

COMPASS

Your Guide to Tri-State Events

July 15, 2021

plus
SUMMER
DAY
TRIPS

PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN



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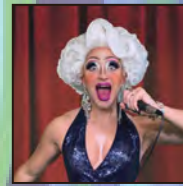
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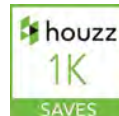




PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

Eggs, meats, milk and other pantry essentials, from area vendors, can be found at Mountain View Farm.

FARMSTANDS: PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

At Mountain View Farm, Everything You Need for a Fine Meal

On a pleasant June morning Lara Hafner and Maria Grusauskas entertained a visitor on the porch at Mountain View Farm on Route 7 in Falls Village, Conn.

The visitor was a little startled when Hafner mentioned that she and her husband, Patrick, bought the place in 2013. Had it really been that long?

The visitor sipped excellent coffee (the “Inspiration” blend from Coffee-Tea-Etc. in Goshen, Conn. — and available at Mountain View Farm) while Hafner explained that the farm tries to sell as many local food products as possible.

“If there’s a cool local product we want to know about it.”

Mountain View Farm works with Husky Meadows Farm in Norfolk, Conn., a CSA (community-supported agriculture) farm that provides vegetables to members, who can pick up their boxes at Mountain View — and whatever else they might need while they’re there: eggs (chicken and duck), meat, milk, cheese ...

Or cut flowers. Hafner and Grusauskas carefully moved a table full of flowers in pots, ready to go, out of the farmstand and into the sun.

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PHOTO BY PATRICK L. SULLIVAN

Customers can pay in cash or electronically at Mountain View Farm.

... Mountain View Farm

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Inside the small wooden stand there were all sorts of options. Goat cheese, a variety of sausages, duck legs, duck breasts, chicken, wild Alaskan salmon, halibut.

Local honey and maple syrup. Funky drinks. Raw milk.

And bacon, but it sells out quickly. Call ahead, check Mountain View's Facebook page or sign up for the farm's newsletter to stay ahead of the bacon supply.

Most of the animals were doing their thing some distance from the house and farmstand, but the visitor did get to see some chicks and ducklings.

Hafner said she had recently taken delivery of some 400 layer hens, and a similar number of meat birds was expected shortly.

It's worth bearing in mind that the farm animals live in pastures and eat bugs and grass and a bit of organic grain as a supplement. They do not live in cramped little pens and eat grain that's full of antibiotics.

The farmstand is located at 309 Route 7 North in Falls Village, just north of the junction between Undermountain Road and Route 7 (on the left if you're heading north). It is open from dawn to dusk and is self-serve.

When Mountain View first opened, there were some problems with theft. The Hafners installed security cameras, which have done the trick.

So next time you need to stock up on supplies, swing by Mountain View Farm and see what's on offer before heading to the grocery store.

The website is www.mountain-viewfarm.farm and the phone number is 860-491-0040.



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HOPS: DEBRA A. ALEKSINAS

A Hops Resurgence Is Brewing on Sharon Mountain

James Shepherd's path to becoming the state's main commercial grower of hops was paved with challenges. It has taken six years of trial and error, sweat and perseverance, to successfully reintroduce a crop that once had roots here but fell out of use due to Connecticut's fickle climate. The majority of hops are now grown in the Pacific Northwest.

"We didn't know what we were doing in the beginning," said Shepherd during an early June visit to his sprawling, 170-acre Smokedown Farm atop Sharon Mountain in Sharon, Conn.

The farm boasts a 9-acre hop yard started in 2015 with the hopes of providing hops — an essential ingredient that gives beer its flavor — to local craft breweries. Brewers select different varieties to appeal to different tastes.

Smokedown's hops, which are dried and pelletized, are sold to about 25 breweries across New England, including Kent Falls Brewing Company, Connecticut's first farm brewery, located on 50-acres in Kent, Conn.

"We go to James' farm every year and select the hops we want for beer that we make throughout the next year," said Barry Labendz of Kent Falls, who noted that he launched his brewing company in the same year Shepherd started his farm operation.

"Being a farm brewery, we found each other very quickly and easily," Labendz said.

"While we grow some of our own hops, we try very hard to work with the local supply chain — but I wouldn't use the hops if they weren't great," he said of Smokdown Farm's product. "We use 100% locally grown grain at this point, which, when we started, I never thought would be pos-

sible."

Smokedown, too, has been defying the odds.

'OUR THIRD LEGIT SEASON'

An early June heatwave had Shepherd, who is a physician and infectious disease specialist at Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, Conn., worried about his tender hops crop.

Wiping sweat from his brow, he explained that hops are one of the most complicated crops to grow.

"Grapes are easy by comparison," Shepherd noted as he inspected the bright green tendrils spiraling upward along a tall string.

Behind him is an other-worldly view of rows upon rows of what look like wood telephone poles growing out of the ground, connected to steel aircraft cables that hold up an aerial trellis from which 20,000 strings are suspended.

The hops grow skyward on cord made of coconut fiber imported from Sri Lanka. "I installed all 667 of the 22-foot poles in this field and put them in with that green tractor over there," Shepherd noted, motioning to his faithful John Deere, parked nearby. The poles are buried 4 feet deep.

The process of preparing the hop yard initially involved setting 9,000 perennial hops plants into the ground, and the installation of 5.5 miles of drip line to keep the water-loving crop viable.

"There is no book on hops in Connecticut," explained Shepherd, who is a board member of the Connecticut Farmland Trust.

"It is, in effect, a new crop," he said, even though it was grown locally a



PHOTOS BY DEBRA A. ALEKSINAS

Numerous barns on James Shepherd's Smokedown Farm are used for the hops operation, from storage and drying to pelletizing and packaging.



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... hops in Sharon

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century ago. This is our third legit season. The first three involved a lot of trial and error.”

He credits farm manager Ally Hughes, a fourth generation farmer from the Midwest who joined Smokedown in March 2018, for the operation’s success. “Ally has taken it to the next level. She has learned on a steep curve. This is really the fruits of her labor.”

And labor galore is what it takes to grow hops each season, beginning with spending three weeks in early spring tying lengths of cord throughout the hop yard. “We installed 20,000 strings this year,” said Shepherd, who noted that the hops operation has become a family affair, with help from his wife, Katherine, three sons, and his sons’ friends from college. Once planted, the hops must be trained to follow the cord skyward.

BREWFEST ON JULY 24

While the 2021 growing season is the Sharon hop yard’s sixth season, the venture has yet to operate in the green despite the fact that hops are a “high-value crop,” yielding \$10,000 per acre, according to Shepherd.

“It’s been slow starting an agriculture business and a marketing business. At first, customers are suspicious and worry that they won’t be able to rely on us to produce enough to meet their needs,” he explained. The past two years, though, were breakthrough years for the young farm, and a growing number of craft brewers hopped on board.

“Last year was the closest we came to making a profit. This year, if the crop is as good as it is looking now, we will take another step toward profitability,” said Shepherd, who estimated it could take two to three additional years to break even. “Really, my goal for this year, if not next year, is to sustain the salaries on the farm.”

Two upcoming events are planned at Smokedown to help market and promote the hops operation, said

Shepherd.

On July 24 a brewfest will include tours of the hop yard and samples of the hops. A percentage of the proceeds will benefit the Connecticut Farmland Trust. Details will be posted on www.beerfest.com. Then on Aug. 10, an industry party with exclusive entry to brewers and others in the industry is on tap.

The operation received a shot in the arm recently in the form of its first matching grant from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to invest in infrastructure. Shepherd plans to apply for an additional grant in 2022 to purchase equipment that would increase harvesting capacity.

Since 2019 Smokedown has been pelleting onsite.

SEVEN VARIETIES OF HOPS

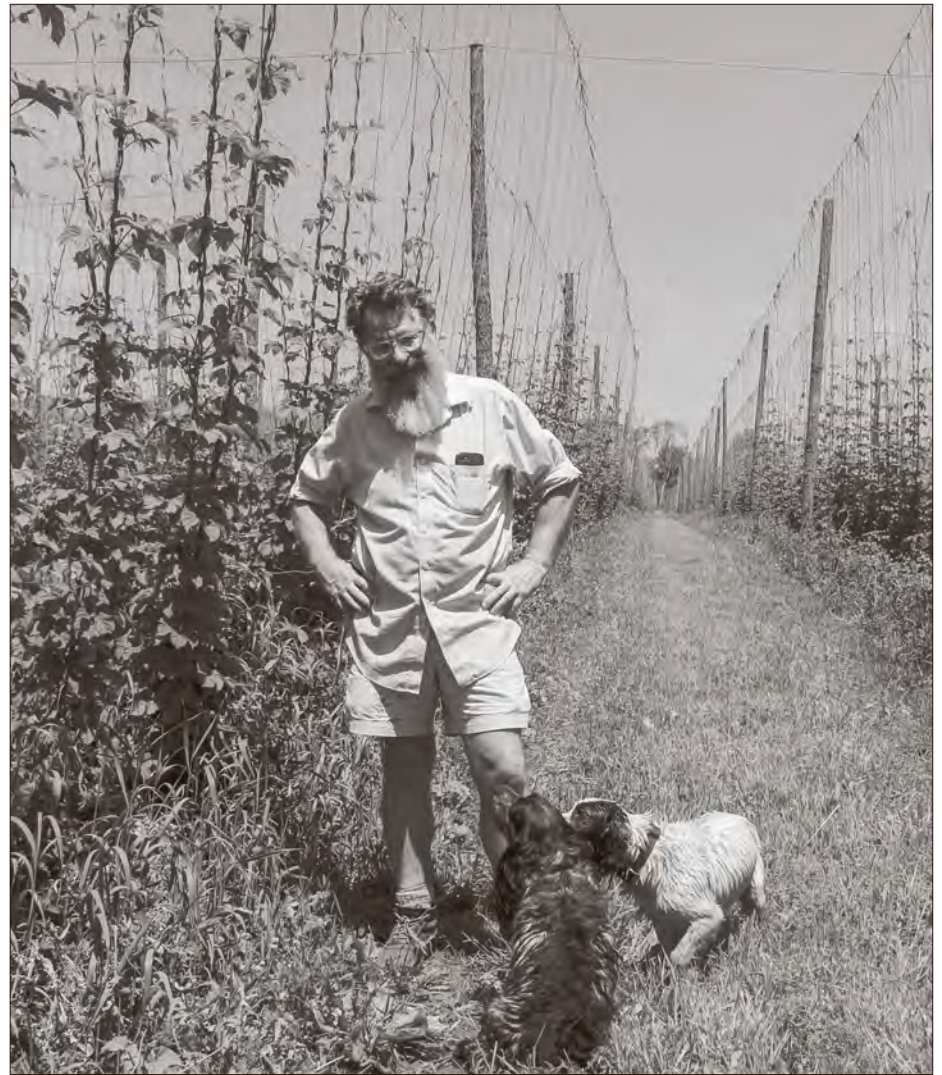
Hops, which are the female flower of the hop plant, are what give beer its flavor, bitterness and aroma. Smokedown grows seven varieties to appeal to a wide range of tastes, from standard varieties like the fruit-and-flower-forward Chinook and the fruity Cascade, to more pungent, spicy varieties like Challenger, which Shepherd described as having a “knock-your-socks-off aroma.”

All of the aromas, he said, “are quite distinct. We really believe that we can grow fascinating local Connecticut hops using these basic varieties.”

While those varieties are also sold by national growers, Shepherd said his hops have “very special characteristics” due to his farm’s location which offers adequate sunshine, plentiful rain and rich soil. “The topsoil here is 8 feet deep,” he noted.

When asked which flavor profile he personally prefers, the transplanted Englishman offers an honest assessment: “I like a nice, British pub pint of ale. That’s good enough for me.” No beer snob here.

Kent Falls’ Labendz has used both Chinook and Cascade in his brews,



James Shepherd inspected his hops crop at Smokedown Farm in Sharon during a heat wave in early June.

such as his Bird Post Pale Ale, as well as Challenger, “which was the first hop we worked with James on.” He explained that by collaborating with a local grower like Smokedown, “you can understand the process and the supply chain better. That’s where the personal taste profile comes in. Challenger, for instance, can become stinky and pungent if left to stay on the vine past peak harvest date, but sometimes you want that. So I can order one-third early, one-third late, and do trials to see what the flavor impact is.”

That ability to customize orders, said Labendz, is a luxury rarely available to small craft brewers. “With the larger hops suppliers in the Northwest, you have to be one of the top customers,” with orders of around \$50,000 per year, to get the best pick of the crop. “We would never be able to

do that ... it’s like we get the last kick in kickball.”

Additional hops varieties grown at Smokedown include Tahoma, Santiam, Teamaker and Centennial. In addition to Kent Falls Brewing Co., these varieties are sold to Connecticut craft breweries including Bad Dog Brewing Company in Torrington, Norbrook Brewery in Colebrook, Great Falls Brewing Company in North Canaan, Nod Hill Brewery in Ridgefield, Woodbury Brewery, Clocktown Brewing Company in Thomaston and Brewery Legitimus in New Hartford.

“Brewers are beginning to take an interest in locally produced beer ingredients like our hops,” said Hughes. “The consumer is driving the hype for locally grown ingredients and Smokedown will continue to provide uniquely New England characteristics to the hops.”



PHOTO BY KAITLIN LYLE

Riding along the Harlem Valley Rail Trail on a summer day, cyclists will soon experience the thrill of riding over the clear blue waters as they ride from the center of Millerton in the direction of Copake.

CYCLING: KAITLIN LYLE

Finding Balance by Getting on a Bike

One of the things I love best about this area is that there are few limits to where you can ride your bike.

I have been on a bike for more than a decade, and I've ridden everywhere from the Hotchkiss Library in Sharon, Conn., to all around Block Island, R.I., and along sections of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.

I seized any excuse to take my bike out on the ride, whether I was picking up milk downtown (balancing the gallon precariously on my handlebars), checking out a book from the library or riding to my former cashier job at the Sharon Farm Market.

When I was growing up in Sharon, my brother and I would ride our bikes down to the Sharon Pharmacy every

fall to check out the Halloween costumes on display.

As I got older, my mom started taking me out on the Rail Trail to explore the trails.

Come winter, spring, summer or fall, you could find us riding down the trail, over ice patches and fallen leaves and past bodies of water and local wildlife.

We would start at Coleman Station in North East, N.Y., at the Sharon border, and ride to the center of Millerton. We'd later challenge ourselves with a ride from Coleman Station to the Wassaic Metro-North Train Station, sometimes stopping on the way back for an ice cream at Fudgy's.

Continued on page 8

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... the thrill of the ride

continued from page 7

When the town of Amenia, N.Y., completed its long-awaited Trail to the Train project last fall, we immediately set our sights on the trail extension leading to the hamlet of Wassaic.

The newest section of the trail extending from Millerton to Copake has become a new favorite, one that I tend to ride in the early morning at least once a week.

After learning the hard way to always be alert, I no longer listen to music while I ride. I've come to prefer the break from technology and the chance it gives me to enjoy the sounds I catch on my ride.

A MAGIC CARPET RIDE OF SIGHTS, SOUNDS

No matter how many rides I've been on, the first mile tends to be the hardest as my legs slowly adjust to pedaling myself forward, but once I'm off, it's a sensation akin to flying.

It never fails to astound me how the local area — the same one I've lived and worked in for most of my life — bursts with life, sound, color and scents when summer arrives.

Sometimes I'll catch a whiff of honeysuckle or the smell of the lilac trees. I often hear the train whistle as it rides out of Wassaic.

I've seen everything on the trail from swans, turtles, geese and goslings to seasoned cyclists, dog walkers, teen skaters and even a man walking his LaMancha goat.

I've watched the communities I've grown to love demonstrate town spirit in unlikely places, from turning one of the pine trees on the Amenia section into an impromptu Christmas tree, to decorating rocks and placing them along the trail markers for Boston Corners and the train station.

SHE GOT BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

But, again, I'm someone who learned from experience, that there are clear rules to keep in mind when exploring the trails.

For example, when you approach a crosswalk, it's crucial for cyclists to

disembark and walk to the other side before getting back on the bike again. I should know: I was in a biking accident in July 2015, just three days after my 21st birthday. I was biking ahead of my mom on the Rail Trail heading to Amenia when I got to the crosswalk. The last thing I remember was getting ready to pedal to the other side when I was hit by a car coming down the road, the impact shattering my hip socket and fracturing my tibia.

Two surgeries and months of physical therapy later, I was back at home and then back at college for my last year. It would be months before I'd be back on the bike again.

FINDING THE BALANCE (AGAIN)

As luck would have it, there was a poster sale on my college campus the semester I went back to finish my degree. Among them was a simple black-and-white poster featuring a picture of a bike similar to the one I ride today. Above the bike, written half in print and half in cursive, was a quote from Albert Einstein: "Life is like riding a bicycle: to keep your balance, you must keep moving."

I initially bought the poster as a reminder of the moment when my life went off balance; I've kept it as a reminder of how I keep my balance.

SAFETY IS ESSENTIAL

Take it from someone who learned the hard way: Don't take these rules for granted. The trails are there for you to use, but they don't give you free reign over the road.

Respect the trails and your fellow cyclists, and always be aware of what's happening around you; all it takes is a moment to change your day.

And for those of you who didn't grow up on "Mick Harte Was Here" — Barbara Park's coming-of-age story about a young girl who loses her brother in a bike accident — don't disregard the helmet.

Enjoy the thrill of the ride; but don't get so caught up in it that you forget to be cautious.

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PHOTOS BY ALEXANDER WILBURN

Pom Shillingford is producing luscious blooms and selling them through her new company, English Garden Grown.

FLOWERS: ALEXANDER WILBURN

Capturing the Inimitable Glory of the English Garden

This May, approximately 385 years after Dutch noble houses, their scullery maids and footmen alike, rushed greedily to acquire the prized perennials, Salisbury, Conn., had its own little burst of tulip mania.

The 17th-century fever (and fall) for these flowers has been styled as a metaphor for every kind of asset bubble in the 20th and 21st century — from the subprime mortgage boom to the tizzy for cryptocurrency and NFTs.

But setting speculative markets aside, it's easy to see why the tulip and its painterly petals, independent

of economic theory, has captured the imagination for centuries, held dear by famed florists and Flemish Baroque masters like Jan Davidsz de Heem.

So it's no wonder that, when English gardener and Salisbury, Conn., resident Pom Shillingford started her first floral business venture, she made cut tulips the star opening offer.

English Garden Grown, Shillingford's locally cultivated, cut-stem service offers something unique for a growing number of subscribers: a perfect eight weeks of decor-ready

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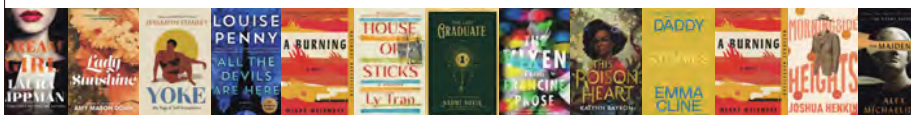
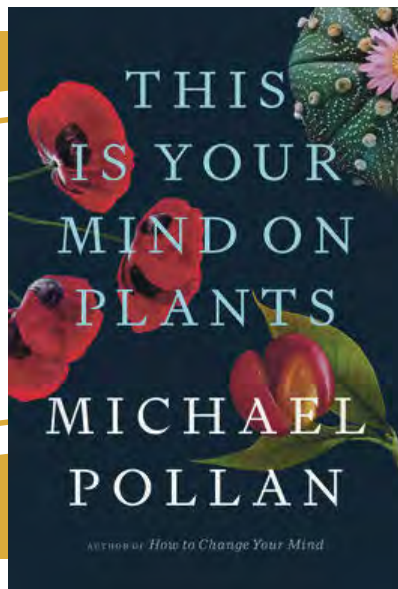


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... *English garden*

continued from page 9

flowers that look like you grew them yourself.

Shillingford teamed up with Matt Sheehan, a farmer who lives in Sharon, Conn., and Brooklyn, N.Y., and is the husband of “The Vintage Baker” cookbook author Jessie Sheehan. Together, they set out to provide subscribers with a month of weekly buckets of fresh tulips, followed by four weeks of peony buckets.

Fellow Brit (and the executive chef and co-owner of The White Hart Inn) Annie Wayte was so smitten with the blossoms that she sold English Garden Grown extras at Provisions at The White Hart in Salisbury.

Sitting in her pale petal-pink kitchen on Salisbury’s Main Street in early June, Shillingford, tall and slender, infectiously gregarious and effortlessly chic in summer chinos and flip-flops, traced all of her botanical inspiration to her childhood. She’s lived in Salisbury with her husband, David, and their three children since 2012, but grew up in Hampshire — yes, the same Southeast English countryside county that Jane Austen called home. Her mother was a gardener and her grandmothers were gardeners.

“I didn’t even know you could buy flowers at a store until my late teens,” Shillingford recalled with a laugh. With so much growing in everyone’s yard, what was the need? And the floral styling of the day? It was all about Constance Spry, who designed the arrangements for the wedding of Wallis Simpson to the Duke of Windsor — and for Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation.

Having spent her youth surrounded cozily by farm-fresh flowers, Shillingford was shocked when she moved from Hampshire to London.

“Everyone used this company called Interflora to send these horrendous arrangements: stiff, stark, scentless, with no character. Roses and rigid irises and all that floral foam. Flown-in from who knows where — unsustainable and environmentally

devastating ...”

Surrounded by her four dogs — two grown black Labradors, an excitable black puppy, and a lone, grande dame pug — Shillingford elaborated on her goal of filling her subscribers’ homes with quintessentially English arrangements (no American zinnias here!) that were timely for the season and completely locally grown. No easy job in the short New England season.

“I get on Instagram, and in February in England, the daffodils are coming up, the crocuses, the hellebores, everything is blooming and gorgeous and green. And here in the states we wait, and we wait, and we wait ...”

With the spring slip this year from bitter mud-and-frost to blistering heat, Shillingford and Sheehan felt the slam of the East Coast’s extreme climate shifts.

“The first week in June was really the first time I felt on top of my garden, but by then the tulips are gone, alliums are done, peonies are half over. We’re heading into the end of the summer by July.”

Her biggest help in the project came from a winter online course during the pandemic held by Floret Flower Farm in Washington State’s Skagit Valley.

Shillingford patriotically maintains that no American has fully captured the British style when it comes to garden design and floral decorating. But it was Floret’s Erin Benzakein who inspired the launch of English Garden Grown.

Benzakein, who is as well-known to flowerheads as Martha Stewart is to household DIY fans, is famous for her bursting, color-focused blooms and ethical sustainability in her farming.

Still, Shillingford’s heart belongs to the Brits. Among her heroes is Arthur Parkinson, the 20-something, social media, new generation successor to the grand tradition of English gardening — who struck up an unlikely letter-writing friendship as a child



Pom Shillingford brings a love of all things English (including dogs, gardening and cricket) to her life in Litchfield County, Conn.

with the youngest Mitford sister, the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire.

The gardens of Chatsworth House, the late Duchess’s home in the Derbyshire Dales, is the luxurious daydream for many growers, Brit and Anglophile alike — Shillingford included. Although, “Debo,” as she was known in the Mitford clan, had her own detractors.

As she wrote in her 2010 memoir, “Wait For Me!,” “I was proud of the new border ... planted with clashing bright-red plants and a few orange flowers — a startling antidote to

the pastel colors favored by garden designers. I took Cecil [Beaton] to see it. ‘It’s awful!’ he bleated. ‘It’s a retina irritant.’”

Even among the tastemakers, there’s no accounting for taste. So if tightly twisted tea roses are the thing for you, that leaves more wildly arranged, and wildly captivating, buckets of tulips for the rest of us.

To learn more about English Garden Grown and to get on the subscription list for the 2022 spring season, follow @english_garden_grown on Instagram.

TOMATOES: CYNTHIA HOCHSWENDER***Because You Can't Tell it too Many Times:*****The Tale of the
Tomato Pie War**

Yes, we're talking about the Tomato Pie War (again!). This is an interesting tale of a clash in one small area town, and it's worth telling again because, well, it's summer and soon the tomatoes will be ripe and ready for roasting and there will be a recipe at the end of this article.

For those who have heard this story before, I won't go into too much detail here; if you want to know more, do a search for "tomato pie" at our newspaper's archive online through the Salisbury, Conn., Scoville Memorial Library at <http://scoville.advantage-preservation.com/>.

Suffice it to say that in the winter of 2012 there were very heated discussions between the owner/chefs of two Salisbury restaurants over who/which was allowed to feature tomato pie on their menu. There was more to it than a mere menu item of course. But whatever.

Most folks who live around here will realize that tomatoes are not a winter fruit. The tomato pie, really, is not even a winter menu item. Nonetheless, angry words about fresh versus canned tomatoes were thrown about that February and at one point there was a bumper sticker handed out by one of the eateries, laying claim to the Original Tomato Pie.

**NAMES ARE
WITHHELD HERE**

In the world of art, there is something called "provenance," which is the documentation that shows the journey of a work from artist to owner(s). In the tomato pie war, there was also provenance, of a sort.

One of the restaurants (Restaurant A) had been cited in an article in 2008 by beloved Gourmet magazine food writer (and Cornwall, Conn., resident)

Laurie Colwin (it later appeared in her collection called "More Home Cooking"). The chef/owner (Chef A) told Colwin that she had found the original tomato pie recipe in a Hotchkiss School fundraising cookbook — but she had changed it enough to claim it as her own.

The other chef/restaurant owner (Chef B) still had a copy of the original fundraising cookbook — and the recipe, which was shared by Anita Westsmith, wife of a popular local dentist.

**FRIENDS OF THE
TOWN HILL SCHOOL**

The cookbook was actually put together by students at the Town Hill School (now part of the Indian Mountain School) in Lakeville, Conn., and was called "Favorite recipes from friends *some famous* of the Town Hill School." It was published in 1986.

In a Feb. 16, 2012, issue of The Lakeville Journal there is a letter from Alexandra Hunter of Sharon, Conn., who remembers collecting the recipes for that cookbook when she was a youngster. Hunter is the daughter of Chef B.

She says in her letter that tomato pie "is a dish my family has been making for more than 20 years. I remember testing that recipe when Anita Westsmith submitted it. I also remember writing to First Lady Reagan and asking her for a recipe, and getting one in return for that same book."

In case you're wondering, there is a recipe submitted by "President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, Washington, D.C.," for "President Reagan's Favorite Macaroni and Cheese;" and one from "Nancy Reagan, The White House" for

Continued on page 12

PHOTOS BY CYNTHIA HOCHSWENDER

The true secret to the most delicious tomato pie is to roast and then drain the tomatoes.

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... tomato pie

continued from page 11

“Pumpkin Pecan Pie.”

FRIENDS OF THE GREAT JAMES BEARD

Ultimately, Hunter explains in her letter, both Salisbury tomato pies grew out of a recipe by famed chef James Beard and published in his book “American Cookery” in 1972. She generously suggests that both Chef A and Chef B adapted their recipes enough to be able to call their tomato pies their own. And after all, shouldn’t one town be big enough for two tomato pies?

Chef B also wrote a letter to the editor giving credit to Beard for the pie.

In her letter, Chef B claims that she only uses fresh tomatoes in her pie; and she accuses Chef A of using tomatoes from a can. Colwin confirms in her article about Chef A’s pie that it does use “first-quality canned tomatoes.”

IMPORTANT TO ROAST THE TOMATOES

I will take this matter one step further and say that the key to a delicious tomato pie is to use not canned tomatoes, not just fresh tomatoes but: roasted fresh tomatoes (preferably at their peak of ripe deliciousness, from your own garden or that of a very talented farmer).

Sprinkle a little sugar on top so they caramelize as you roast them for about 30 minutes at 375 degrees (remember that tomatoes are acidic and shouldn’t really be cooked in a metal vessel).

You’ll want to drain off the liquid from those tomatoes (set it aside and use it to make sauce) so that it doesn’t make your pie soggy.

There are several options you can choose for your own tomato pie. You can do a biscuit topping; you can use a pate brisé pie crust (denser than a

regular pie crust, and better able to stand up to the liquid of the tomatoes) on top and on the bottom; or you can use a pate brisé crust on the bottom and biscuit dough on top.

The James Beard version, for the record, uses biscuit dough.

A secret to making tender biscuits: Make your own butter. It’s easy. Take a small container of heavy cream, run it through your food processor until it separates into solids and liquids; use a cheesecloth and a sieve to drain the buttermilk into a bowl; and, of course, use the buttermilk in the biscuits. You’ll probably want to chill the butter and buttermilk in the refrigerator for a couple hours.

Each of the tomato pie recipes mentioned in this article is slightly different.

The James Beard version is, of course, available in his cookbook.

The Laurie Colwin version is, of

course, online — but more exciting, her cookbooks have also just been re-released in a partnership between Harper Perennial and Vintage.

If you’ve never read her fiction or food writing, you should get hold of some to read this summer, and find out why she has such a cult following. Colwin is widely adored and admired.

It’s hard to know how much Colwin adapted the recipe that she received from Chef A; and it’s hard to know how much Chef A adapted her recipe from the original cookbook.

The version that I’m going to share here is one that was further adapted in an online blog at www.thegarden.typepad.com/a_bite_to_eat/laurie_colwin.

It is the version that I use and is a bit more detailed than both the original James Beard recipe and the Town Hill cookbook recipe.

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TOMATO PIE

Adapted from several sources along the way to perfection

DOUGH

You can use whichever dough recipe you like best but this one calls for you to mix 2 cups of all-purpose flour with 4 teaspoons of baking powder. You can do this in a bowl with a whisk or save a step and drop it in your food processor, which you will need for your next step: Add 8 tablespoons of cold butter and process for just a few seconds, until the mixture is fairly uniform and doesn't have lumps of butter.

With the food processor running, add about 2/3 cup of milk all at once (use buttermilk if you made your own butter from fresh cream; this is the secret to making exceptional biscuits). Process for a few seconds until the dough just comes together as a mass. Do not overprocess it or you'll end up with tough dough.

Wrap your dough in plastic and let it rest in the refrigerator while you prepare the next steps.

ROASTED TOMATOES

This recipe calls for 2 pounds of fresh tomatoes. I like to use fresh roasted tomatoes that have had a chance to sit and drain themselves of their liquid. I like a dry pie, not a wet one. How can you tell how many tomatoes you'll need? This recipe calls for a 9 inch pie pan. Look at your pie pan and try to estimate how many tomatoes you can fit in it without it overflowing, keeping in mind that there is dough and there will be cheese.

To prepare my tomatoes, I roast them in a 375 degree oven until the tops kind of get dark and blistered. I usually do this well before i make the

pie. It's nice to sprinkle a little sugar on the tomatoes before you roast them.

When your tomatoes are ready, heat your oven to 400 degrees for the pie.

THE PIE

Take out your dough and split it in half (a small digital scale is immensely helpful with this and other kitchen tasks).

Roll out half the dough, either on a floured surface or between two sheets of plastic wrap (the more flour you add, the tougher your dough will get).

Fit the dough sheet into your pie tin (I like to butter the pan first). Use a slotted spoon to lift a third of your tomatoes out of their roasting pan and into the pie plate, so your not taking too much liquid (the liquid will make your filling runny).

Sprinkle 3 tablespoons of chopped basil (chives and scallions are good too) on top.

Add another third of the tomatoes, and then the rest of the herbs and 3/4 of a cup of grated cheese (definitely cheddar but feel free to add others as well).

Mix 1/3 cup of good quality mayonnaise with 2 tablespoons of freshly squeezed lemon juice. Drizzle half of it over the tomatoes and herbs and cheese, then add the remaining tomatoes and top with the remaining herbs, cheese and mayo mixture.

Roll out the other half of the dough and lay it on top, and seal the edges (a little water or milk will help).

Cut several stem holes in the top. Bake at 400 degrees for about 25 minutes, until the crust is nicely brown.

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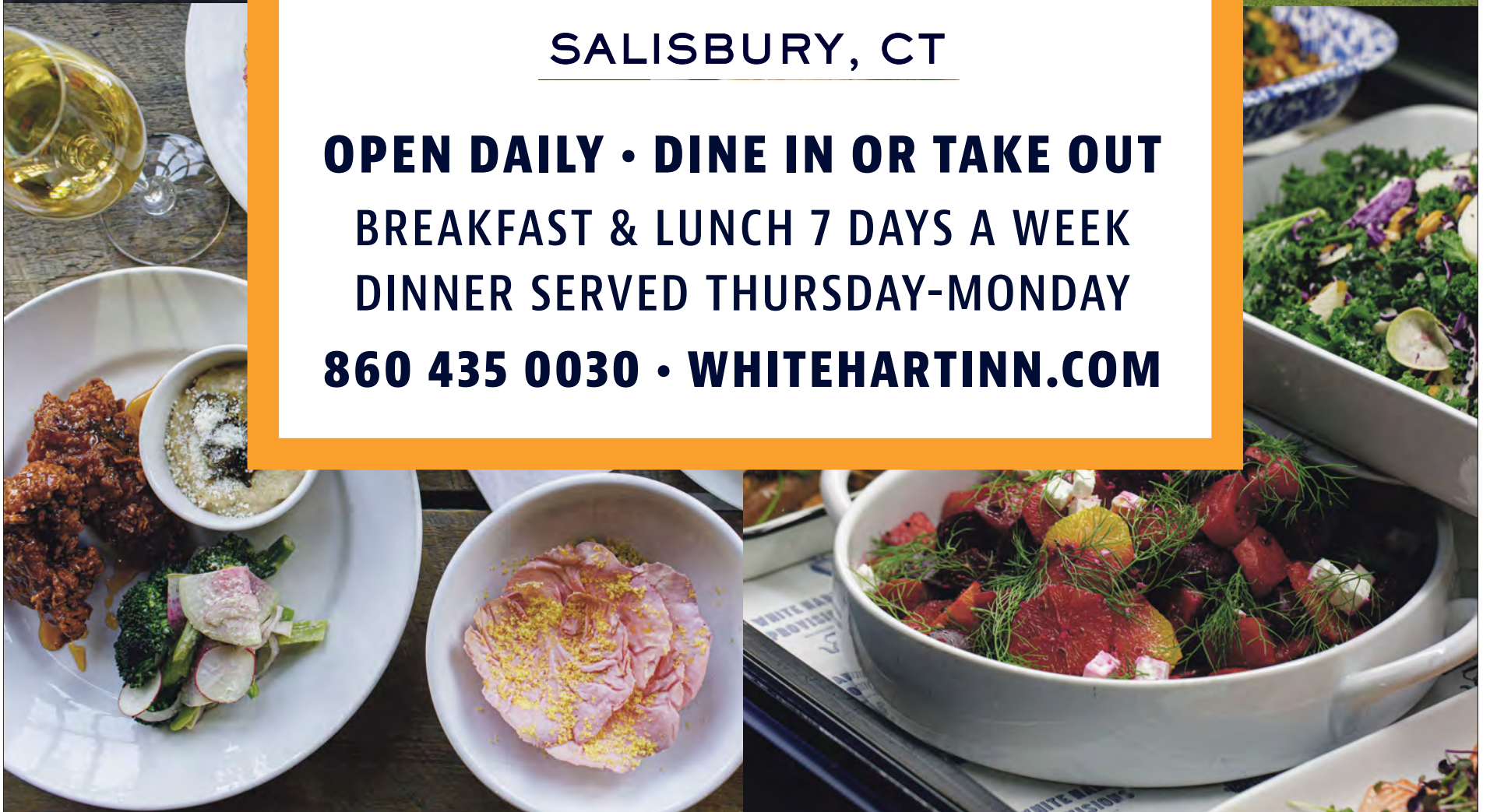
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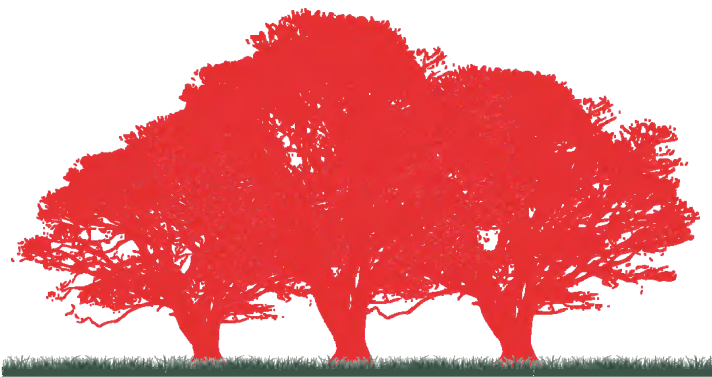
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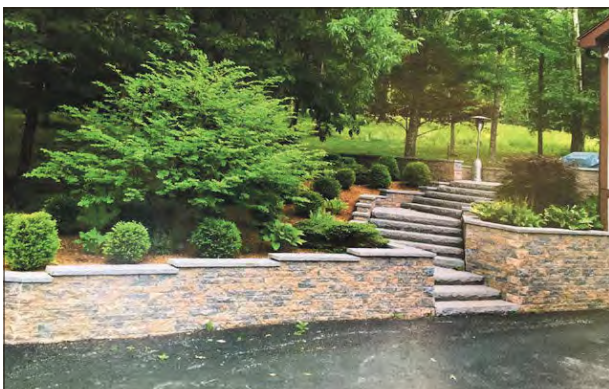


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BAKING: LEILA HAWKEN

A Bakery Rooted in Community: Suzie's Sweets

Flour can be a fickle ingredient. In the right hands it is essential to creating all sorts of baked wonderments. In the wrong hands, well, its use can bring disappointing results.

Years ago a friend did suggest that in addition to my few talents, I should become “more comfortable with flour.” But really, why learn to bake when there are so many superb practitioners of the art in our region?

There is a new phenomenal bakery enterprise in Cornwall, Conn., where baker Susan Saccardi is definitely comfortable with flour. That essential ingredient is in just the right hands with her.

Her baked goods are sold under the name of Suzie's Sweets, an array of unforgettable baked desserts, breads, muffins, cookies, custom cakes and more — all of which use flour to good advantage. Well, except the flourless pastries. Those are very good too.

At present, because Saccardi has not located a suitable physical building in which to locate a commercial bakery, she sells her baked goods at farm markets (the Coop Farmers Market on the Green in Cornwall on summer Saturdays), the Local in West Cornwall on Fridays, and in her own roadside bake stand at 108 Warren Hill Road in Cornwall on Fridays and Saturdays.

“I sell out of everything every week,” Saccardi said.

During a conversation at her certified home baking kitchen in spring, Saccardi described her baking philosophy and experience. We were joined by her son, Dean, home from college and studying remotely — making him available to help significantly with the business.

Energetic and on the move, Susan

came and went from the conversation to tend to baking sheets entering and leaving the oven. Dean kept the conversational thread on course.

He reported that business is brisk. The recent influx of residents from New York City who fled the pandemic are hungry for the quality of their products. Serving as the IT guy for the business, Dean created and manages the website at www.suziesweetsct.com.

“With the amount my business has grown, my family has been essential to the business. I would not be able to do what I do without them nor would I want to. It is definitely a family affair,” Saccardi said.

Dean agreed, adding that his sister Dana helps when she can. And adult children Beth and Brian, who do not live locally, are also involved. In fact, Brian recently devised a cone device useful in making bagels, a hugely popular new item.

Bagels and scones are baked on Saturdays, Saccardi said. “These are traditional New York-style bagels,” she said, reminiscent of those enjoyed in her youth.

“I really took a long time to get my bagels to where I remember them as a child,” she said.

Saccardi recalled that her passion for baking started when her children were young and she was trying to find foods that were not overloaded with sugar.

“I started reading labels and not liking what I saw,” she said.

Aiming to keep it “pure and simple,” she wanted to create pastries with lots of fresh fruit.

“I want to taste the flavor of the fruit and not the flavor of the sugar or added ingredients,” she said.

“I try to use organic ingredients,



PHOTO BY LEILA HAWKEN

Definitely a “family affair,” Susan Saccardi, at left, produces a vast array of baked good in her home bakery business, Suzie's Sweets. Her son, Dean, assists in many aspects of the business, from managing the web presence to helping in the bake kitchen.

fresh ingredients, and real vanilla extract,” she said, steering away from anything artificial. She exclusively uses King Arthur flour from Vermont. People who are “comfortable with flour” recognize that brand as top quality.

Local farms provide ingredients wherever possible. Rhubarb, herbs, fruits and vegetables are sourced from local farms including Nutmeg Acre Farm in Warren, Conn., for rhubarb, and Ridgway Farm for maple syrup, Hurlburt Farm for cheese and Buck Mountain Herbs, all in Cornwall, and others.

Cinnamon buns are new and very popular, she said. Cookies include oatmeal raisin, molasses, chocolate crinkle and mocha.

Saccardi said that Dean and she are talking about developing more

Italian and German cookies.

Dean helps with the bread and focaccia, the latter using fresh local herbs and organic olive oil.

Her turnovers are enormously popular, filled generously with strawberry, rhubarb or apple. Cinnamon buns and mocha cookies are big hits, too.

Muffins are highly prized by customers. Saccardi bemoaned commercial muffins where you can't help but count the small bits of fruit once you break open the muffin. Disappointing.

“I love Cornwall and I love to support the community,” she said.

Some day Saccardi hopes to find the perfect site for Suzie's Sweets, but for now she's doing just fine with her farm market and farm bake stand and a reputation for handling flour really well.

2021 Summer Day Trips

Action Wildlife Foundation Inc.

337 Torrington Road, Goshen, CT, 860-491-9191, www.actionwildlife.org
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Appalachian Trail

Rte. 41, Undermountain Road, Salisbury, CT, www.appalachiantrail.org
Park your car and hike the beautiful trail, dawn to dusk. Be aware of ticks.

Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum

25 Main St., Cooperstown, NY, 888-425-5633, www.baseballhall.org
Museum open 7 days a week. Gift shop. Hall of Fame Induction, Sept. 8. Summer hours, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Beckley Furnace

140 Lower Road, East Canaan, CT, www.beckleyfurnace.org
Open year round during daylight hours, docents on site Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Historic iron furnace on the Blackberry River; Connecticut's designated Industrial Monument.

Berkshire Botanical Garden

Rtes 183 & 102, Stockbridge, MA, 413-298-3926, www.berkshirebotanical.org
Courses & lectures in plant anatomy, physiology, botany, landscape design. Annual Grow Show. Display gardens and visitor center open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily through Oct. 31. Gift Shop. Guided tours available.

Berkshire Museum

39 South St., Pittsfield, MA, 413-443-7171, www.berkshireremuseum.org
Art, natural history and history for the entire family. Touch tank and aquarium, special outings and events. Spark! Lab hands-on, creative laboratory. Gift shop. Open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sun., noon to 5 p.m. Members & children, under 3, free. Wheelchair accessible.

Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum

Lenox Station, 10 Willow Creek Road, Lenox, MA, 413-637-2210, www.berkshirescenicrailroad.org
Historic Lenox Station, ride the Yard Jitney or experience a cab ride with an

engineer, and tours, May through early September. The Lenox Station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. See website for updates and museum schedule.

Bidwell House Museum

100 Art School Road, Monterey, MA, 413-528-6888, www.bidwellhousemuseum.org
Georgian saltbox authentically restored, filled with antiques, and surrounded by 192 acres of grounds and hiking trails, the museum tells the story of the early settlement of the Berkshires. Grounds and gardens open year-round free of charge. Guided tours begin July 17th by appointment only on Mondays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. or 3 p.m.

Canaan Railroad Days

North Canaan, CT, 860-824-8250, www.canaanrailroaddays.com
57th Anniversary Canaan Railroad Days, July 14 to 18; Canaan Carnival, July 14 to 15.

Catamount Aerial Adventure Park

2962 State Highway 23, Hillsdale, NY, 518-325-3200 or 413-528-1262, www.catamounttrees.com
Aerial forest adventure, ages 7 and up, with 12 courses of varying difficulty, 170 elements, 50-plus zip lines. See website for information and seasonal hours.

The CENTER for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck

661 Route 308, Rhinebeck, NY, 845-876-3080, www.centerforperformingarts.org
A venue for the performing arts. Open daily, year-round. Closed New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. See website for events.

The New Children's Museum

950 Trout Brook Drive, West Hartford, CT, 860-231-2824, www.thechildrensmuseumct.org
The Children's Museum offers hands-on fun with science and nature for younger children and families. Exhibits and demonstrations, education classes and activities, a live animal wildlife sanctuary, state-of-the art digital science dome, movies and planetarium shows.

Columbia County Fair

Columbia County Agricultural Society, 32 Church St., Chatham, NY, 518-392-2121, www.columbiafair.com
181st year anniversary, Sept. 1 to 6.

Danbury Railway Museum

120 White St., Danbury, CT, 203-778-8337, www.danburyrailwaymuseum.org
Unique line of vintage diesel locomotives, guided tours, train rides, exhibits, library, celebrate your child's birthday, gift shop. Special events each month.

Dinosaur State Park

400 West St., Rocky Hill, CT, 860-529-8423, www.dinosaurstatepark.org
Registered National Landmark, open year round. Picnic area, 500 dinosaur tracks, trails, gift shop. Park grounds open daily, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed Mondays. Fee for Exhibit Center only, children under 5 are free.

Dutchess County Fairgrounds

6550 Springbrook Ave., Rte. 9, Rhinebeck, NY, 845-876-4000, www.dutchessfair.com
175th Dutchess County Fair, Aug. 24 to 29. Check website for the full calendar of events.

Fireman's Association of State of New York Museum of Firefighting

117 Harry Howard Ave., Hudson, NY, 518-822-1875, www.fasnyfiremuseum.com
More than 300 years of firefighting history on display. Children 3 and under free. Wheelchair accessible. Gift shop. Tours available by request. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

Fisher Center at Bard

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, 845-758-7900, fishercenter.bard.edu
Summerscape 2021 live music, dance, opera and performance events run during July and August. 31st Bard Music Festival Aug. 6 to 15. See website for other events.

Goshen Fair

Goshen Fairgrounds, Rte. 63, Goshen, CT, 860-491-3655, www.goshenfair.org
Sept. 4-6.

Hancock Shaker Village

1843 W Housatonic St. (Rtes. 20 & 41), Pittsfield, MA, 413-443-0188, www.hancockshakervillage.org
Craft demonstrations, oval box making, exhibits, farm animals, and more. Children 12 and under, free. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Howe Caverns

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185-acre public garden. Open five days a week through Aug. 15. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays, except legal holidays.

Irondale Schoolhouse

16 Main St., Millerton, NY,
www.irondaleschoolhouse.org
Tour the historic 1858 one-room schoolhouse that was saved from demolition and relocated to the center of the village as a tourist destination and an institution for learning. Open through mid-October on Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Jacob's Pillow

358 George Carter Road, Becket, MA, 413-243-9919, www.jacobspillow.org
225-acre National Historic Landmark, home to America's longest-running international dance festival. Festival 2021 through Aug. 29. See website for more information.

Kent Falls State Park

Rte. 7, Kent, CT,
www.ct.gov/deep/kentfalls
Five miles north of Kent center. 275 acres, 200-foot waterfall, hiking, beautiful picnic area and plenty of parking.

KidsPlay Museum

61 Main St., Torrington, CT, 860-618-7700,
www.kidsplaymuseum.org
A museum where children can interact with the exhibits and learn as they play. Geared at children ages 1 to 10. Children under 1 year admitted free. See website for current hours of operation.

Lake Compounce

186 Enterprise Dr., Bristol, CT, 860-583-3300, www.lakecompounce.com
Family-friendly fun theme park. Includes roller coaster and thrill rides, water rides, classic and kiddie rides and shows. Lake Compounce serves a wide variety of food options as well.

Lebanon Valley Speedway & Dragway

1746 Rte. 20, Lebanon, NY, 518-794-7130,
www.lebanonvalley.com
Dirt-sanctioned stock car racing. Muscle car drag racing. Office hours Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Race days gates open 5 p.m. See website for more information.

Lime Rock Park

60 White Hollow Road (Rte. 112), Lakeville, CT, 860-435-5000,
www.limerock.com
2021 Auto racing season. Food concessions, bring your lawn chair and cooler. Call or go online for park information including camp sites and complete racing schedule.

Magic Wings Butterfly Conservatory and Gardens

281 Greenfield Road, South Deerfield, MA, 413-665-2805, www.magicwings.com
Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed Mondays. Features an 8,000-square-foot indoor conservatory home to nearly 4,000 exotic and domestic butterflies in a tropical environment.

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center

14 Castle St., Great Barrington, MA, 413-528-0100, www.mahaiwe.org
The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center presents live performances, film, and cultural events year-round from a historic Berkshire theater. Box office open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. See website for scheduled events.

Mystic Seaport

75 Greenmanville Ave., Rte. 27, Mystic, CT, 860-572-0711, or 888-973-2767 www.mysticseaport.org
Maritime Art Gallery, education & special kids programs, group tours, planetarium, classes, recreated 19th-century seafaring village with shops. Climb aboard an historic tall ship and stop by the Mystic Aquarium. Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

New England Air Museum

Bradley International Airport,
36 Perimeter Road, Windsor Locks, CT, 860-623-3305, www.neam.org
Helicopters, DC-3 airliner, WWII aircraft, jet fighters, etc. Open daily, 10am-4pm. Children 3 and under free. Children under 18 free through Sept. 6 with adult. Discounts for seniors.

Norman Rockwell Museum

9 Glendale Road, Stockbridge, MA, 413-298-4100, www.nrm.org
Largest collection of Norman Rockwell art including original Saturday Evening Post covers, gift shop, tours, cafe, beautiful ground for walking and having a picnic. Open Thursday through Monday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday noon-7pm, closed Wednesday. Free parking, wheelchair accessible. 18 and under, free.

Old Sturbridge Village

1 Old Sturbridge Village Road, Sturbridge, MA, 800-733-1830, www.osv.org

A recreated village and outdoor history museum that brings to life the world of ordinary men and women in early 19th-century rural New England. Wheelchair accessible, free parking, children under 3, free; senior discount.

Performance Spaces for the 21st Century

2980 Route 66, Chatham, NY, 518-392-6121, www.ps21chatham.org
PS21 is set on 100 acres of restored orchard fields. Programs through September. See website for schedule. Grounds open to the public.

Sharon Audubon Center

325 Cornwall Bridge Road (Rte. 4), Sharon, CT, 860-364-0520,
sharon.audubon.org
Eleven miles of woodland and meadow hiking trails. Pond, exhibits, gift shop, visitor center. Open year-round.

Eric Sloane Museum and Kent Iron Furnace

31 Kent-Cornwall Road, Kent, CT, 860-927-3849
Reconstructed studio and artwork of Eric Sloane. Antique machinery, rock, gem and mining exhibits. Gift shop.

Open Friday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Taconic State Park

253 Rte. 344, Copake Falls, NY, 518-329-3993, www.parks.ny.gov
Hiking trails, swimming, camping, cabins, nature center, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, 25 miles of trails. Call for schedule.

Trevor Zoo

Millbrook School, 131 Millbrook School Road, Millbrook, NY, 845-677-3704,
www.trevorzoo.org
180 animals, exotic species. Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. by reservation only.

Val-Kill

Rte. 9G, Hyde Park, NY, 845-229-9115, 845-229-9422, www.nps.gov/elro
The private retreat of Eleanor Roosevelt. Only National Historic Site dedicated to an American first lady. Val-Kill Cottage remains closed. The grounds are open every day from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Wassaic Project

37 Furnace Bank Road, Wassaic, NY, 855-927-7242, www.wassaicproject.org
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CYCLING: CYNTHIA HOCHSWENDER

Dreaming of a Maillot Jaune

Ardent cycling fans are no doubt already glued to their screens, watching the excitement of the 2021 Tour de France, which began on June 26 and continues until Sunday, July 18.

Anyone who's paying attention has noticed that when it's Tour de France season there is an explosion of cyclists on area roads (some of them wearing yellow jerseys that bring to mind the coveted *maillot jaune* of the French tour).

Cyclists who want to intensify their dream of taking part in a cycling competition can take part in the 17th annual Tour of the Litchfield Hills on Sunday, Aug. 1.

The ride is open to cyclists of all abilities, but obviously there will be some serious competition in the higher-mileage categories (there are routes from 12 miles to a full century

of 100 miles).

It is a fundraiser for The Cancer Care Fund of the Litchfield Hills. The registration fee after July 14 is \$50. Some details of the race remain unknown at this point as the organizers keep an eye on any new COVID-19 developments and restrictions. The rides leave from Torrington, Conn.; for more information and for updates, go to www.tourofthelitchfieldhills.com and the tour's Facebook page.

August is also the traditional month for the Harlem Valley Rail Ride, which similarly offers rides for many levels, including two century routes. The ride last year was canceled because of COVID-19. So far a date has not been announced for a 2021 ride although it's possible it will be held the third weekend in August, with cyclists leaving from Millerton, N.Y.; keep an eye on the website and this newspaper to see

if/when dates are announced, www.harlemvalleyrailride.com.

There are also occasional cycling tours in the area that combine a challenging ride with visits to working farms. Coming up Oct. 1-3 is the Farm to Fork Fondo of the Berkshires, hosted by Farm to Fork Fitness. These are self-guided cycling tours, they cost a few hundred dollars and they are not charity events.

Anyone interested in the three-day Berkshires event, which is based in Pittsfield, Mass., and includes dinners, tours and (of course) cycling, can go to www.farmtoforkfitness.com/destinations/berkshires. And although they are disgraced, cyclist Lance Armstrong and cycling coach Johan Bruyneel do an excellent Tour de France podcast (with cycle champ George Hincapie, who is not disgraced); it is called THE-MOVE (or, the move).



FILE PHOTO

The competitive cycling season peaks in July with the Tour de France, which ends with the ride through Paris on Sunday, July 18. The Tri-state region offers cycling events on a gentler scale, such as this one that was photographed in 1985 for The Lakeville Journal.

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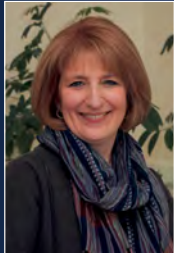
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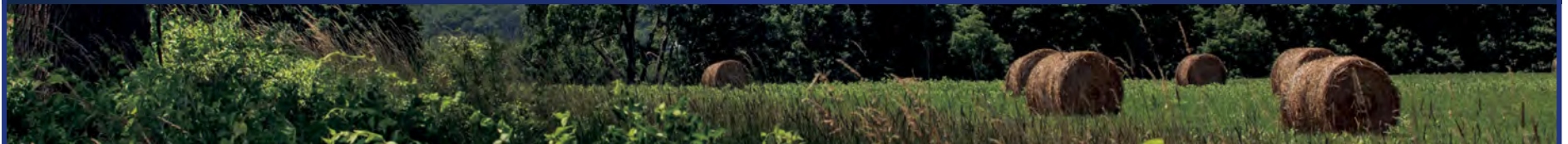
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