

Our Vermont

SPRING 2020

YANKEE



THE JOYS OF
SPRING SKIING

FRESH AND TASTY
EGG RECIPES

DAY-TRIPPING IN
MONTPELIER

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

Dream Time

In my office at *Yankee*, I keep a box of letters that readers have sent me over the years. One of my favorites came from a reader named Donna. “I am a Midwesterner in place, a New Englander in heart,” she wrote. “Some years ago I came to Vermont in late April, and it filled my lungs, and soul, with the purest air imaginable. I will always remember that fresh breeze with a hint of flowers and hearing the songs of far-traveling birds. So cleansing, so calming, so right.”

I don’t know if Donna has been able to return to Vermont yet. But I’m betting that the memory of being here, right when the landscape has swung from one season to the next, has never left her.

When most people read “dream” and “Vermont” together, what they immediately see in their mind’s eye is the brilliance of autumn. And I get that. I myself have driven hundreds if not thousands of miles over the state’s back roads during that all-too-fleeting exuberance of color. Fall is what truly excites the eye.

But let me make the case for spring—especially springtime in the villages and small towns that lie in wait around the mountain curves and along the thousands of miles of dirt lanes that give Vermont a character unlike any other in New England.

When the snow melts off the mountains and after the mud dries, a greening begins. When skis are waxed for the final time and tucked away, we pump up tires on road bikes and mountain bikes. Children gather at the park with bats and balls. Townspeople we may not have seen for weeks suddenly wave to us on their walks to a distant hillside. At the store we talk not about the dark, but about how the sun is still visible—and it’s 7 o’clock! There is a greening not just in the leaves and lawns but also inside us.

Sometimes we seem to be fighting winter, with the sounds of plows and snowblowers announcing another round of man versus nature. And then gradually, almost without our noticing right away, we see the open windows of neighbors ... the general store has fresh syrup for sale from the farm down the road ... and our weekly paper devotes a full page to the high school spring sports schedule.

I have always thought that our cities were made for winter, with their museums and eateries and theaters, and all those warm shops. But our small towns and villages, well, that’s where dreams happen in spring, places where Donna from the Midwest can visit once and never forget and maybe still dreams of returning.



Mel Allen
editor@yankeemagazine.com

YANKEE

1121 Main St., P.O. Box 520, Dublin, NH 03444
603-563-8111; newengland.com

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PUBLISHER
Brook Holmberg

MARKETING DIRECTOR
Kate Hathaway Weeks

EDITOR
Mel Allen

ART DIRECTOR
Lori Pedrick

DEPUTY EDITOR
Ian Aldrich

MANAGING EDITOR
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SENIOR FOOD EDITOR
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Heather Atwell
Edie Clark
Annie Graves
Beatrice Farrand Maki
Julia Shipley

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS
Kindra Clineff
Mark Fleming
Corey Hendrickson
Michael Piazza
Heath Robbins
Kristin Teig

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Going with the Flow

In praise of the old-fashioned sap bucket.

Enough it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of maple syrup, it can be done with a single bucket and a spigot. My husband did that—it's a great deal of work. Eventually, we felt that buying the syrup made more sense somehow.

I am changing my mind, though.

Come spring, I see changes along the roadsides, and at the risk of sounding like a curmudgeon, I'm having a hard time getting used to this. I'm talking about the method of collecting sap with plastic tubing.

In years gone by, when I drove along back roads in early March and saw the buckets hanging off the trees, it represented so much: the beauty of our woods, as brought forth in countless paintings and photographs, seemingly never enough of them to capture that interesting bucket poised midway up the thick trunk of the incomparable maple. It also represented the mysterious way that the sap begins to move up into the branches long before any other sign of spring has

appeared. The buckets were the cheerful reminder in the midst of the high snowbanks that always defy our hopes: *Spring is coming!*

Sugaring was the great remedy for cabin fever. There are endless stories of springs when the snow was still hip deep and sap buckets had to be collected via snowshoe. So many stories told, so much hooch consumed in the wee hours of a sugaring morning. As one who travels the rural byways of New England at odd hours, I can say there is not a more cheerful sight than coming upon a sugarhouse before daybreak and seeing the huge clouds of steam billowing from the roof vent. There used to be any number of these backyard sugarhouses, ready all year for this one brief, glorious season.

It's all part of our history, and I'm not saying it is gone. But it is changing. This surely improves our supply of syrup, but it leaves an aching hole for all of us who

simply loved the beauty that the old process brought to our woods. This tubing is clever and definitely of the late 20th century. The tubes are spliced together like intravenous lines, running from one tree to the next. Where there was once the *drip-drip-drip* of the sap, a sound with the musical elegance of a metronome, there is now a rushing sound, like a faucet turned on high. This is the preponderance of sap, not from one tree but from, perhaps, 20. It races, gravity-fed, gathering speed down the hill toward a humongous covered aluminum vat placed as close to the road as possible. From there, it is an easy pump into the refrigerated tanker truck that comes to collect the sap.

I warned you that this would be curmudgeonly. I know that we make just as much syrup as we ever did, and I am sure that the job of the syrup producers has been made infinitely easier. I believe that the bucket method came to us from the Indians, and there has not been any significant change since then. So, we are overdue.

Still, I miss those buckets.

I recently went to an estate auction where a lot of old wooden sap buckets were sold. There must have been 200, stacked up like custard cups, one stack after the other, the stacks as tall as a man. The buckets had a reddish stain on them and made me long to see them once again hanging from the maples near my house. An interior decorator bought them, the entire lot. I suppose many of these old buckets are now hard at work bearing sprays of dried flowers in some grand living room far from the silence of a March woods.

I am cleaning our bucket. It is not so much work, I am thinking now. That maple beside the garden hasn't been tapped in years. Maybe a good day, when the sun is strong, I'll take a lawn chair out there and set it up in the snow, beside the bucket. I can sit back and close my eyes, tilt my face into the warming sun, and listen to the *drip-drip-drip*, New England's Morse code: *Spring is coming.* —Edie Clark



Crack On

Celebrate spring with these favorite Yankee egg recipes.

Eggs are the natural wonders of the kitchen. If that sounds like hyperbole, whip up a batch of popovers and watch their balloonlike elasticity as they inch up the pan. Or make homemade mayonnaise and observe how the yolks absorb oil like sponges, turning rich and creamy without a drop of cream. Egg yolks lend a silken thickness to custard and a rich moistness to cakes.

For many farmyard chickens in our northern climate, longer spring days restore them to full egg-laying capacity, so this is a great time to seek out a carton of local eggs. The following recipes highlight the diversity and deliciousness of this incredible food. —Amy Traverso



Blueberry Dutch Baby

This oven-baked blueberry Dutch baby pancake has the drama of a soufflé without any of the stress. Bring it straight from the oven to the table for all to admire—it will deflate quickly but remain slightly puffed and delicious.

½ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup whole milk
2 large eggs
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
¼ teaspoon table salt
⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
½ cup wild blueberries (fresh or frozen)

Juice from ½ lemon
1 tablespoon powdered sugar

Preheat your oven to 425° and set a rack to the lower position. Lightly beat together the flour, milk, eggs, sugar, salt, and nutmeg. The batter will be a bit lumpy.

Melt the butter in a 9-inch cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Pour the batter into the heated skillet and sprinkle with blueberries. Place in the oven and bake until golden and puffed, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle with lemon juice and powdered sugar. Serve immediately with maple syrup, if desired.



Shirred Eggs with Bacon

Take simple shirred eggs to the next level with crisp bacon and a sprinkle of onions, peppers, and Parmesan for added texture and flavor. Feel free to substitute ham for the bacon or another filling for the pepper and onion to suit your taste.

**12 strips bacon
1 heaping tablespoon diced bell pepper
1 heaping tablespoon diced onion
6 medium eggs
6 teaspoons heavy cream
3 teaspoons grated Parmesan cheese
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Garnish: 2 sprigs fresh chives, or grated
Parmesan and a pinch of sea salt**

Preheat your oven to 400° and set a rack to the middle position. Arrange the bacon on a greased rimmed baking sheet and cook until lightly browned but not crisped, 10 to 14 minutes. Remove and lower to 325°.

Lightly grease six 7-ounce ramekins arranged on a baking sheet, and line the sides and bottom of each with 2 bacon strips. Combine the diced pepper and onion in a small bowl. Spoon 1 heaping teaspoon of the mixture into each cup, followed by 1 cracked egg. Add 1 teaspoon cream, ½ teaspoon Parmesan, and black pepper to taste.

Bake until the egg whites are opaque, 12 to 15 minutes. Serve in their ramekins, or use a spoon to transfer them to a small serving dish. Garnish with herbs or chives, or a bit of grated Parmesan and a pinch of salt, and serve warm.

Mr. Ellis's Tomato Tart

For the crust:

- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes
- ¼ cup ice water

For the filling:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 2 eggs
- ½ cup plus ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- 6 scallions, white and light green parts only, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon fresh-ground black pepper
- 3 medium tomatoes, cored and cut into ¼-inch wedges
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves

First, make the crust: Using a food processor, pulse together the flour and salt. Add the butter, and pulse until pea-sized. Pour in the ice water and pulse until the dough comes together in a ball. Place plastic wrap on a cutting board, turn the dough out onto it, flatten into a 1-inch-thick disk, then wrap in plastic. Refrigerate for at least an hour or up to three days.

Preheat your oven to 350°. Place dough on a lightly floured cutting board and use a lightly floured rolling pin to make a 14-inch circle about ¼ inch thick. Transfer to a 10-inch removable bottom tart pan, fitting dough into the bottom and sides and pinching off any excess. Refrigerate for 10 minutes.

Remove from refrigerator and use a fork to prick the bottom of the dough all over. Place a 14-inch sheet of parchment paper or aluminum foil into the tart pan, and add dried beans or pie weights to weigh the paper down. Place pan on a baking sheet and bake until the crust edges are firm and beginning to turn golden, about 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and carefully remove the paper and pie weights. Return to the bottom rack and continue to bake until the crust is golden, 10 to 15 minutes.

Now, make the filling: In a large bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, buttermilk, eggs, ½ cup Parmesan, chopped scallions, and black pepper. Pour ¾ of the mixture into the crust, then arrange the tomato wedges in a circular pattern, overlapping them slightly. Roughly tear the basil leaves and distribute evenly over the top of the tart. Pour the remaining custard over all and sprinkle with the remaining Parmesan.

Bake until crust is a deep golden brown and filling is set and beginning to brown on top, about 30 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool at least 30 minutes, then unmold and cut into wedges. Serve warm or at room temperature.



LORI PEDRICK (STYLING BY LIZ NEILY)

Herbed Popovers

Popovers are very dramatic when they come out of the oven, all golden brown and puffed. But they deflate quickly—so you'll want to serve these delicious herbed versions as soon as they are done.

2½ tablespoons salted butter, plus more for muffin tin or cups
3 large eggs
1½ cups milk
1½ cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh thyme
Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Preheat your oven to 400°, set a rack to the bottom position, and generously grease a 12-cup muffin tin or popover cups.

Melt 2½ tablespoons salted butter and set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs; then add the milk and beat thoroughly. Sift in the flour and stir. Add the melted butter and remaining ingredients, and stir well.

Fill the cups of the prepared tin two-thirds full with batter. Bake until golden brown and puffed up, 20 to 25 minutes. (Be careful not to open the oven while baking!) Serve immediately with herb butter on the side.

Herb Butter

Serve with your favorite bread, muffins, or cornbread, or atop sautéed or grilled poultry or fish.

1 stick salted butter, softened
1½ tablespoons minced fresh chives
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh thyme
1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a small bowl, stir the butter with a wooden spoon until very soft and workable. Add the herbs and pepper to taste. Serve in a ramekin or small bowl, or shape it into a log, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for up to several weeks.



Easy Pavlova

We're especially fond of making this gorgeous meringue dessert with strawberries, but you can substitute other berries, kiwi, or mango.

For the meringue:

- 4 large egg whites
- 1/8 teaspoon table salt
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon white balsamic or cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch

For the topping:

- 1 pint (about 12 ounces) fresh strawberries
- 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Preheat your oven to 300°. Line a sheet pan with parchment, trace a 9-inch circle in the center, and turn the paper over.

Using a standing mixer with a whisk attachment, beat egg whites until frothy. Add salt and continue beating. As soft peaks form, slowly add sugar in a thin stream, beating as you go. Once sugar is incorporated, beat on high speed until firm, shiny peaks begin to form, about 2 more minutes. Stop beating, then gently fold in vanilla, vinegar, and cornstarch with a spatula.

Spoon the meringue into the center of the traced circle and spread it out to the edges, creating a shallow well in the middle. Put into the oven, reduce heat to 250°, and bake 1 1/2 hours. Turn off the oven, leaving meringue inside until it turns crisp and pale but is still a bit soft inside, about 1 hour. Remove from oven and let cool completely.

Meanwhile, prepare the fruit: Hull and slice berries. Toss with 1/4 cup sugar and lemon juice, and set aside.

Whip cream, 1 tablespoon sugar, and vanilla with an electric mixer or whisk until firm peaks form. To serve, peel parchment from meringue and place on a serving platter. Spread whipped cream over meringue. Spoon berries over the top and serve.



Apple Custard Cake

In this recipe, pouring the custard over the batter partway through the baking process creates three distinct layers of cake, custardy cake, and custard—a trio of complementary textures.

For the cake:

- 1 medium, firm sweet apple, peeled, cored, and cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wedges
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, plus more for pan
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour, plus more for pan
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon table salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk
- Powdered sugar, for dusting

For the custard:

- 1 large egg plus 1 large egg yolk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons granulated sugar

Toss apple slices with lemon juice and set aside. Preheat oven to 350° and set a rack to the middle position. Use butter to grease a 9-inch springform pan, then sprinkle with flour. Shake the pan to coat with flour; discard any excess.

In a medium bowl, whisk together $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour, pastry flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside.

In the bowl of a standing mixer, cream 5 tablespoons butter and sugar on high for 1 minute. Add egg and vanilla and beat to combine. Then add a third of the flour mixture and stir to combine. Add half the milk and stir. Repeat with another third of the flour mixture, then the rest of the milk, then the remaining flour mixture. Pour the batter into the pan. Lay the apple slices over the top and set the pan on a baking sheet, then transfer to the oven for 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the custard: In a small bowl, whisk together the egg, egg yolk, cream, vanilla, and 3 tablespoons sugar.

After 25 minutes, remove cake from oven, pour the custard over the top, and sprinkle with the remaining sugar. Return to oven and bake until the sides of the cake pull away from the pan and a tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes more. Dust with powdered sugar, and serve.



Prime Pickings

One of the year's first wild edibles, the highly prized fiddlehead fern is a sign that spring has truly sprung.



DEIRDRE Malfatto/STOCKSY

Every year when late April rolls around, there is a restlessness in the Vermont landscape—an imperceptible underground stirring along streams and rivers, in bogs and marshlands. And then, as if responding to music inaudible to the human ear, coiled green heads appear by the thousands, stretching slender graceful necks, reaching toward the sun. The annual *Matteuccia struthiopteris* uprising is under way. It's fiddlehead time.

There are many varieties of edible ferns in this country, but our familiar ostrich fern is the most popular. It's a beautiful fern, tallest of the eastern species, though its name is a point of some dispute. Some say the plump fronds of the full-grown fern resemble ostrich feathers; other believe the name comes from the fact that the crosiers (the tightly furled frond structures of the emerging fern) look like ostrich

heads. In either case, there's no doubt about the reason for its nickname: At the right stage for picking, when the stems are two to five inches long, each tightly coiled crosier is shaped exactly like the head of a fiddle.

The fiddlehead is not a "green" in the sense that dandelions and spinach are. In texture, use, and even method of cooking, it's probably best compared with asparagus. There is little waste to a fiddlehead. Just pick or blow off the clinging papery brown scales (remnants of the membrane that protected the crosier as it pushed out of the ground), snip any too-long stems, and wash the greens. There's no need to unwind one for inspection, because—unless some newcomer to the world of plant-eating pests has very recently discovered this spring treat—you will not find any form of life in a crosier except tasty plant.

—Beatrice Farrand Maki

How to Sauté Fiddleheads

Fiddleheads are best served simply, sautéed with a bit of butter and an allium, such as garlic or shallots. Here's a technique for preparing fiddleheads from *Yankee* food editor Amy Traverso that yields an easy and flavorful dish.

- When buying fiddleheads, look for fresh, bright green, tightly coiled plants. Browning is a sure sign of age.



- While bringing a pot of salted water to a boil, take about 1½ pounds of fiddleheads and wash them in cold water. Be sure to rub away any remaining brown scales and trim the ends.
- Because the plants are wild, it's wise to make sure they're thoroughly cooked



before serving, to avoid the possibility of foodborne illness. So boil them in the salted water for about 10 minutes before sautéing them.

- While the fiddleheads are boiling, brown some butter in a skillet. This will impart a wonderful nutty flavor to the fiddleheads, and the method couldn't be simpler: Simply melt 3 tablespoons over medium heat and let it cook until the milk solids in the butter turn a nice chestnut brown.
- For oniony flavor, you can add another wild edible: ramps, also known as wild leeks. The finely chopped stems from five plants is sufficient (the leaves have a more vegetal flavor, so I leave those out).

- Sauté the ramp stems for 4 to 5 minutes in the browned butter. The stems will flavor the butter. Cook them over medium heat for about 4 minutes.

- Drain the cooked fiddleheads and add them to the skillet with the butter and ramps. Sauté for 3 or 4 minutes to blend the flavors, then serve.

And turning sautéed fiddleheads into a full meal is just as simple: Sauté 2 chopped portobello mushrooms in olive oil over high heat until they begin to caramelize, add the cooked fiddleheads, and stir in the zest of 1 lemon and 2 tablespoons of sour cream. Top with a piece of roasted salmon, and voila! Dinner is served.





April's Maple founder
April Lemay sets up a tap
on one of her maple trees.

Sweet Dreams: April's Maple

Part of an ongoing series in which we meet up with small producers bringing the bounty of Vermont to our table.

April Lemay never set out to be a sugar maker. In fact, less than a decade ago the Vermont native was working in Boston as a partner at an international accounting firm. But then 800 acres of family land in Lemay's hometown of Canaan went up for sale, including a large sugarbush; Lemay, who'd been looking for an investment opportunity, bought it. She erected a sugarhouse, set out 9,000 taps, began coming home on the

weekends to help her parents boil sap—and April's Maple was born. In 2014, Lemay returned full-time to the Northeast Kingdom to run her business, which had grown to include a café serving breakfast and lunch. “People kept saying it was such a brave move, but it never felt that way to me,” she says. “It just felt like the next opportunity.” We recently caught up with Lemay for a quick Q&A during her morning shift in the café kitchen. —*Ian Aldrich*

Tell us a little bit about your family's connection to sugaring.

My grandfather owned the land I have now, and he had carefully logged it to preserve the sugarbush. He had a small sugarhouse, and we'd head up there on Easter. He'd hang a ham over the evaporator. The steam would cook the ham, and the drippings would keep a check on the foam from the boiling sap. [Laughs.] Everybody got something out of it. There was ham and maple syrup, and we got to eat both!

What was it like for you to return to the Northeast Kingdom and start fresh?

For me, it was easy to come home. Many of the families I knew as a kid were still here. I didn't have a problem reintegrating into the community. The things I miss are easy things, like a good Indian restaurant or good Thai food—they're not essential to life. [Now] I see my family all the time. I work with my husband. Both my parents still work for me, my Aunt Bonnie cooks in the kitchen, my Aunt Fran has her art on the walls, and my Aunt Hylie makes the bread I sell. There is no struggle to find a work-life balance like I had in the corporate world. It's ingrained in everyday living.

I love it when I know I'm going to work outside and spend a day in the sugarbush. The smells, what I'm seeing, working the land—it's hard not to appreciate what I'm doing.

Did you find it hard to break into the business of sugaring?

I know I'm not what people expect. For starters, I'm a female and younger than what most people imagine a sugarer being like. People sometimes come in here and see my parents and just think they own the place. *No, there's actually an April at April's Maple!*

But the sugaring community is incredibly welcoming. If you're new to the business, they'll talk to you about what they do. They probably won't share their family secrets, but it's not a community that shuts the door on other sugar makers.



For so many, maple represents something beyond just a sweet treat. Why is that?

We're working the land. That's part of it and it's an easy thing to romanticize. But as sugarers, we're also dealing with a product Mother Nature has already basically made. All we do is collect sap and remove the water to turn it into something that makes people feel good. I think people find that kind of thing magical.

It sounds like you do, too.

I'm so lucky to be in such a happy business. People who come in here generally have a smile on their face. It's a great place to be. As we say, have a sweet day. And we really do.

April's Maple is open 10 a.m.–5 p.m. weekdays (closed Tuesdays) and 10 a.m.–3 p.m. weekends. 6507 Route 114, Canaan. aprilsmapple.com

Destinations

Offering high-flying action in April, the Bear Mountain Mogul Challenge is a favorite spring event at Killington.



Spring Flings

Winter may be over, but there's still plenty of skiing and slopeside spectacle at resorts across the Green Mountain State.

DAVE YOUNG/KILLINGTON RESORT

Vermonters are crazy for skiing in any kind of weather and any kind of temperature, but early spring presents a special delight. The days are longer and the temperatures have climbed—and quite advantageously, this time of year also brings a bonanza of freshly fallen snow for many of Vermont's resorts. **Stowe Mountain Resort**, for example, receives a third of its annual 300 inches of snow accumulation in March.

The best part of a blue-sky 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; others wear costumes. Concerts and barbecues abound.

At **Sugarbush Resort** in Warren, there's live reggae music, hula dancing, and drink specials during Island Weekend (March 21–22), while visitors to **Jay Peak Resort** in Jay can warm up for another highly anticipated Vermont season—summer!—at the annual Pump House Beach Party (April 18).

For the frugally minded, spring skiing also adds another important dimension: affordability. Across the Green Mountain State, resorts offer discounted single-day and unlimited late-season passes. The "Spring Loaded" deal at **Bromley Mountain** in Peru, for example, is a four-day ticket for just \$119, while the Nor'Beaster is a special end-of-the-year pass that covers skiing at **Killington** and **Pico Mountain** from mid-March until the close of the season

(buy it for \$229 before March 13, or \$249 after). And at **Mad River Glen** in Waitsfield, the famous "April Fool's Day Special" awards skiers half off the regular day rate on April 1 if they "act foolish" in the ticket office.

No ski event marks the gleeful transition into spring more than pond skimming, and resorts across the state host their own competitions in this unusual sport. The most colorful of the bunch is found at the Jackson Gore Base Area of **Okemo Mountain Resort** in Ludlow, where the Slush Cup & Splash for Cash (April 4) rewards competitors for the biggest splash, best costume, and driest clothes. The big finale? Contestants trying to grab a bag of cash dangling over the pond.

Another early-spring competition worth checking out can be found at **Mount Snow** in West Dover, which hosts a cadre of mogul maniacs for the annual Bud Light Glade-iator (March 29). The mountain's

Ripcord trail, one of the steepest in the East, takes center stage as contestants bump and jump their way to the bottom.

Spring takes many forms at **Stratton Mountain Resort**. Ski or ride until your legs have called it quits at the 24 Hours of Stratton (March 21–22), the only time of the year the trails are open around the clock. The following Saturday (March 28), March di Gras gives spring a hearty embrace with a pond skimming competition, a block party, live music, and an ice bar.

Finally, no resort captures Vermont's skiing and riding scene like **Killington**. Located 11 miles east of Rutland, the "Beast of the East" is the



Staying dry and looking fly is the key to pond skimming, part of the March di Gras celebration at Stratton.

acknowledged king of the hill in New England. It thrives on superlatives (most trails, most lifts, most snowmaking equipment, longest season)—and this November, just as it has for the past four years, the resort will host the Audi FIS Ski World Cup.

Come spring, Killington posts a bevy of fun events. The season gets off to a hoppy start with the Vermont Brewers Festival (March 21), in which visitors congregate around fire pits at the base area of Bear Mountain Lodge and sample the state's finest beers. Two weeks later, the Bear Mountain Mogul Challenge (April 4) lets amateur bumpers vie for the coveted winner's cup. The scene is a bit chiller at the annual Dazed & Defrosted celebration (April 11), which features live music, demos, and milder moguls.

For more information on Vermont's spring ski season, go to skivermont.com. —*Ian Aldrich*

Designed by Thomas Silloway in 1857, the Vermont State House boasts a gold-leaf dome topped by a statue of Ceres, Roman goddess of agriculture.



Adventure Capital

Spend time in Montpelier, and you'll find that this seat of state government is also a hub for history and culture, great food, and eclectic diversions.

As idiosyncratic as the state it represents, Montpelier is the smallest capital in the nation, a mix of farmers, politicians, back-to-the-landers, musicians, artists, and urban escapees. This city of about 7,500 exudes a feeling of small-town intimacy backed by a cultural richness that you'd expect from a much larger place, all flavored with the essential Vermont ingredients of independence, steadfastness, and creativity.

In Montpelier's downtown—the heart of the largest urban historic district in Vermont—you'll find a well-preserved collection of buildings from mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, many of which are now home to thriving local retail shops and eateries. The Vermont College of Fine Arts and the New England Culinary Institute add their own flavor to the mix, while green spaces such as Hubbard Park, North Branch River Park, and Mill Pond Park offer the chance to connect with nature.

Visitors will find that the golden dome of the State House is never far from sight. A Greek Revival beauty built of granite from nearby Barre, the capitol has a vast lawn that hosts everything from joggers and dog walkers to protests and concerts. Inside, Representatives Hall is an open stage where visitors can watch history being made, and not for the first time: Vermont's Constitution prohibited slavery before the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished that institution nationally. It's the only state to not require a balanced budget, but it has achieved that anyway, since 1991. And in 2000, it became the first state to sign civil union into law.

The Setting

Nature is magnificently represented in this central Vermont town, which is nestled in the foothills of the Green Mountains. The Winooski River churns alongside U.S. Route 2 at the city's southern border, a block from



TOP: Legislators convene in Representatives Hall at the State House. On Wednesdays during the legislative session, this elegant chamber hosts the Farmers Night Concert Series. ABOVE: A size chart at the locally owned Capitol Grounds Café winks at Montpelier's political character.



the State House. Its tributary, North Branch, meanders through the town center, gliding under State Street. From there you can reach the countryside in about five minutes—whether that means winter cross-country skiing at **Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks** in East Montpelier, or spring hiking in **Hubbard Park**, which offers a great view from a stone tower perched at its highest point.

ABOVE: Montpelier's historic downtown is largely made up of brick buildings built after fires struck the area in 1875.
RIGHT: The Capital City Farmers' Market offers everything from organic grass-fed beef to artisanal popsicles.

Eating Out

In this cradle of farm-to-table dining, the words *local*, *sustainable*, and *artisanal* crop up on menus all over town. Plus, the front-and-center presence of the **New England Culinary Institute** means that Montpelier is awash in seasoned cooking pros, and the institute's two training grounds—**NECI on Main** and **La Brioche Bakery**—showcase future chefs' talents. (Among those who honed their chops here: Alton Brown, who graduated from NECI in 1997.)

If you tend to judge a place by its cafés, Montpelier's does the town proud. **Capitol Grounds** serves up perfect cups of its own house-roasted coffee and also is a favorite stop for breakfast and lunch (the garlic-olive cream cheese is highly addictive for garlic lovers). **The Skinny Pancake** is famed for its crepes (hence the name), which make up a tasty chunk of the brunch, lunch, dinner, and dessert offerings.

Restaurants run the spectrum from urban pub grub at the ever-popular **Three Penny Taproom** to upscale



locally sourced/organic cooking at **Kismet**. And, yes, the pizza at **Positive Pie** is *positively* delicious (hand-tossed thin crust), though you can also get hearty salads, starters, sandwiches, burgers, and pasta dishes there.

Shopping & Culture

It's only appropriate that the state's capital should have one of its oldest and most eclectic farmers' markets. On Saturdays from May through October, the **Capital City Farmers' Market** draws more than 50 vendors who sell some of the region's finest produce, meats, cheeses, baked goods, and crafts. Live music creates a festive atmosphere, and the market attracts a colorful collection of locals as well as tourists.



A handful of longtime retailers keep company with newer locally owned businesses on Main and State streets: **Bear Pond Books** has been an indie institution since 1973; **Capitol Stationers** since 1950; and **The Drawing Board** since 1975. Main Street is also where you'll find the craft gallery **Artisans Hand**, a showcase for the work of 120 Vermont crafters. On Langdon Street, **Buch Spieler Records** has been buying and selling music in Montpelier since 1973.

Speaking of local history, you can get lost in time at the small but engaging **Vermont History Museum**, with its glimpses of World War II, heartbreakingly vignettes from the Revolutionary War, and a retro look at the ski industry. Meanwhile, the **State House** is both a living museum and a modern-day forum that's open to the public. "The People's House" is just that—so much so



MATTHEW JOHNSON/VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY (MUSEUM); COREY HENDRICKSON (SHOP); HEATHER ATWELL (TOWER); COURTESY OF THE INN AT MONTPELIER (INN)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Musical rare gems and collectibles fill Buch Spieler Records; a pair of gracious residences make up the Inn at Montpelier, whose guests have included Martha Stewart and Yo-Yo Ma; views of Montpelier await at the century-old 54-foot-tall observation tower at Hubbard Park; the Vermont History Museum is home to relics and specimens including the state's last known cougar, killed in Barnard in 1881.

that townsfolk rent out rooms to legislators, effectively removing the separation between city and state.

Another way to spend a rainy afternoon is at one of Montpelier's two (yes, two) independent theaters. **Capitol Showplace** runs big-studio and blockbuster movies, while **The Savoy** screens art-house fare in a historic Main Street building.

Lodging

Opened in 1988, the **Inn at Montpelier** spans two Main Street buildings with almost 400 years of history between them. The 19 guest rooms range from cozy standard rooms (queen beds) to deluxe rooms (queen or king), the biggest of which comes with a large private deck overlooking the grounds.

Just three miles from downtown Montpelier is **High Hill Inn**, a serene getaway set amid almost 50 acres of meadows and forest. From the inn's high vantage point, the uninterrupted views extend in every direction; in the immediate landscape, horses, chickens, and goats add a lively note. Breakfast here is not to be missed: fresh-cooked, organic, and as locally sourced as possible.

—Heather Atwell and Annie Graves



Vermont's hilly, wooded terrain is custom-made for mountain biking, a sport whose popularity in the Green Mountain State has surged in recent years.

On the Right Track

Five reasons to seek out Vermont's lesser-known mountain bike trails.

Over the past two decades, Vermont has become a hub for serious mountain bikers. A lot of the attention has gone to Kingdom Trails in East Burke, a 100-mile-plus network of single-track that's frequently praised as one of the best in the country. But this overlooks what's available in other parts of the state. Vermont has more than a thousand miles of trails, and in Chittenden County alone there's over 125 miles of world-class single-track that's open to the public.

"Each of these networks has its own personality," says Tom Stuessy, executive director of the Vermont Mountain Bike Association, a Burlington-based group that helps the state's 29 local riding chapters promote their networks. "And because Vermont is such a small state, the next great network of trails is never that far away."

So if you're looking to strike out into new territory this year, read on for some of Stuessy's expert recommendations.

Slate Valley Trails

Poultney

One of the newest and largest trail networks in Vermont, Slate Valley offers more than 30 miles of riding—from gravel roads to narrower single-track. The appeal here is impressively broad, says Stuessy, as the extensive collection of trails includes both flatter, beginner terrain to rigorous, more technical hills and routes. “It’s big and varied with something for everyone,” he says.

North Branch Park

Montpelier

This expanding network of roughly six miles runs through a small portion of a larger 200-acre natural preserve in downtown Montpelier. The trails are smooth and relatively easy, but there are a few challenging climbs, too. Riders can continue on to the North Branch Nature Center or hook into the East Montpelier network. This spring will see the addition of two more miles to the North Branch ride. “It’s just a super-accessible set of trails,” says Stuessy. “And the trails are bermed up, so you can really fly if you want to.”

Memphremagog Trails

Newport

This network is already home to more than 20 miles of riding, and plans are under way to add another 7 to 10 miles of single-track in the next two years. The existing configuration slices through the hills and forests on both sides of Darling Hill Road. Most of the network is rated easy to moderate.

Chamberlin Hill

Richmond

Part of the expanding network of trails in Chittenden County, the Richmond riding scene has just exploded in recent years, according to Stuessy. Mountain biking throughout this region is exceptional, especially for technical riders who pack a passion for navigating rocky, rooty terrain. The course design at Chamberlin Hill is especially impressive: “The bridge work is pretty unique,” Stuessy says, “and because the single-track



FROM TOP: A wooden bridge provides a nifty lift over a boulder at Chamberlin Hill, which appeals to bikers who relish challenging terrain; riding the Trapp Family Lodge's scenic trails, which link up with the excellent Waitsfield-Montgomery-Stowe trail system.

is built for beginners and advanced riders, everyone can ride together.”

Waitsfield-Montgomery-Stowe Corridor

Stuessy calls this network, which runs upward of 100 miles, one of the state’s best. There’s technical terrain on Waterbury’s Perry Hill and a “sweet” downhill across town at Little River State Park. Miles of beginner and advanced trails course through Waitsfield, while more than 50 miles of single-track lace through Stowe. “You can camp out for four or five days and just ride until you’re absolutely exhausted,” Stuessy says.

For more on these trails and other mountain biking networks, go to vmba.org. —*Ian Aldrich*

Out & About

We round up some springtime events that are worth the drive.



Patty Yoder's "Bailey Has the Ball," part of a new exhibit at the Shelburne Museum

FEB. 1-AUG. 23

Shelburne

"Creature Comfort: Animals in the House"

This thought-provoking exhibit at the Shelburne Museum explores the ways that animals have inspired the design of household objects both beautiful and functional, from paintings to furniture and more. shelburnemuseum.org

Team members start atop Mount Mansfield and cover approximately 20 kilometers of tricky terrain before concluding at the von Trapp Lodge. mmsc-mmwa.org

MAR. 1

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 done right (and occasionally, spectacularly wrong). mountsnow.com

FEB. 23

Stowe

Stowe Derby

In one of the oldest and most challenging ski races in North America, participants ranging from recreational skiers to National Ski

MAR. 7

Manchester

Paul Krugman

As part of Northshire Bookstore's Off the Shelf series, Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman will talk about his latest book, *Arguing with Zombies*, with WAMC's Joe Donahue at Maple Street School. northshire.com

MAR. 7-8

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

MAR. 15

Brattleboro

Josephine County at Stone Church

A quartet of traditional musicians from diverse backgrounds deliver gorgeous

four-part harmonies, dynamic instrumentals, and an experience that takes listeners from the United States to Ireland and back. stonechurchvt.com

Peking Acrobats



MAR. 17-18

Burlington

Peking Acrobats

The Flynn hosts this world-famous Chinese acrobatics troupe, who defy gravity with their displays of contortion, flexibility, and control. Their remarkable feats are accompanied by a live orchestra of traditional Chinese instruments. flynncenter.org



Josephine County

MAR. 20-25**Montpelier***Green Mountain Film Festival*

Founded in 1997, this smorgasbord of cinema is dedicated to bringing the best movies from around the world to Vermont. Film buffs



and casual moviegoers alike are sure to find something appealing among the slate of features, documentaries, shorts, and animated tales. gmffestival.org

MAR. 21-22**Statewide***Maple Open House Weekend*

New England's biggest statewide maple celebration can be found in the nation's top maple-producing state, where 130-plus sugarhouses will welcome some 40,000 visitors over the weekend. vermontmaple.org

**MAR. 21-22****Stratton Mountain***24 Hours of Stratton*

The ski lifts at Stratton Mountain operate all night as hundreds of skiers and riders (6- to 12-person teams) work together to rack up runs as a fund-raiser for the Stratton Foundation, supporting programs providing food, housing, and heat to underprivileged families. Live music and games help keep the party going until the finish-line frenzy at noon on Sunday. stratton.com

MAR. 28-29**Rutland***Festival of Quilts*

Maple Leaf Quilters brings its biennial show to the College of St. Joe's, with an array of antique quilts, vibrant modern creations, demonstrations, vendors, a quilt raffle, and more. mapleleafquilters.org

APR. 4**Warren**

Pond Skim at Lincoln Peak
Break out your best costumes and take a plunge across a 120-foot pond at the base of Lincoln Peak—or just come and watch the fun—at one of the oldest pond-skimming events in the nation. sugarbush.com

*Baby Farm Animal Celebration at Billings Farm & Museum***APR. 4-5****Essex Junction***Vermont Home & Garden Expo*

If you're considering building or remodeling, landscaping or gardening, come to Champlain Valley Expo and seek advice from the experts, while discovering the latest innovations in products and services. homebuildersvt.com

APR. 10**Norwich***Montshire Unleashed!*

Tonight's your last chance to check out the Montshire Museum of Science's winter series for adults, which features food, drinks, and music as well as ample opportunities to get in touch with your inner kid. montshire.org

APR. 10-11**Woodstock***Baby Farm Animal Celebration*

Visit Billings Farm this weekend and you can take a wagon ride, learn about heirloom seeds, and tour the 1890 farmhouse—but save plenty of time for the lambs,

chicks, and calves who are the stars of the show. billingsfarm.org

APR. 25**St. Johnsbury***World Maple Festival*

Celebrate the history and heritage of the maple industry with a pancake breakfast, road race, street-festival live entertainment, and the crowning of the world maple champion, plus more than 100 vendors. worldmaplefestival.org

**MAY 2****Statewide***Green Up Day*

This uniquely Vermont tradition marks its 50th year as volunteers across the Green Mountain State collect as much as 500 tons of trash from public spaces and roads. greenupvermont.org



Close to Home

Artist Peter Huntoon is constantly finding ways to see his native Vermont with fresh eyes.

Looking out a window at his home studio in Middletown Springs, Peter Huntoon describes to me over the phone what he sees. It's a vista ready for any artist's paintbrush: undulating hills, an old stone wall, winter-bare birch trees. "This is kind of like my paradise on a hill," he says of the property where he has lived for more than 20 years. "You *really* have to come here."

Huntoon's enthusiasm for the Vermont landscape is infectious, and it extends far beyond the boundaries of his own property. Since 2013 he has devoted most of his creative effort to "A Day in Vermont," an email

newsletter—really, a love letter to his home state—that features a brand-new painting every week as well as Huntoon's memories, favorite quotes, and ruminations ("Here in Vermont we like to roll along at our own pace. ... By moving slowly we get to see just a little bit more"). The paintings depict snowy slopes and downtown sidewalks, tractors and churches, kids at play and wild turkeys strutting—and Huntoon puts in a lot of miles to find those subjects.

"Part of what turns me on as an artist is seeing something I haven't seen before, exploring new towns like Grand Isle or other places I don't roll through every

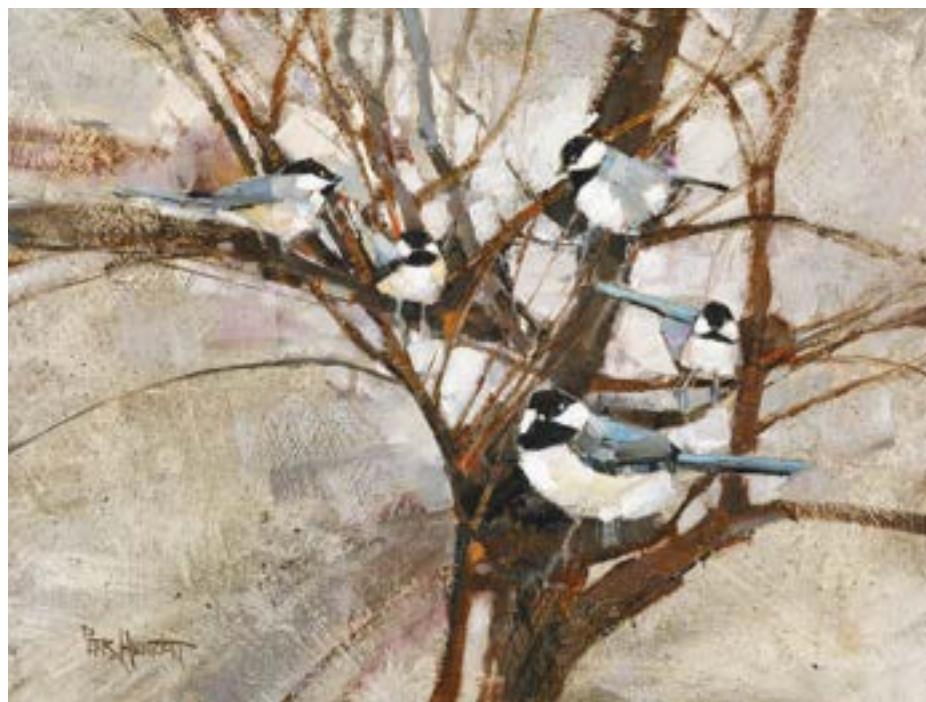
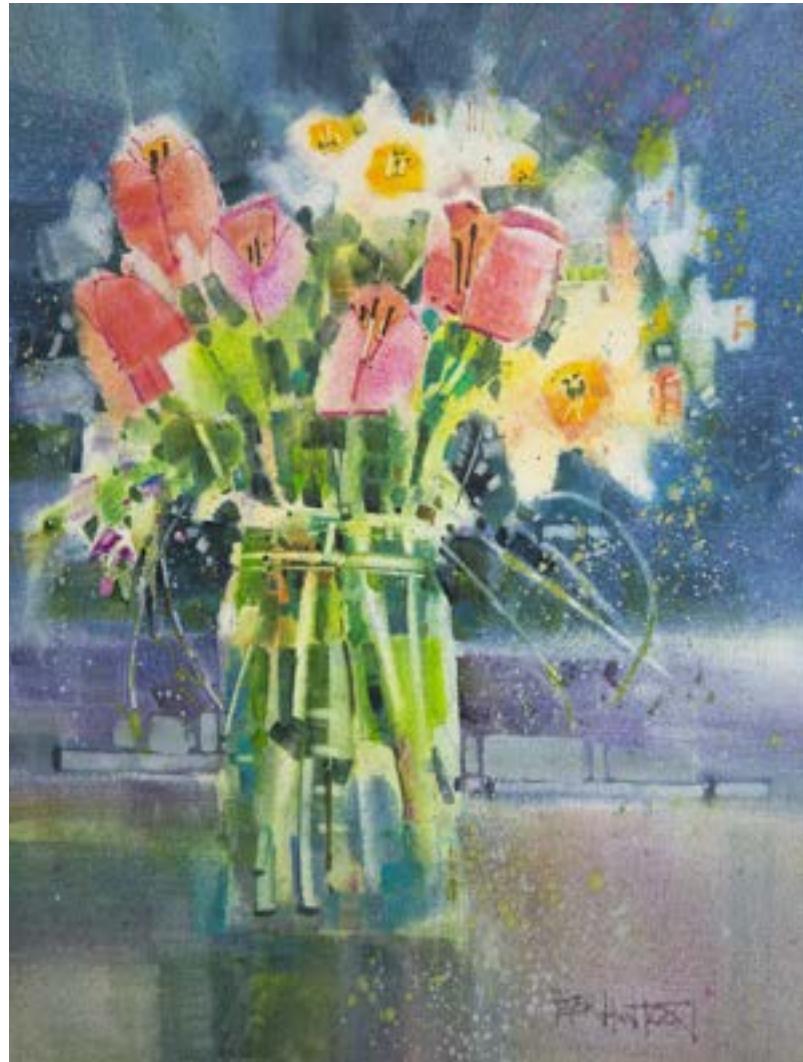
day," says Huntoon, who grew up in Rutland and later lived in Poultney. "I went to the Northeast Kingdom for seven days and came back with 10 paintings. I was on fire, painting from sunrise to sunset—I think I took two showers the whole time I was up there!"

Another reason he roams widely: "I'm finding the less obvious things to be more appealing these days," he says. "I've done the covered bridges, I've done the barns and farms that are picturesque at first glance, but more and more as I grow as an artist, I'm digging for even more authentic subject matter. Deeper, more meaningful—at least to me."

In doing so, Huntoon has struck a chord with plenty of others, too. "A Day in Vermont" has more than 10,000 subscribers, and all of the 350-plus paintings he's made along the way have sold via a weekly auction on his website. Ironically, the project has been such a boon, financially and creatively, that Huntoon has put it on temporary hiatus in order to clear out his last remaining commissions, which he no longer plans to accept.

It's an accomplishment that may once have seemed far-fetched to Huntoon, who took the long way round to finding his life's work. Though he inherited artistic ability from his father, Bernard—"We'd play a game where I'd draw a random squiggle on a piece of paper and hand it to him, and he'd turn it into this amazing drawing"—he didn't realize that it was particularly special. "I assumed that everybody could do that!"

Things started changing when Huntoon was about



APRIL'S FLOWERS

"This vibrant spring bouquet of tulips and narcissus came from my friend April's garden. I thought of this floral arrangement as a group of good friends huddled together, engaged in effervescent conversation."

BLACK CAP CAUCUS

Though he's not a political artist, Huntoon sometimes alludes to current events in his work. Describing these black-capped chickadees, which he painted around the time of the 2016 presidential caucuses, he says, "Chickadees appear rather considerate and agreeable. They just don't seem to have much interest at all in squabbling. How refreshing."

EARLY SPRING FARM (PREVIOUS PAGE)

This scene off Route 22A in Benson represents one of the "little magical spots" that Huntoon often happens upon while driving around the state. "What makes them magical varies—it could be the light, it could be the subject," he says. "This particular area is just full of old farms and hilly nooks and crannies. I explored that for a few weeks, and the painting came out of that trip."



30 and going through a divorce. "It was then that I said, *What am I going to do from here on?* And I could have taken a left, but I took a right, and it put me on the right track with art.

"I remember thinking that I was too old, that so many other people had already been doing it for so long. But on the other hand, I thought: *I'm going to be 50 years old whether I start or not, so I might as well start and see what happens.* So fast-forward 27 years later, and I'm making a full-time living doing exactly what I love."

Even better, Huntoon has a partner who shares in his passion: Mareva Millarc, an abstract painter. They met on Match.com more than a decade ago, and right from the beginning the connection was art. It still is, says Huntoon, who put together a joint exhibit with Millarc in 2014. "Art just consumes so much of our attention, anybody else would be bored with us," he jokes. "But her inspiration and subject matter come from own head more than anywhere else. I need a jumping-off point in nature. Nature is what drives me."

And by "nature," by extension he means the Green

WESTON

In addition to being an arresting combination of colors and shapes, this scene reminds Huntoon of another of his pastimes. "A principle of design is repetition with variety," he says. "I play a little music on the side, and to me, those blue slashes across the road—each one having a similarity or relationship to the other, all blue but yet all different—they're like musical notes dancing up through the road."

Mountain State, his constant muse. Asked when he realized that Vermont would always be the place for him, Huntoon laughs. Before becoming a full-time painter in

2012, he worked for Sto Corp. in Rutland for 24 years. "That job gave me the opportunity to travel to close to all 50 states," he says. "Toward the end, I just couldn't do it anymore. Any time I was on the Northway to go to Albany to catch a flight, it was like that scene in *Planes, Trains, and Automobiles* where the guy yells, 'You're going the wrong way!'

"And I was. I wanted to be here."

To see more of Peter Huntoon's work or to subscribe to "A Day in Vermont," go to peterhuntoon.com.



SWEET SCIENCE

When Huntoon saw this sugarhouse in Ira, “it was just getting dark and the glow was radiating out into the March night, and I pulled over. I didn’t know those people, but we were good friends by the time I finished taking photos!” he says. “It was the kind of thing that propels me to my studio to get right to work. Because if I can’t paint [on scene], I want to paint what I *just* saw—like fresh-baked bread—because I’ve still got that feeling.”

SPRING TWILIGHT

“It was dusk when I was driving through East Poultney, and this painting presented itself to me ready-made. I exaggerated some of the colors, certainly, but in that moment I saw it all at once. When I can see it in my head before I even pick up a brush, those can be pretty strong paintings.”



MISTY MORNING

"Sometimes a cool damp day yields the best paintings," Huntoon says of this scene, which he made on location at Chittenden Reservoir near the Lefferts Pond area.

"The rich colors of nature seem to saturate and glow from within."

CASTS OF THOUSANDS

"There's a little pond in the middle of Rutland called Combination Pond, and I grew up right around there and would fish it all the time. Every year in spring they'd have a fishing derby and would stock it with trout, and all the parents and kids would come. Over the years I've done several paintings of the event. In this one, there are several individual stories going on—like the dog sniffing the tackle box—and I grew up with all of that. For me, that's a personal memory of fishing with my father."



The Horse That Changed America

UVM's Morgan Horse Farm shows how its namesake breed is far more than a storybook legend.



There are any number of ways to wind up at the magisterial white barn at the University of Vermont's Morgan Horse Farm in Weybridge, Vermont, a 127-acre property tucked between the Green Mountains and the silver trough of Lake Champlain.

If you're a horse, chances are you were born here, one of many offspring in the longest continuous breeding program of Morgans in the nation, one devoted to perpetuating the traits of a horse that changed America. You are the descendant of a not-so-promising colt that begat a world-famous breed.

If you're 25-year-old equine specialist Kim Demars, you were first a kid who longed for a Morgan horse, and now, thanks to mysterious providence, you're helping ensure the future of the breed.

But let's say you're one of the farm's 10,000 annual visitors, which means you followed increasingly remote roads before finally turning up Battell Drive, where a pair of weeping willows drape like horses' manes, to reach this historic farm.

So you've parked your car on this sunny morning, and now you're strolling toward this stately barn, with its fancy cornices and cupola, at the end of a sprawling lawn. It's serene and silent. You may be wondering, Is anyone here? but inside it's a veritable equine hive: home to 40 horses, more if you count the ones *in vitro*.

Wander into the vestibule, festooned with ribbons and photographs of dark-eyed champions, and you'll meet the person staffing the gift shop. Just a hay bale's toss away from the cash register there's a long hall of box stalls, each with a 1,000-pound Morgan watching your approach. Down one floor you'll find more stalls, and tucked into a corner there's a chestnut mare with bright white socks standing in the crossties as an apprentice brushes her flanks, preparing her to meet some visitors.

Beyond is the indoor riding area, where a horse the color of molasses trots in earnest circles around a woman with her blond hair pulled into a ballerina bun—this is Demars, the farm manager. Within the hour they'll clear out so a stallion can arrive and occupy the area for breeding purposes. His material will be examined and packed into containers in a nearby laboratory: It's a side room no bigger than a pantry, but it contains everything

necessary to perpetuate the genetics of a horse that never lived in a barn as grand as this one.

The Morgan breed originated with Justin Morgan, a Vermont music teacher who in 1792 fortuitously accepted a debt repayment in the form of two horses, a stallion and a colt. In the days when almost everyone and everything moved around on or behind a horse, Morgan's colt, named Figure, became legendary.

"This is the story of a common, ordinary little work horse who turned out to be the father of a famous family of American horses" is how Marguerite Henry begins *Justin Morgan Had a Horse*, the book published in 1945

that won a Newberry Honor award and a lot of youngsters' hearts. Though small in size—reportedly 14 hands and about 900 pounds—Figure accomplished astonishing feats. He cleared timber and hauled stones to establish fields and pastures throughout north-central Vermont. In 1795, he raced against two horses in Brookfield—one after the other—and won both

times. Almost a decade later, he won a pulling contest in St. Johnsbury. Then, in July 1817, Figure bore President Monroe through the streets of Montpelier—leaving little doubt as to why the breed later became Vermont's state animal, as "it could outrun, outdraw, and outtrot any other horse."

Justin Morgan kept his "rugged little stallion" for only a handful of years; he advertised his breeding services, leased him out as a workhorse, and then sold him. Figure went on to have 11 owners during his lifetime. Even so, the horse came to be known by Morgan's name, as did the breed, secured by Figure's accomplished progeny.

In a lithograph portrait of Justin Morgan, his eyeglasses perch on his forehead and his face registers a look of sober surprise, as if he'd just heard, *Hey, mister, long after you're gone, people will utter your name daily because it will become the moniker for a breed that will carry thousands of men through the coming wars, haul families out West, and even set a record as the fastest trotter in the world.*

And all because one summer day Justin Morgan went out to collect a debt and brought that little colt home.



The grand 1878 barn built by the founder of the Morgan horse farm, Colonel Joseph Battell. In front of the barn is a statue representing the breed's sire, Figure.



Scenes from the farm, which the University of Vermont acquired from the federal government in 1951. At far left is farm manager Kim Demars with a broodmare named Havana.

Two hundred years later, Kim Demars's parents brought a little filly home, a Morgan named Tanner. Tanner was 4 and feisty; Kim was 7. They matured together. Then Kim left for college, and Tanner went to another farm. So Kim assumed that the Morgan portion of her life was over. But then one day after college, as she was working as a receptionist, the director of the Morgan Horse Farm, Steve Davis, phoned asking her to stop by to chat about a job opportunity. *Did that just happen?* she asked herself afterward. Soon, she was learning to breed Morgans at a 19th-century farm founded by Colonel Joseph Battell, a man smitten with the breed.

What horseman wouldn't be? Figure's descendants had accompanied prospectors to California for the Gold Rush in 1848 and hustled mail across the dangerous West with the Pony Express. They had served both a Confederate general and a Union general during the Civil War, and after the war they were chosen for the U.S. Cavalry.

They inspired Battell, a bachelor philanthropist from Middlebury, to commission this handsome facility to house some of the finest Morgans; he also established the Morgan Horse Registry. When Battell died in 1907 he left his barn and the Morgan-stocked property to the U.S. government, which turned it into a cavalry remount station as Battell had envisioned.

"With a government breeding establishment managed by honest competent men who are practical

horsemen and who have made the subject of heredity careful study," Battell wrote, "...when one set of men drop out, others will be found who will take their places and continue to carry out the original idea, generation after generation."

In 2013, a few months into her new job, Demars bred her first mare. Donning a long plastic glove, she administered a whisker-thin cylinder containing genetics of a carefully chosen stallion into the mare, thereby accomplishing the risk-free equivalent of a romp in the hay. Then she waited as first-cut hay was baled and stacked away ... as zinnias were planted and clapboards painted ... as busloads of visitors toured the premises ... as geldings trotted in circles, preparing for horse shows ... as second-cut hay was baled and stored ... as the older foals were weaned ... as water buckets froze and Battell Drive had to be salted and plowed. Then finally, 330 days later, the mare gave birth.

In that late April chill, Demars watched her first foal—a filly—blink her wide, sober eyes; unfold her jumble of slick limbs; then rock herself upright, and stand. Whereas many of the farm's Morgans have dark coats, this foal's was a bright chestnut, and above her hind hoofs were white socks. Over the following months and years, visitors praised the distinct beauty of the filly, who was named Valencia. "She was true to the Morgan type," explains Margot Smithson, operations coordinator at the farm. "Her parts all fit together; her



face was so pretty, and as far as her temperament was concerned, she was as kind and sweet as they come.” In this way, Valencia embodied the qualities of her famous ancestor, Figure.

The U.S. government concluded its remount program in 1951—by which point automotive technology had made horses nearly obsolete—and subsequently the property was acquired by the University of Vermont. Over the years a series of “honest competent men” have continued the Morgan breeding program on the premises, financing the enterprise through selling horses, offering breeding services, and welcoming tourism.

More recently, women have assumed leadership roles at the farm. On this particular day, Demars and her apprentice, Hannah Bevilacqua, are working inside the lab. As Bevilacqua analyzes a stallion’s semen under the microscope, Demars assembles the containers for filling breeding dosages. For the past six weeks they’ve attended the deliveries of eight foals. As well, they’ve been breeding other mares to carry on the next generation.

In a nearby corral, the newest horses, some just a month old, nuzzle and bump against their mothers. The colts are alert and inquisitive, adhering to the mares

The world's oldest Morgan horse breeding herd continues with the colts and fillies who are born at the UVM farm every spring. Shown here is equine specialist Sarah Fauver with a colt named Avenger.

like mischievous shadows. One nibbles your bare elbow, and then sniffs opportunistically at your wrist. Then it reaches out to nip another foal, reminding you of backseat shenanigans between siblings.

Just before noon, a couple arrives at the farm. A month ago, they took the five-dollar tour that begins outside by the bronze statue of Figure. By the time they steered their car back down Battell Drive, they, too, were smitten with the breed. Today they are hoping to meet a special horse, one they can ride across the open fields of Vermont.

After greeting the couple in the barn’s vestibule, Demars leads them past the preserved skeleton of Black Hawk, a famous Morgan trotter, and the black-and-white photos of prize-winning government Morgans. She takes them down the corridor of Battell’s beautiful barn to the box stall at the end, where she stops, her hand on the latch of the stall. Then she slides open the door to reveal a 5-year-old mare with a shiny chestnut coat and pretty white socks standing patiently.

“This,” she says, “is Valencia.” —Julia Shipley

Buying the Store

How one Vermont hamlet saved the heart of its community—and got the world's best pancakes in the bargain.



This is the story of a small Vermont town that lost its general store—its primary marketplace and social heartbeat for 180 years—and how determined citizens came together to bring it back. Lest you find yourself immune to Capra-esque tales of underdog pluck, it's also the story of a crumb coffee cake that would put any New York deli to shame. And the pancakes! But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Back in 2012, after nearly two centuries of operation, the Barnard General Store did the unthinkable and closed down. The small town north

Childhood sweethearts
who first came to Vermont
for college, Jillian Bradley
and Joe Minerva brought a
combined two decades' worth
of grocery experience when
they took over running the
Barnard General Store in 2013.

of Woodstock, population 947, was left reeling. Longtime operators Carolyn DiCicco and Kim Furlong had been hit hard by an anemic post-Irene foliage season followed by what came to be known as "the winter that wasn't."

They had poured their lives into the venture, but in the end the numbers just didn't work. And so went Barnard's only local grocer, its community hub and ice cream counter, a fueling stop for snowmobilers on the



Corridor 12A trail, and a core piece of its identity.

Numbers were crunched, and a remedy was proposed: If a newly formed nonprofit, the Barnard Community Trust (BCT), in partnership with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, could raise half a million dollars, the store's landlord would be willing to sell the building at a loss. People donated what they could, some larger donors pulled through, and within a year the BCT owned the building, ready to lease it out to new operators.

Enter Joe Minerva and Jillian Bradley, fresh-faced 20-somethings already schooled in the small-town grocery business from stints at the local market in Richmond, near Burlington. Residents were thrilled to have their store back. And then Jillian revealed her secret superpower: In addition to the fact that she and Joe were willing to work 80-hour weeks, she's a legitimately gifted cook.

In Jillian's hands, staples like BLTs and home fries sing with zingy extras like sriracha mayo and sharp cheddar. The crumb coffee cake (her grandmother's recipe) is as tender as cotton candy, with a thick streusel topping perfumed with cinnamon and—what's that flavor?—love. On weekends there are buttermilk pancakes, served plain or with chocolate chips or blueberries or pumpkin-chai spice. Pancakes may not be a complicated endeavor, but Jillian has mastered the perfect ratio of leavening, buttermilk, and butter,

FROM LEFT: The Barnard General Store has stood at the crossroads of town life since 1832 but looked in danger of closing permanently just a few years ago; Jillian's scratch-made buttermilk pancakes are a popular option on weekend mornings.



so they reach ideal richness and height without a hint of bitterness.

Now the store is chugging along, riding the rhythms of slow and busy seasons. Jillian and Joe have trained a solid staff, which allows them to take the day off now and then. Summer people vacationing on Silver Lake, just across the street, boost the ice-cream-and-grocery business. On hot days, children with hair still damp from swimming line up at the window next to the soda fountain for a scoop of cookies-and-cream. Tourists pop in for a bottle of maple syrup with a side of rural authenticity; locals get quinoa, canned corned beef hash, and prepared meals of elevated comfort fare (as in apple-stuffed pork chops or coconut-pecan twice-baked sweet potatoes).

Jillian and Joe say they'll measure their progress in terms of decades. "Our number one goal wasn't to make as much money as possible," Joe says, and gestures to the entrance of their store. "It was to make sure that door never locks again." —Amy Traverso

Waxing Ingenious

A look at Bee's Wrap, a Vermont-born product that helps save leftovers and the planet at the same time.



For inventors throughout history, the home isn't necessarily just a place to raise a family—it can also be an incubator of inventions, too. From an improved ironing board (Sarah Boone, mother of eight) to the foot-pedal trash can (Lillian Gilbreth, mother of 12), we can thank enterprising parents for any number of innovations that smooth or improve daily life.

In the case of Vermont's Sarah Kaeck, inspiration grew out of the fact that she and her family—husband Brian and their three children—were making and growing a lot of their own food at their New Haven farm. Finding healthy, sustainable ways to store it was challenging, especially in the case of Kaeck's home-baked bread. How to keep loaves crusty and fresh without resorting to plastic bags?

Her big idea came after she learned about waxed fabric being used for food storage. It's a winningly simple concept: The wax coating keeps the air from getting in and prevents moisture from leaking out. It also allows the fabric to be molded to the food—no zip-top or twist ties necessary. Even better, it can yield a washable, reusable, biodegradable tool for everyday living, which is just what Kaeck set out to make.

From humble beginnings in 2011—which saw early prototypes made with the help of an electric skillet in the family kitchen—Kaeck continued to refine her food wraps, which she dubbed Bee's Wrap, and by 2015 had moved operations into a 4,000-square-foot workshop in Bristol. Then Bee's Wrap was featured in a 2017 BuzzFeed video, "This Eco Food Wrap Is Perfect for People Who Love the Environment," that went viral (96 million views and counting). And everything changed.

"We were completely sold out of everything," Kaeck recalled in a 2019 interview with *Vermont Business Magazine*. "So we had to ramp up. ... It was quite an experience. We pulled it off, which was a great feat for everyone who jumped on board. Everyone in the company and people in our community came to help. And so we've been building steadily off of that."

According to Charlotte Addison, the company's marketing and sales VP, Bee's Wrap is privately held



LEFT: Bee's Wrap founder Sarah Kaeck, 2017 winner of the U.S. Small Business Administration Award for Vermont Woman-Owned Business of the Year.

ABOVE: Bee's Wrap products are made with just four natural ingredients: sustainably harvested beeswax, organic jojoba oil, tree resin, and organic cotton that has been manufactured to the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS).

and does not release its sales or production figures. But the facts speak for themselves: From a core staff of four, it has grown to 40 employees. It recently moved into a Middlebury facility three times bigger than the old one in Bristol. Its products are now distributed in some 3,000 stores—from The Vermont Country Store to REI and Nordstrom—in more than 30 countries.

Part of the appeal of Bee's Wrap may stem from its distinctively playful patterns, all printed on organic cotton. Kaeck and textile designer Carey Stoudt work together to explore each new theme, typically inspired by nature and various ecosystems. From sea turtles and monarch butterflies to roly-poly bears, the patterns are specifically designed to engage kids, Addison says, noting that they're often sold in zoos, maritime aquariums, and botanical gardens around the country.

Which all points back to the biggest reason behind this Vermont success story: With so many people looking to cut down on plastic use, being good to the earth is just good business. With regular use and proper care, Bee's Wrap products typically last for about a year, "so if you used one of our sandwich wraps three times a week," says Addison, giving a quick example, "you'd offset more than 150 single-use plastic baggies."

"We also know that, according to National Geographic, nearly 80 million Americans used at least one roll of plastic wrap in the last six months," she adds. "We hear from customers all the time who haven't purchased or used plastic wrap in years!" —Jenn Johnson

Tucked Away In the Heart of the Green Mountains

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