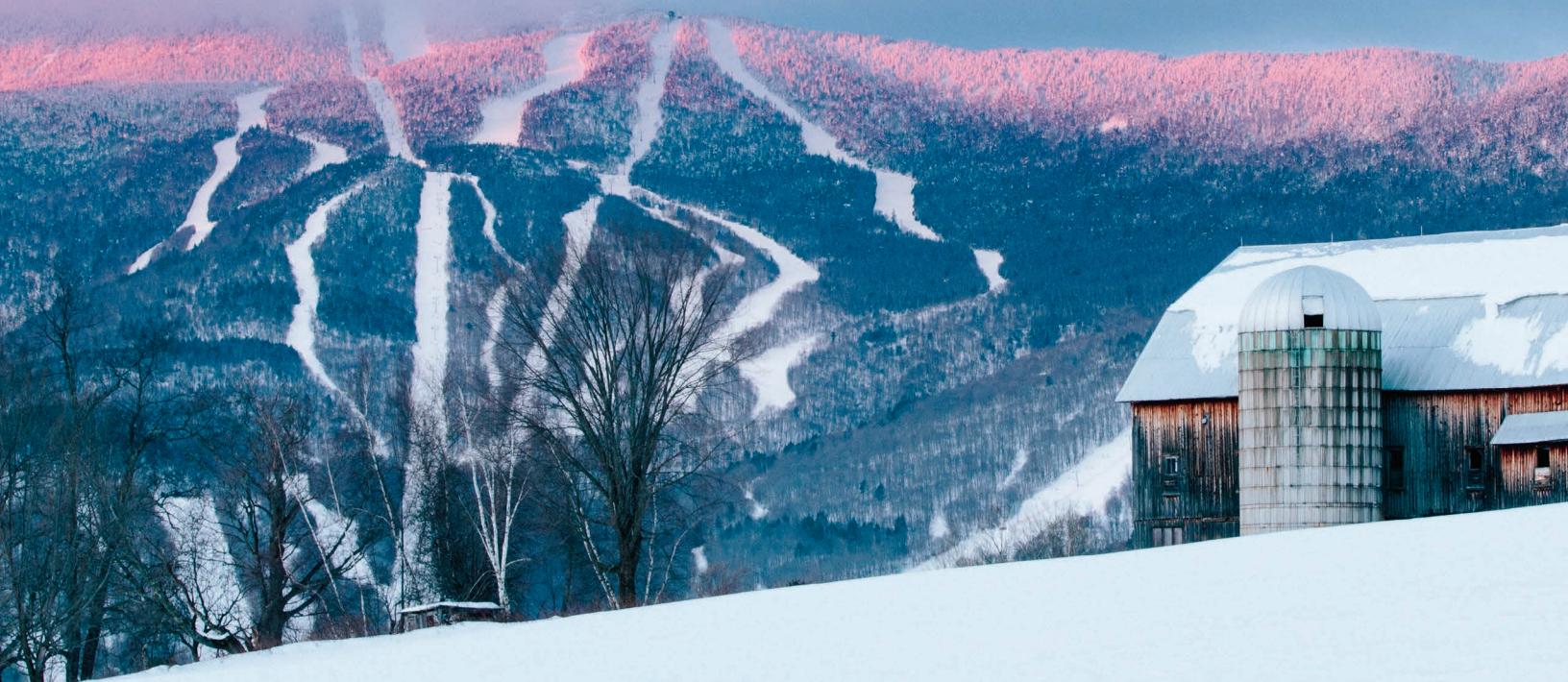
• **Good Measure (Northfield):** "They have an imperial milk stout in the works that is aging in a maple syrup/rye whiskey barrel. Their head brewer has done a great job with big dark beers in the past, and I think this will be a fun high-ABV beer to try."

• **Shacksbury Cider (Vergennes):** "Shacksbury will come out with their annual Deer Snacks this fall/winter, and while it isn't spiced it does convey an inherent ephemeral seasonality. It's made with foraged apples and fermented with native yeast and naturally carbonated. It's an all-around awesome cider that will come and go this winter. Also worth keeping an eye out for is Shacksbury's Apple Hill, which is a single-origin wild-apple cider. All of the fruit is from a registered historic site: Apple Hill Farm in Rochester." —Jenn Johnson

Returning for 2019 is Hibernator, a classic winter ale from Long Trail in Bridgewater Corners.

Preserved through the efforts  
of the Vermont Land Trust,  
Fayston's 19th-century  
Bragg Farm looks over a vista  
that includes the slopes of  
Sugarbush Resort in Warren.

Destinations



# Vermont's Snow Globe

*The Mad River Valley is famous for its skiing,  
but those who live here know it's a perfect little world unto itself.*



High over Fayston, Mad River Glen's single-chair lift offers skiers a private ride to the top.

**T**here's a valley for every pair of hills in Vermont, but seldom do you get the sense of "valleyness" that you do in the Mad River Valley. Cradled by the Northfield Mountains to the east, and the steep spine of the Greens to the west, it's a remarkably self-contained little world, and under the dome of a winter sky, a snow globe is just what it seems.

The two towns of Waitsfield and Warren anchor the heart of the Mad River Valley. (Fayston, Moretown, and Duxbury are the valley's other towns.) Tiny Warren, just off the southern end of the stretch of Route 100 that follows the river, is defined by two institutions: the **Warren Store**, one of those Vermont general stores that sells sandwiches and designer clothes on the same ancient, wood-heated premises, and the posh **Pitcher Inn**, with its renowned restaurant and wine cellar, and guest rooms each designed by a different architect.

Waitsfield, seven miles north, is busier. At its heart is the 1833 **Village Bridge**, also known as the Big Eddy Bridge, the second oldest in Vermont still in use. There was more than a big eddy here in late August 2011, when Tropical Storm Irene made the normally mildly irascible river truly Mad. But the bridge survived—as did the nearby block of shops and restaurants, though one building had to be nudged back onto its foundation.

A block away, on the corner of Bridge Street and Route 100, the yellow-brick **Joslin Memorial Library** is a place where, according to a local guide, you'll find "even the occasional dog."

\* \* \* \*

To the world outside, the Mad River Valley is all about skiing. That's understandable, as two of Vermont's premier downhill ski destinations spill their trails eastward from the Green Mountain cordillera. Their characters are wildly distinct: Cooperatively owned **Mad River Glen**, in Fayston, is a defiant throwback, with its deliberate paucity of grooming and snowmaking, exclusion of snowboards, and legendary single chairlift (there are also two doubles), while **Sugarbush**, sprawling across Lincoln Peak and Mount Ellen in Warren, is bigger, far more clustered with lodgings and restaurants, and decidedly more au courant.

But the local passion for winter goes well beyond the downhill runs, whether at retro Mad River Glen or with-it Sugarbush. "As soon as it snows here, you can't reach anybody," says Karen Nevin, then the director of the Valley Arts Foundation, which promotes cultural participation year-round. "Everyone snowshoes, or cross-country skis, out their back doors." For those

whose back doors don't open onto trails, or for visitors, there's cross-country at **Ole's** and **Blueberry Lake** in Warren and snowshoe excursions offered by **Clearwater Sports** in Waitsfield.

And then there are the Icelandic horses. Off Route 100, in Fayston, Karen Winhold's **Icelandic Horse Farm** has been home for more than 25 years to the shaggy, diminutive equines first brought to Iceland from mainland Scandinavia around 1,100 A.D. Odinn, Freyja, Frigg, Loki, and the rest of Karen's herd of more than 30 horses are all masters of the breed's singular lateral four-beat gait called the "tölt."

"People giggle when they feel the rhythm of that gait," Karen says—and they can enjoy the ride for up to two hours, all winter long. "The horses really do like the snow. The powder is fun for them to go through."

\* \* \* \*

If the Mad River Valley has drawn its share of enthusiasts for the winter outdoors, it has exerted no less of a pull on artists and craftspeople. I'd been told by a local that "ski areas aren't the key to the valley—it's the creative people here." Without agreeing that one element of the region's attractiveness should be set against another, I did find a remarkable store of artistic vitality in the Mad River Valley.

The **Waitsfield Art Walk** is a 1.3-mile stretch of Route 100 that takes in some 19 shops and galleries—places such as Waitsfield Pottery, Artisans' Gallery, and Mad River Glass, where Melanie and David Leppla blow and shape exquisite wares while visitors look down from the shop into their workroom. "The sense of community here is really conducive to creativity," Melanie says.

**RIGHT:** Melanie and David Leppla's glass studio in Waitsfield is one of the anchors of the local arts scene. **BETWEEN:** Simple but tasty fare for refueling skiers is the specialty at the Birdcage at Mad River Glen.



COREY HENDRICKSON



Standing at the intersection of Mad River Valley creativity and the local passion for winter sports is Dave Sellers, inventor of the Mad River Rocket. Dave, an architect, has designed homes and public buildings all over the world, and has taught at Yale—but his local notoriety derives from what has been described as his "sled on steroids."

"I tried to design an alternative to skiing," Dave told me as we sat in his happily cluttered office at the edge of Warren village. "Skiing is expensive, and energy intensive. With the Mad River Rocket, you get a lifetime pass for \$100—the cost of the sled—and you have 50,000 acres of sledding terrain in Vermont alone."

The sturdy plastic Rocket differs from traditional sleds in two important ways. First, you ride it while kneeling, with a knee strap securing you to the sled. And second, it has what Dave calls a "negative keel": Instead of digging down, the square-shaped channel of the inverted "keel" creates its own monorail out of snow as it makes its descent.

"It's the only wilderness sled in the world," Dave says. "You can take it to the top of any mountain in Vermont and ride down. There'll never be an instructor, because it's so easy to learn. We'll take any conditions that nature provides, except ice, and we want to challenge skiing."



The rustic-style Ski Room at Warren's Pitcher Inn makes for a warm and welcoming retreat from the snow.

Dave Sellers also challenges the throwaway culture of the modern era with his **Madsonian Museum of Industrial Design**, located in a rambling old house near the Village Bridge in Waitsfield. “It’s a collection of stuff that’s beautifully made, stuff that lasts,” he explains. At the Madsonian, you just might find that toaster or electric fan that you wish you’d kept, or maybe still have.

\* \* \* \*

The Valley is also a hub of local food culture, as I learned from Karen Nevin. “Everything has to do with local farmers,” she says. “Most of the world has farmers’ markets in the summer; we have them year-round. I buy my pork here, my beef there ... I know my cow.”

I got a sense of just how committed Valley people are to the locavore ideal when I dropped in for dinner at the **Big Picture Theater & Café**. Tucked just across the lobby from Waitsfield’s little movie theater, the café is a cheerful array of snug booths with a nice comfort-food menu. The “Big Picture Burger” came with local blue cheese and sautéed mushrooms, on a brioche. It had the unmistakable flavor of grass-fed beef, and, after I’d finished and was sipping the last of my Tuesday-night

special \$5 chianti, I asked the waitress where the beef was from. That’s something you do only in places like the Mad River Valley. She answered, “Oh, do you know where Helm’s place is?”

“No,” I said to her, “I’m not from around here.”

“Well, his name is Helmut Nottermann. Wait a minute, I’ll ask.” She went over to the kitchen, talked with a co-worker, and came back to tell me “Snug Valley Farm.” It was, apparently, only about 50 miles away, in East Hardwick. Know your cow.

In the morning, fortified by the inn’s French toast and baked pineapple squares, on my last day in the valley I slid aboard one of Mad River Glen’s single chairs. It seemed odd, making the ascent in my own private seat, but early on a weekday like this I probably would have been alone on a double. It was so early, in fact, that I was treated to first tracks in six inches of fresh powder.

To the east, the morning mist had just cleared from the peaks of the Northfield range, and before kicking off onto one of Mad River’s “Ski It If You Can” trails, I paused to take in that valley view I’d first seen from the opposite hills. Again I looked into Vermont’s snow globe—looked and then plunged inside. I shook the powder, and watched it whirl around me. —William Scheller

# Shining Example

*The village of Westminster gives the gift of wonder to everyone who wanders down Main Street on Christmas Eve.*



The light of more than 1,200 luminarias lends a magical glow to Westminster on Christmas Eve.

**E**very year on Christmas Eve, as we drive home from a dinner in New Hampshire with my parents and siblings, my family crosses over the Connecticut River outside the village of Westminster. And there, we pause.

My wife and I worry about the time—the elves' work inevitably left to do and all that—but we turn left anyway, and head south on Route 5. Climbing the long hill into the village of Westminster, we pass the first of

the luminarias lining both sides of Main Street. We slow the car and turn off the headlights and marvel, again, at the sight of the lights twinkling as far into the distance as we can see. We roll slowly past white colonials and farmhouses, dark at that late hour behind hundreds and hundreds of glowing paper bags. We have the road to ourselves and—if it's cold and clear and black—the stars will wheel above us, mirroring the shimmer on the ground, and the night will feel magical.

At first I'd accepted Westminster's simple light show as one last, anonymous present on Christmas Eve. The "anonymous" part was easy to believe: In more than a dozen years of making this little detour, we'd never seen a creature stirring. But then, in 2009, I looked behind the scenes to see what it takes to create such a generous public display of beauty.

We left early for Christmas Eve dinner and swung through Westminster during the daylight, just as volunteers were lighting the luminarias. I talked with Addie Terrell, a teenager with a shy smile, in front of her house just south of the fire station. Her mom and dad were out there helping, as well.

"We moved here from Connecticut in 2000," she told me, "and starting that next year, we've helped every time." Along with her mom and dad and her brother's girlfriend, Addie had joined "a whole bunch" of people at the Westminster firehouse the night before to put the sand and candles into white paper bags.

I learned some of the details later from Diane Bazin and Chris Hackett, who had organized the luminaria display for the previous 10 years. For the 2009 event, it had taken more than 30 volunteers about an hour to prepare 1,296 luminarias and load them onto borrowed flatbed trailers.

On the morning of Christmas Eve, a firetruck with

lights flashing had pulled one trailer, and Diane Bazin, with her husband's truck, had pulled a second one, each with a small group of volunteers hopping on and off to place the luminarias along a one-mile stretch of Route 5 and a couple of side streets. That, too, had taken just an hour. "They've really got it down to a science now," Ginger Cook told me later. Her parents had started the town tradition back in the mid-1980s, simply because they thought it would be a nice thing for the community.

Strolling along Main Street, I saw people up and down the village walking out to the ends of their driveways

and lighting the luminarias in front of their houses.

Neighbors chatted with neighbors and waved to one another across the street before disappearing back inside. In a couple of hours, residents would gather for a Christmas Eve service at the Congregational church, then head out onto

*It was an unusual, small, sporadic parade: cars with their headlights off, streaming through the village at 5 mph.*

Main Street. By then, the luminarias would be glowing brightly. And an unusual, small, sporadic parade would have begun: of cars with their headlights off, streaming slowly through the village at 5 mph. Some would be making this drive for the fifth or tenth or twentieth time. A surprising number would carry out-of-state plates. Many would have gone out of their way to be here. All of them would be attracted to a town's quiet ritual, bringing light to the darkest time of the year—and adding a little wonder to our holiday. —Jim Collins



## HOW TO CREATE A LUMINARIA DISPLAY IN YOUR TOWN

- Reach out to every family along the luminaria route and get them to "buy in" to the event. Westminster's display is a volunteer effort put on by the residents of the village, with no funding or official support from the town government.
- Solicit donations from local businesses, civic groups, and individuals to purchase votive candles for the display. Request donations or discounts for lunch-size paper bags (preferably white) and dry sand from supermarkets and/or hardware stores. (Highway-department sand is often too wet to use with paper bags.)
- Put just enough sand into each bag to weigh it down, about an inch or so.
- Enlist your local fire department for help in transporting and setting out the luminarias; depending on the number, flatbed trailers may be useful.
- Place bags at even intervals, about seven or eight feet apart.
- Use votive candles that can burn for 10 to 12 hours. Use a barbecue-style lighter, and work while there's still daylight left to see what you're doing!



# Slipping Away

*Six Vermont snow-tubing hot spots to try this winter.*

You don't have to be a skier to enjoy the winter fun at many of Vermont's beloved ski mountains. At resorts and outdoor centers dedicated to an array of winter sports, snow tubing offers a totally different kind of thrill-in-the-chill. The following are some favorite places to start slip-sliding away; just remember that tubing depends on natural snowfall, so be sure to check on the conditions before making your visit. —*Ian Aldrich*

## Grafton Ponds Outdoor Center, Grafton

Grafton offers miles and miles of pristine Nordic and snowshoe trails, but tubing fans gravitate toward the

center's 600-foot-long hill and a pair of curving chutes that leave them yelling for more. When it's time for a warm-up, check into the lodge, grab a seat by the fire, and put in an order for a mug of steaming hot chocolate. [graftonponds.com](http://graftonponds.com)

## Magic Mountain Tube Park, Londonderry

This famously challenging ski mountain caters to tubers of all stripes with a trio of 400-foot lanes. After you've had your fun, you can head to the main lodge for some après-ski refueling, or take a seat by the windows in the Black Line Tavern and watch the kiddos continuing to enjoy the snow. [magicmtn.com](http://magicmtn.com)



## Mount Snow Ski Area, West Dover

At one of the largest snow tubing hills in the state, visitors can choose one of eight different lanes to whisk them downhill at thrilling speeds. Save your legs and let the Magic Carpet return you to the top. Make a day of it or just make it part of your post-ski experience. Finish up at the Main Base Lodge with a hot drink or two. [mountsnow.com](http://mountsnow.com)



## Killington Tubing Park, Killington

The 60-minute tubing sessions at Killington are guaranteed to please. You'll go down, then up, then down again, before coasting to a stop at the bottom of the hill. When the tubing clock hits zero, head to the Clubhouse Gill for a stick-to-your-ribs pub-style entrée and some post-tubing camaraderie. [killington.com](http://killington.com)

## Okemo/Jackson Gore, Ludlow

Situated in Vermont's southern Green Mountains, this big-time resort serves up big-time winter fun—both on the slopes and on the snow tube tracks. Choose from one of four groomed chutes to launch your thrill ride. Afterward, you can relax in the nearby hot tub at the Spring House fitness center and recharge your muscles for the next round of snowy fun. [okemo.com](http://okemo.com)

## Sharp Park, Milton

Some 300 vertical feet define this park, the only snow tubing facility located in northern Vermont. Opened by a local resident named Rick Sharp in order to preserve a treasured one-acre parcel of land, the

attraction's star is Cobble Hill, a quarter-mile thrill ride of natural snow and bumpy terrain. A word of caution: There are no lifts to bring riders back up to the top. What goes down, in other words, must go up to go down again. [sharppark.com](http://sharppark.com)



# Out & About

*We round up some of our favorite Vermont events that are worth the drive this season.*

**NOV. 9–MAR. 8**

## Shelburne

*"Time Lapse: Contemporary Analog Photography"*

This new exhibit at the Shelburne Museum celebrates artists who use the darkroom as a type of laboratory of creativity. [shelburnemuseum.org](http://shelburnemuseum.org)

**NOV. 22**

## Burlington

*Dar Williams*

The UVM Recital Hall plays host to the singer-songwriter whose music has won over fans including Joan Baez and Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls. Look for her to perform longtime favorites alongside songs from her newest album, *Emerald*. [uvm.edu/laneseries](http://uvm.edu/laneseries)



**NOV. 22–24**

## Burlington

*Craft Vermont*

The premier juried show of fine Vermont crafts brings one-of-a-kind pieces to the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel. [vermonthandcrafters.com](http://vermonthandcrafters.com)



**NOV. 29–DEC. 1**

## Putney

*Putney Craft Tour*

Take part in the oldest continuous craft tour in the country as you make your way to the studios of more than 20 of the area's most talented artists. [putneycrafts.com](http://putneycrafts.com)

**NOV. 29–DEC. 1**

## Woodstock

*Thanksgiving Weekend on the Farm*

Turkey Day takes on 19th-century flavor this weekend at Billings Farm & Museum, as it hosts traditional cooking demonstrations and "History of Thanksgiving" programs. [billingsfarm.org](http://billingsfarm.org)

**NOV. 30–DEC. 1**

## Barre

*Winter Festival of Vermont Crafters*

Some 120 artisans and

crafters gather at the Barre Municipal Auditorium, offering handmade items and creative crafts just in time for the gift-giving season. From journals and pottery to beeswax candles and specialty foods, if it is better when made by hand, you'll likely find it here. [greaterbarrecraftguild.com](http://greaterbarrecraftguild.com)

**NOV. 30–DEC. 1**

## Killington

*Audi FIS Ski World Cup*

Killington Resort plays host to this premier Alpine racing event. The weekend includes women's giant slalom and slalom races, attracting athletes such as U.S. Ski Team superstar Mikaela Shiffrin. [killington.com](http://killington.com)

*Mikaela Shiffrin, one of the stars expected at the Audi FIS Ski World Cup*

**DEC. 6–8**

## Essex Junction

*Vermont International Festival*

Join the fun at this annual celebration of cultures from around the world, which brings crafts, foods, music, and dance to the Champlain Valley Expo. [vermontinternationalfestival.com](http://vermontinternationalfestival.com)

**DEC. 6–JAN. 1**

## Manchester

*A Victorian Christmas at Hildene*

Tour the beautiful country estate which was once home to Mary and Robert Todd Lincoln, while it is decorated for Christmas circa 1912. [hildene.org](http://hildene.org)

**DEC. 7**

## Plymouth Notch

*Coolidge Holiday Open House*

This Christmas tradition features the bedecked birthplace of President Calvin Coolidge, old-time music, sleigh rides, craft demonstrations, and kids' activities. [historic sites.vermont.gov](http://historic sites.vermont.gov)



## Destinations

DEC. 7

### Weston

#### *Christmas in Weston*

A day of fun for all ages is in store during this town-wide annual event. Visit with Santa at The Vermont Country Store before climbing aboard a horse-drawn wagon for a ride. Stop by the Weston Playhouse for puppet and magic shows or visit Old Parish Church for a reading of *A Christmas Carol*, then spend the day reveling in food tastings, greenhouse tours and craft demonstrations, accompanied by the music and caroling throughout downtown. Stick around for the lighting of the town tree at dusk. [westonvt.com](http://westonvt.com)

DEC. 13–15

### Woodstock

#### *Winter Wassail Weekend*

This jam-packed weekend includes a parade with more than 50 horses and riders dressed in holiday costumes and period dress, concerts, a breakfast with Santa, and historic house tours. [woodstockvt.com](http://woodstockvt.com)

DEC. 14

### Montpelier

#### *Touch of Vermont Holiday Gift Market*

You'll find the perfect gift for everyone on your list this season as more than 45 Vermont makers and artisans present their wares at City Hall. [touchofvt.org](http://touchofvt.org)

DEC. 31

### Ludlow

#### *Family New Year's Eve*

At Okemo Mountain Resort, enjoy early-evening ice skating, snow tubing, snowshoeing, mountain coaster rides, horse-drawn wagon rides, cookie decorating, and fireworks. Families can ring in the New Year with a DJ dance party.



*Christmas in Weston*

and still get the kids to bed early enough so that they'll be awake and ready to the hit slopes bright and early on January 1. [okemo.com](http://okemo.com)

JAN. 18

### Quechee

#### *Winter Wildlife Celebration*

Visit the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS), the home of many winged ambassadors—from owls to eagles—for this day that's all about family fun. Join expert educators to explore exhibits and trails, and enjoy games, crafts, and activities. [vinsweb.org](http://vinsweb.org)



*A rough-legged hawk, one of the wildlife ambassadors at VINS*

JAN. 23–26

### Stowe

#### *Winter Carnival*

From snow volleyball and snow golf to ice carving and dance parties, there's something for everyone at Stowe's annual celebration of winter. [stowewintercarnival.com](http://stowewintercarnival.com)

JAN. 25

### Brookfield

#### *Brookfield Ice Harvest*

Come to Sunset Lake to experience how ice was harvested, cut, and moved at the turn of the century. You can also try out handmade snowshoes and see the famous Vermont Floating Bridge. [802-276-3959](http://802-276-3959)

JAN. 28–30

### Essex Junction

#### *Vermont Farm Show*

The Champlain Valley Expo plays host to this annual tradition, which features over 250 booths showcasing everything from beekeeping to sugar making to dairy farming. [vtfarmshow.com](http://vtfarmshow.com)

FEB. 1–2

### Craftsbury Common

#### *Craftsbury Marathon Doubleheader*

The largest Nordic ski event in the East now comes with a twist: You can register for the classic marathon on Saturday, skiing either 25 or 50 kilometers on some of the most scenic terrain in New England, or opt for the new, slightly shorter freestyle marathon on Sunday. [craftsbury.com](http://craftsbury.com)

FEB. 15–23

### Brattleboro

#### *Brattleboro Winter Carnival*

At this townwide party, you can see a movie, a puppet show, a concert, or a variety show; hit the ice rink or the dance floor; and still find time for pancake breakfasts, sleigh and snowmobile rides, and games. Note: Fred Harris Memorial Ski Jumping Tournament is Feb. 16–17. [brattleborowintercarnival.org](http://brattleborowintercarnival.org)



FEB. 15

### Norwich

#### *Igloo Build*

One of the Montshire Museum's longest-running and most entertaining traditions returns, as igloo expert Bert Yankielun gives hands-on instruction on how to build an insulated, sturdy snow house. Fun for all ages, with indoor warm-up activities throughout the day. [montshire.org](http://montshire.org)

JAMIE WALTER (WAGON); KARI HOGLAND/STOCK (SKATES); COURTESY OF VINS (HAWK)

# Guaranteed for Life

*Dorset's J.K. Adams carries on a 75-year-old tradition of creating wood products that are both beautiful and enduring.*



BRENT HARREWN  
Founded in Dorset in 1944,  
the woodworking business  
J.K. Adams is today overseen  
by second-generation owner  
Malcolm Cooper Jr.

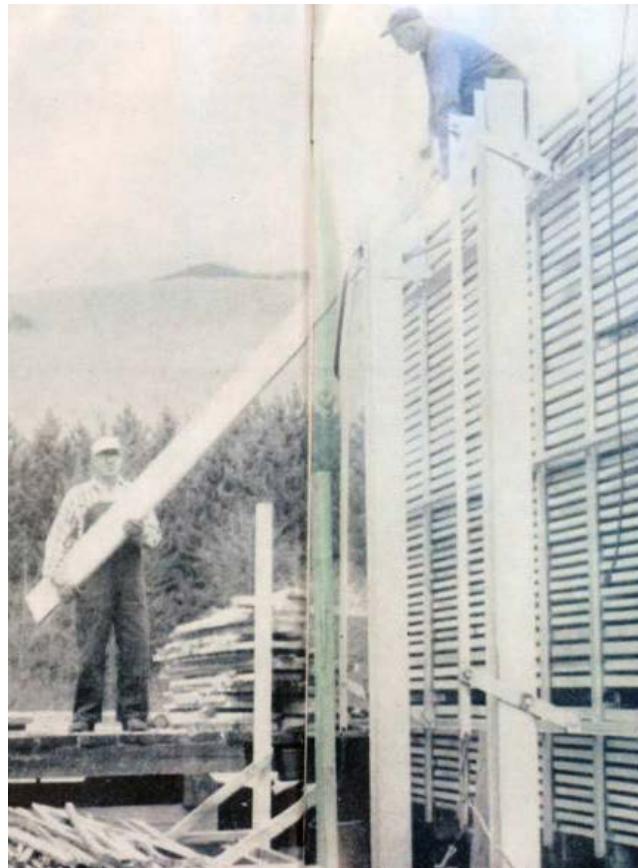
Made in Vermont

If you were an apple, especially one plucked from an heirloom tree, you would do well to be sliced on a J.K. Adams "Q-Tee" cutting board—a product that goes back over 50 years—before being served with hunks of Vermont cheddar. If, on the other hand, you were a fresh-from-the-oven turkey, you could wind up atop something truly prestigious: the J.K. Adams reversible maple carving board, which for six years in a row has been named the best reversible cutting board in the country by the experts at America's Test Kitchen.

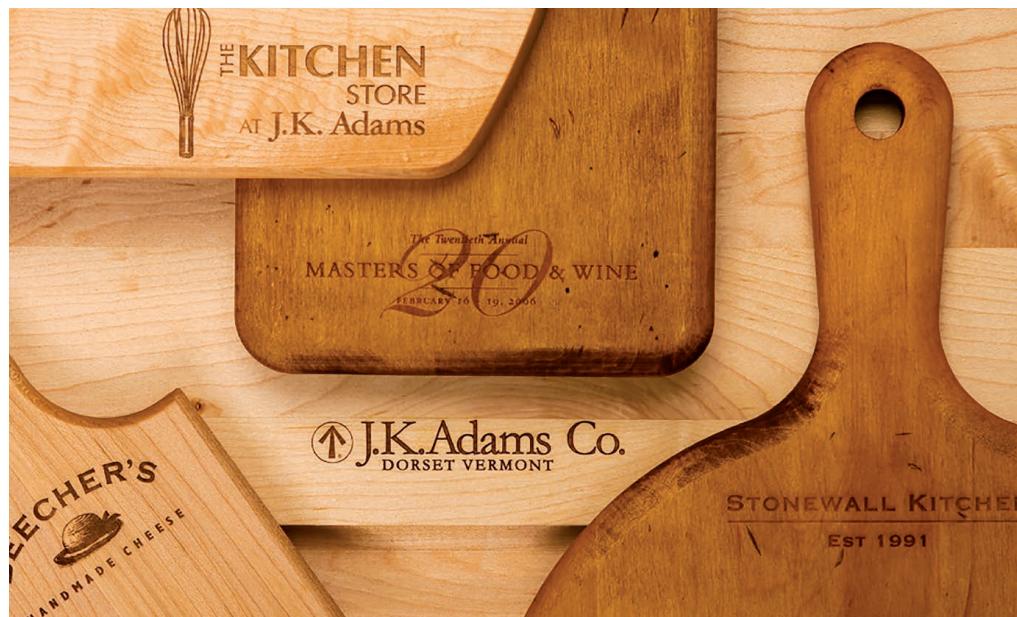
At a time when many bemoan the loss of American manufacturing, there might be a lesson in this venerable family business just outside the village of Dorset. Simply put: If you make something better than anyone else, people will want it.

Like many American success stories, this one springs from humble origins. Shortly after World War II, Josiah K. Adams began manufacturing a wooden toy car in a small Dorset shop. Dubbed the "Speedy Racer," the toy caught on, and Adams needed to expand—so he took a dismantled ice house, relocated it, and rebuilt it on the spot off Route 30 where his namesake company still stands today.

Adams's fledgling wood-products business added T-squares and slide rules to its line, and in 1949, an industrial engineer named Malcolm Cooper joined the firm as a partner. A man of talent and vision, he eventually became the company's owner, and his ambition matched the country's growing appetite for kitchen products that were not only practical but also aesthetically pleasing. His son, Malcolm Cooper Jr.,



once told a reporter, "I don't recall us ever talking about sports or political news around the dinner table. It was always about the business and how to drive the business forward." (When asked why his father did not give his own name to the company, Malcolm Jr. chalked it up to Yankee thrift: It would cost too much to change the stationery.)



ABOVE: In this archival photo, longtime J.K. Adams employee Charlie Phillips—whose three sons also worked at the company—hands up a board of green lumber to be loaded into a kiln car for drying. It's estimated that Charlie alone handed 30,000 to 40,000 board-feet of lumber up 15 feet in the air every year.

LEFT: J.K. Adams is known not only for the quality of its cutting boards but also for the finely detailed customization it offers, as shown in this selection from The Kitchen Store.

Using fine wood from North American hardwood forests—ash and walnut, maple from Vermont—Malcolm Cooper designed kitchen products to be passed down through generations, and he made innovations in the process. One day, frustrated by the difficulty in retrieving kitchen knives from a rack, he cut the bottom of a wooden block knife holder so that it slanted at a 45-degree angle; knives slid in and out with ease, and the world took notice. He created the first modular wine rack, as well as the rotating spice rack.

Every year, it seemed, J.K. Adams was bringing something new to the kitchen: carving boards that began life as scrap wood, rolling pins, trays. Plus, Cooper knew how to build and keep a business competitive, and in time he was able to pass it down to his son, Malcolm Jr., who still heads up the company.

Today, visitors to the store see not only the famous J.K. Adams line but also fine kitchenware from other artisans. Before or after browsing, you can stroll along a catwalk to the observation deck and look down on the action in the 10,000-square-foot workspace. Your senses go into overdrive: There's the whine of power saws, the smell of cut hardwood, the roar of massive industrial fans—all part of a steady thrum of creation. And as befits a company that owes its name to Yankee frugality, nearly every scrap of wood goes either to heating the plant or into a useful part of something.

There are some 40 employees here each day, including a team of designers who are constantly innovating. Recently they were figuring out ways to engrave favorite recipes of customers into cutting boards. But perhaps no employee embodies the homespun character of J.K. Adams like Janice Corey, who began on the factory floor in 1966 and in time moved to an administrative position. “Janice runs the shop,” Bill Eyre, the senior marketing director, told me on a recent visit.

## When You Go

**J.K. Adams Co.** is located at 1430 Route 30 in Dorset. The Kitchen Store is open 9 a.m.–5:30 p.m. daily except Sunday (10 a.m.–5 p.m.; factory observation hours are 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. weekdays. *802-362-4422; jkadams.com*

**Note:** Every Sunday in winter, one of the largest farmers' markets in the region sets up shop at J.K. Adams's Kitchen Store, showcasing local breads, jams, produce, and more. For more information, visit *dorsetfarmersmarket.com*.

COURTESY OF J.K. ADAMS



Though any wood product is susceptible to moisture and heat, J.K. Adams sticks to its lifetime guarantee. “It happens every day—someone will send us a cutting board they have had for years,” Eyre says.

A few years ago, Malcolm Cooper Jr. told a reporter why he was confident that despite global market pressures, there would always be a need for the craftsmanship he saw at work every day.

“Wood has been used for tools, shelter, and accessories since the start of recorded human history,” he said. “It’s attractive, warm to the touch, and relatively easy to work with. People always come back to wood. Dad believed that if you build something that is functional and well made, people will buy it. We are going to hold on to that.” —*Mel Allen*

Part of the Lovely Rolling Pin series developed by Bob and Gina Hartwig, owners of famed Chicago bake shop Lovely, this rolling pin is designed to ensure that dough is rolled to a perfect, even thickness.

Made in Vermont

# Metal of Merit

*Ancient craft meets modern-day design at Danforth Pewter.*



DANFORTH PEWTER



A crafter works on an oil lamp in the Danforth workshop, using pewter that is 100 percent lead-free.  
BELOW: Founders Judi and Fred Danforth, back when they were just getting started in the pewter business.



**F**rom Christmas ornaments to jewelry, picture frames, vases, and more, it seems there's nothing that Middlebury's Danforth Pewter hasn't conjured up from its namesake alloy in its 40-plus-year history.

The company was founded in 1975 by Fred and Judi Danforth, who were first drawn together by a shared interest in pewter after Fred came from Ohio to attend Middlebury College. Judi, a New Hampshire native, had studied metalsmithing at the School of American Craftsmen in upstate New York. Fred, on the other hand, was a distant relative of Thomas Danforth, who founded a pewter workshop in Connecticut in 1755; Thomas and his sons and grandsons represented one of the most respected names in early American pewter, and today their work is included in collections ranging from the MFA to the Smithsonian.

TAD MYERS: DANFORTH PEWTER

Working out of the old milk house of a former dairy farm in Woodstock, Fred and Judi revived the family business almost exactly a century after the last Danforth got out of the pewter trade. In the mid-1970s, the American Crafts movement was in vogue in Vermont, and the Danforths found a demand for pewter wares created with traditional tools and techniques. From the start, they had a simple business model: Everything was made by hand, with most decisions driven by the "triple bottom line" of what was good for their employees, good for the local economy, and good for the environment.

Business boomed in the 1980s, thanks in part to Danforth Pewter's licensing agreement with Disney, which led to some hugely popular Winnie-the-Pooh figurines. The Middlebury gift shop opened in 1989, and a new solar-powered workshop, gallery, and store debuted in 2006.

Bram Kleppner took over as CEO in 2011. The company is expanding (there are now nine locations in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Maryland, and Virginia), and Fred and Judi, looking toward retirement, are trying to get used to not always having a hand in every aspect of the operation.

But for now, the focus is on the holidays. The nativity sets and Santa's Workshop collections are always popular, and the selection of ornaments, stocking stuffers, and dreidels is ever-evolving. No matter the season, the company's craftspeople are always innovating, testing the seeming limitlessness of pewter's versatility, with results that keep customers coming back for more. —*Joe Bills*

*For more information, visit [danforthpewter.com](http://danforthpewter.com).*

# A Movable Forest

*With prayer and perseverance, Vermont Christmas tree farmers take their crop to the big city.*



Lance Moody, top, and Brandon Taylor muscle a snow-laden tree toward a pile to be craned onto a tractor-trailer at Houle's Tree Farm in Canaan.

PHOTO BY JEFFREY STONE

## CANAAN, VERMONT

**I**t's 12:30 a.m. on Tuesday, 33 days before Christmas, and fresh snow covers the remote hilltop where Melody Houle is limping back to her cabin. While fetching wood to feed the stove—the sole source of heat in the home and headquarters of her family's organic Christmas tree business—she fell through a broken slat in a pallet lining the shed, injuring her foot and ankle. Later today she and her husband, Patrick, will load up the last of this year's balsam harvest, including a select group bound for Cortelyou Road in Brooklyn, New York. It's the culmination of almost a decade of pruning and shearing, and many weeks of cutting and baling.

Melody's leg is swelling fast and throbbing, and she's concerned it could be sprained or, worse, broken—in which case, how will she stand on it day after day for a month in a small street lot in Brooklyn? The 18-wheel tractor-trailer slated to transport their trees to Manhattan will be grinding up the Houles' long, steep, snow-choked driveway just six and a half hours from now.

Monday did not go as planned. Instead of putting away laundry and loading supplies into their white Lincoln Town Car, Melody and Patrick spent most of the day helping a wholesale customer whose axle broke immediately after they'd finished loading his trees. The busted rig blocked the only way into the Houles' farm, up a sinuous two-mile dirt road. As Melody tried to track down a welder, Patrick used rope and plywood to jerry-rig the axle. Meanwhile, the season's first snowstorm began spitting icy flakes. It was night before the trailer was finally dragged clear of the road and a welder was found to come and mend it. And the Houles still hadn't gone to bed when Melody went out for that armload of wood and fell. Now, as she sits in a chair at the small table in the center of their shoebox-shaped cabin, Patrick kneels and places his hands gently on her ankle. Together they close their eyes and ask their heavenly father for protection and healing.

Selling trees is what pays the mortgage in this sparsely populated region of the state's northeast corner, where the Houles' closest neighbors are more than a mile away. The hand-painted sign on their cabin door reads, "Welcome God, Sunshine, and Friends"—and by Melody and Patrick's estimation, these things are what deliver them from tribulations and are undoubtedly part of the miracle that landed them their coveted showcase in Brooklyn. It's almost impossible to score

sales territory in New York City, where veteran tree vendors fiercely guard their corners and curbs, but the Houles happened to spot a rare call for new vendors the instant it was posted on an online message board. This season marks their fifth year selling trees on their serendipitous lot in Brooklyn's Ditmas Park, and the seventh year of their serendipitous business, which they launched after losing their jobs at the Ethan Allen plant in Beecher Falls when it closed in 2009.

Five hours after Melody's mishap, she is standing carefully at the sink—her ankle is pink but the swelling's subsided—as Patrick pulls on his coat and heads out to plow the driveway so the work crew and the crane operator and the first of the day's four 18-wheel flatbed trucks can reach the landing where the trees are heaped. "Hold on," Melody says to Patrick as she ducks under the shirts drying by the woodstove. She grabs an ice scraper off the shelf and hands it to her husband. A look of solidarity passes between them.

Later, Patrick is downhill at the landing, where the flatbed destined for Brooklyn is backed in alongside the chest-high windrows composed of thousands of Christmas trees. Melody has counted all of these trees three times, confirmed by the orange spray-painted dot each bears on the cut face of its trunk. They lie in a pile, baled—they're like shut umbrellas, not to be opened again till Brooklyn, where they'll be individually shouldered into hundreds of separate apartments and hung with ornaments and garlands.

When Ivan Belville, the crane driver, finally chugs up the hill around 8 a.m., the crew jumps into action. Approaching the windrow in teams, they take turns



Melody Houle keeps an eye on a truck being loaded with her family's Christmas trees; later, she'll take a moment to pray for all the drivers' safety.

loading Ivan's "basket" with trees, which he then clamps, lifts skyward, and swings over to the flatbed, again and again. Meanwhile, two workers cling to the flatbed's side stakes as they tamp down the trees, rising higher and higher on the payload of balsams. The air is cold but pungent, spiced with the trees' fragrance as the flatbed fills to capacity.

By 10:30 a.m., the flatbed is hitched to driver Mike Marchand's semi truck. His is the first load of some 3,000 trees that will have coursed out of these hills by dusk—a transient forest. After easing his way down off the hill, he stops at the intersection with Route 102. He gets out of the cab and tugs one last time on his straps; he unhitches his tire chains and stashes them; he makes a final survey of his load. Then he climbs back into the truck.

Later today, Melody and Patrick will gas up their Lincoln and follow their trees to the city. Right now, Mike's tractor-trailer faces due east, where the Connecticut River forms the watery border. Beyond it basks New Hampshire. Canada looms off to the left. Mike taps the accelerator. He and every tree bound for Cortelyou Road turn right. —Julia Shipley



Crane operator Ivan Belville maneuvers a bundle of evergreens to a waiting flatbed at the Houles' farm.

## BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

**T**hey are *moving*." Melody Houle is standing in one of those neglected lots you find all over the outer boroughs of New York City, muddy and uneven, strung with random wires of obscure purpose and littered with rusted detritus. And the fact that these unlovely things have been made visible is a source of triumph for the Houles. It means the trees that hid them even a week ago are selling. By Saturday, December 10, there are only 70 left, down from 300. They are *moving*.

The lot is behind a craft shop on Cortelyou Road in Ditmas Park in Brooklyn. The Houles' stand is a stone's throw from a guitar shop, a check-cashing operation, a hip restaurant, an Islamic school, a

Pilates studio, a Mexican diner, a Dominican hair salon, and Shabuj Grocery, which advertises itself as "Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani & American," and under whose awning passes a family of Hasidic Jews out for a Saturday stroll.

This is a perfect lot, Melody says. The stone walls on two sides keep the trees cool, and the moist dirt keeps them hydrated. And the gate locks, which means she and Patrick can go back to their Airbnb at the end of every night and not have to worry about whether any stock will go missing. Despite the native condition of the lot, it's festive, heavy with pine scent.

Not everything is for sale back here. Melody maintains a small tin of coins and stickers (Christian- and Jewish-themed) for the kids. "Something for everybody," she says. There is also a tree decked with little silver sachets filled with pine needles. "Sometimes you can tell that somebody needs their day brightened," Melody explains. "You hand them one of those, and they get teary-eyed. That's what it's all about."

Melody thinks people are getting them earlier this year because they know that the Houles' trees will last. "They know the secret sauce works."

The secret sauce, by the way, is Sprite and bottled water. Not city water, which contains chloride. One customer after another attests to its potency. One



woman, Hyacinth, says her tree lived well into the spring last year, remaining fully decorated. Finally a friend told her, “Get rid of the Christmas tree! I can’t stand it! It’s March!” She consented, she says, but not without some regret.

More customers, more trees. Men, women, straight, gay, black, white, young, middle-aged. People who went too big last year and touched the ceiling, people harboring regrets at not getting close *enough* to the ceiling. Most are repeat customers, because of the trees and the Houles. “They’re very natural and authentic,” one says. “It’s not about business. It’s about making sure you have the cheeriest Christmas.” Another tells the Houles, “I always get them from here, and I love you guys, and they’re perfect.”

“It’s the secret sauce,” Melody tells him.

A tree is selected by Ken, a painter. A repeat customer. But when Patrick gets the tree on the table, he notices the trunk is crooked and suggests Ken pick another one. Ken settles on a non-crooked tree—to be picked up Sunday—and says, “See you tomorrow, my friends!” Then he turns to a stranger and indicates the dwindling stock on the lot: “I hope it brings them...” and he makes a concerned gesture that can only be read as *overdue good fortune*. “They’re sweet,” Ken explains.

They are *moving*.

“This is our best year yet,” Melody says. “I hope we’re on a roll.”

A French florist comes in. She complains that all her customers in town are incredibly demanding, and all the trees her firm bought to sell them this year are thin. It’s been a nightmare. “I’m a little less difficult on my own tree,” she explains. “I just want to throw some lights on and call it a day. It’s the spirit of the season, not whether it’s perfect.”

“It’s Mother Nature,” Patrick says. “It’s not a perfect world.”

**TOP:** The Houles at work in their little lot in Brooklyn, New York, tucked behind storefronts and a block of apartments.

**MIDDLE:** Melody Houle on the lot that’s been hosting her farm’s trees since 2012: “It’s just right. It’s off the street, and the stone on the buildings keeps the trees cold. Keeps them hibernating.”

**BOTTOM:** Patrick and Melody tie up a Christmas tree for transport.



The next young family, repeat customers, have brought their own dolly with them. The mother's name is Kelly. Her father bought the dolly for them, she says. Kelly asks Melody where their Airbnb is, and they get into Airbnb war stories, as people do. Kelly tells her that her father got an Airbnb last time he was in town, but the ceiling was so low he kept hitting his head on the pipes. "So he went out and bought a bike helmet," she says. "He's a little kooky."

It has started to snow. The December chill sinks in as dusk approaches. Kelly and her family load the tree onto the dolly and turn to go. Before they do, Melody gives Kelly a big hug. "Bye-bye, dear," she says. "Have a merry Christmas." They go.

A minute later, one of the kids returns and gives Melody a five.

"Thank you so much," he says.

\* \* \* \* \*

By Monday afternoon, December 12, there's only one tree left, and it's been leaning against the dirty white wall for hours. Even the last crabbed little Charlie Brown tree is gone, claimed by "a little boy so happy to have his own tree it wasn't funny," Patrick says. The hours crawl by. It closes in on 3 o'clock. "It's time for you to take it out to the street and dance with it," Patrick suggests.

"I suppose you could put it out front with a sign that says 'Last Tree,'" says Melody.

**Brooklyn residents Carina and Richard Bierschbach and their kids head for home with their tree in tow, one of many they've bought from the Houles over the years (they like that the trees are organically grown, they say).**

They carry it out to the sidewalk and lean it against a bike rack. Patrick waits in the car. His hip is bothering him. At about 4 p.m., a friendly couple come by. Alec Betterley, a music therapist, and Nicole Lenzen, a nurse. They are newlyweds—this is their first married Christmas—and they just returned this afternoon from Texas, where they visited his mother. They're tired, they're busy—this is their only day off, which means it's the only chance they'll have to buy a tree—and buying a tree, for these two, is usually fraught. "It's actually one of our most argument-prone days," says Alec.

"We have a hard time picking a Christmas tree," says Nicole.

Not this year. This year, peace will reign. There are no choices. There's just the one. A lovely seven-footer. They pay out on the sidewalk and chat with the Houles. But it's getting cold, and it's getting toward night. Patrick and Melody congratulate the couple and wish them a merry Christmas. As they all prepare to part ways, only one thing remains to be said.

"Now," says Melody, "you remember the watering instructions?" —Joe Keohane

# Back Ta Willey's

*A great small-town store offers far more than just things to buy.*



We live exactly six miles from what I believe to be the best country store east of the Mississippi. It's called Willey's, and it is right in the center of Greensboro, Vermont, a town of 750-ish residents on the eastern shore of Caspian Lake. Willey's is housed in a rambling white clapboard building, with goods located on three floors (if one includes the basement, which I do, since I'm down there on at least a weekly basis, pawing through bins of plumbing apparatus). There's a single gas pump on the building's north side, and a bulletin board that runs almost the entire length of the front wall's exterior.

Greensboro is one of those rural towns that have carved out a niche for themselves as destinations for affluent second-home owners. Credit goes in part to the lake, which is surrounded by tastefully remodeled

"camps" that often run north of \$500,000 and are, in most instances, far more commodious than the homes occupied by year-round residents.

But I imagine Willey's doesn't hurt, either. Were I in the position of choosing where to invest in a Vermont vacation home, being within a short hop of Willey's certainly would be a factor in my decision. Amid the store's fully stocked grocery, hardware, building supply, and household departments, one can procure a very nice bottle of wine, a pair of rubber barn boots, jumper cables, a box of 12-gauge shotgun shells (and the gun to load them into), a length of two-inch schedule 40 PVC pipe, a wedge of Jasper Hill Farm's

**Fifth-generation storekeeper Robert W. (for Willey) Hurst at the Willey's Store in Greensboro, which is the place to go for everything from clothing and locally brewed beer to hardware and hunting licenses.**



FROM LEFT: At the Willey's checkout, fourth-generation proprietor Rob Hurst chats with customer John Smolinsky of Black Dirt Farm; Hurst holds a photograph of his grandfather, Robert A. Willey, taken back in the early days of their family's store.

Bayley Hazen Blue (which is made barely two miles from the store), a can of cream of mushroom soup, and a toilet plunger.

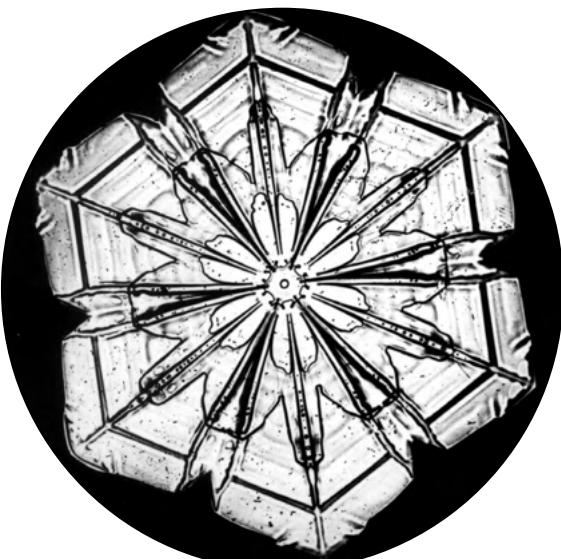
It is a rare week that I do not find ample reason to visit Willey's. And while some of these expeditions do fall under the heading of legitimate need, there are—if I'm being entirely honest—just as many that fall under the heading of “just enough need to be considered legitimate but in truth more an excuse to visit Willey's.” I know I'm not the only one: Around here, the acronym BTW is understood to stand for “Back Ta Willey's,” which is what happens when one returns home with a ½-inch copper elbow only to realize that the line one is cutting into is actually ¾-inch. (This is a hypothetical scenario, of course.)

I like visiting Willey's because I like the drive: the first three miles on a winding gravel road that traces a fast-moving mountain stream; the second three on a secondary paved road that often compels me to brake for meandering chickens. And I like visiting Willey's because I can never be sure who I'm going to run into, though it'll probably be someone I know, which means Willey's is the backdrop for a goodly percentage of my social life. Too, I like visiting Willey's because I can trade heckles with Rob Hurst, who is quick of wit and chuckle, and whose family has owned Willey's for almost 120 years. Once, Rob tried to up-sell me

on a branded drill bit intended to bore pilot holes for concrete screws (it didn't work—I bought the cheaper, nonbranded bit, which did just fine), and ever since then, I like to accuse him of padding his retirement account with each nut, bolt, and screw I carry home.

Which leads me to another thing I like about Willey's: the prices. I'm not sure how they do it, because the store is too small to have the bulk purchasing power of its larger competitors. For instance, I recently bought a metal electrical junction box for less than half what the exact same box cost me at a local building supply store. Such drastic disparities are not the rule, but in my experience, a 10 to 15 percent discount relative to the competition is common here. And the gas at the single pump is always at least a dime cheaper than anywhere else.

The truth is I'd shop at Willey's even if the prices weren't so good, because it is my fervent belief that the world is a better place with stores like Willey's in it. In my view, these stores offer much more than merchandise; they offer community and kindness and decency, along with a sense of camaraderie and connection to a particular place. It's no original thinking on my part to wonder if, despite all the convenience it provides, online and big-box shopping sells us short on a whole lot of less tangible—but no less important—benefits. —*Ben Hewitt*



One Last Thing

# Hidden Gems

*How “Snowflake” Bentley showed us the artistry of winter.*

Vermonters know snow. Many can trace their relationship with the substance along the shooting lower-back pains felt after an epic bout of shoveling. That's why Wilson A. "Snowflake" Bentley's obsession was so unexpected. While his neighbors were cheering the coming of spring, he'd mourn each melting flake as "just that much beauty ... gone, without leaving any record behind."

Home-schooled and self-educated, the Vermont native became famous in 1885 when, at the age of 19, he was the first person to successfully photograph a single snowflake. Working from the family farm in Jericho, he went on to create more than 5,000 photos, none of which, he famously noticed, was exactly like any other one. With each picture, he captured in the jagged symmetry of his subject an ethereal and fleeting beauty that broadened the fields of both photography and meteorology.

The humble Snowflake Bentley Exhibit in Jericho displays many of his original slides and explores the far-reaching effects of the town's most famous resident and his eccentric hobby. Although it's open to debate whether his impact was greater in art or in science, most will agree that his photos are likely the most enduring things ever created in a Vermont woodshed. —Justin Shatwell



To capture the delicate beauty of snow crystals, Bentley fitted a bellows camera with a compound microscope; some of the resulting images are shown at left.

**Jericho Historical Society's Snowflake Bentley Exhibit:** 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Mon.–Sat. and 11:30 a.m.–4 p.m. Sun. (from January to March, days are Wed., Sat., and Sun. only). *The Old Red Mill, Route 15, Jericho Village. 802-899-3225; jerichohistoricalociety.org*



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