

THE MAGIC OF THE NOKOTA HORSE | DAVID FERRON: FASHION FORWARD IN UNIONVILLE

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WINTER 2020

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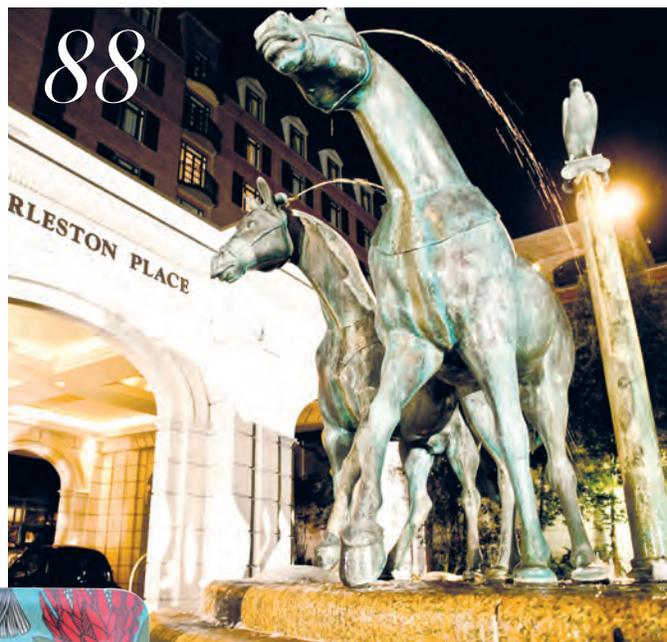
Features

- 24 **CALL OF THE WILD**
A local woman is helping to preserve the Nokota horse breed. *By Lisa Dukart*
- 30 **REASON TO CELEBRATE**
Unionville Saddle's David Ferron launches his ready-to-wear line. *By Melissa Jacobs*
- 40 **ABSTRACTS IN BLOOM**
Vicki Vinton reinvents herself (again) in a blaze of form and color. *By Roger Morris*
- 46 **ON THE HUNT**
In his new book, *Bound to the Country*, Jim Graham documents three decades of a cherished Chester County tradition.

Departments

- EDITOR'S NOTE 6
- NOTED 8
Holiday events.
- SHOP 14
Gifts with local flair. *By Melissa Jacobs*
- CELEBRATIONS 16
A Wilmington couple rings in the New Year with a winter wedding. *By Lisa Dukart*
- FOOD & DRINK 86
Winter treats to savor, perhaps with your favorite adult beverage. *By Roger Morris*
- TRAVELER 88
Charleston, S.C., offers a historic Lowcountry spin on the holidays. *By Hobart Rowland*
- PARTING SHOT 96
By Jim Graham

14



88

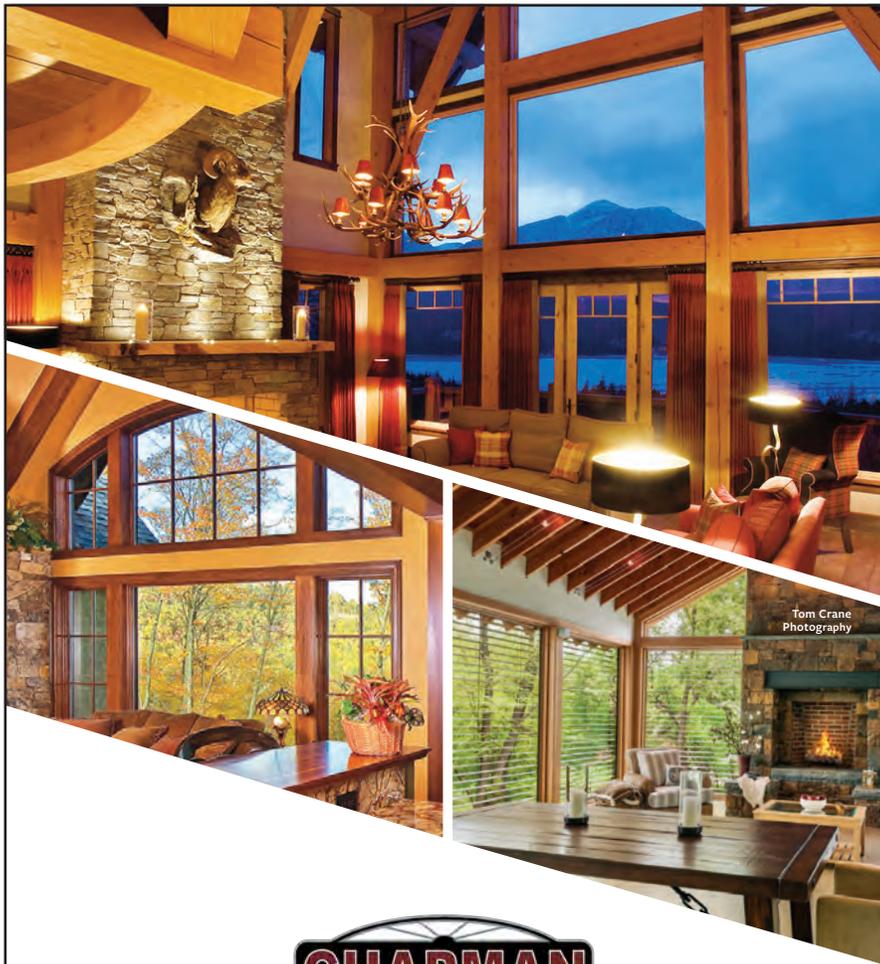
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Worth Celebrating

I think everyone will agree that the holidays will be different this year. Some annual events will be cancelled or modified. Parties will be downsized or eliminated altogether, family gatherings are likely to be smaller, and vacation plans may be up in the air. Never mind New Year's Eve and the very real potential for an empty Times Square.

Even amid all the uncertainty, there's plenty to celebrate—and the Brandywine Valley can be a magical place during the holidays, especially when the falling leaves air out our dense woodlands and frost and snow blankets the hillsides. Contributing editor Jim Graham's gorgeous photography has afforded us a superior year-round lens through which to view the region's beautiful countryside, rich history and vibrant cultural offerings. He's never met an assignment he didn't love—and it shows in his work.

There's no doubt about Graham's affection for the region's rich equestrian tradition. Over the past 30 years, he's followed Mr. Stewart's Cheshire Foxhounds as they go out on the chase. Graham's new book, *Bound to the Country* (Cheshire Editions, 196 pages), celebrates everything that makes this treasured acreage in southern Chester County so special. Thanks to the ongoing efforts of the Brandywine Conservancy, the Masters of the Cheshire Hunt and individual landowners, it remains much as it was over 100 years ago—the way W. Plunket Stewart saw it when he first surveyed the vast expanse of valley in 1910.

Just for *The Hunt*, Graham has compiled a series of images that he didn't include the book. He also reflects on the creation of *Bound to the Country* and how its subject matter has impacted his approach to photography in general.



ED WILLIAMS

You'll also notice that our Noted section is back, just in time to offer some festive—and safe—options for soaking up the season. Plenty of local spots are welcoming visitors, including cherished institutions like Winterthur, Longwood Gardens and the Brandywine River Museum of Art.

Enjoy your winter. And stay safe.

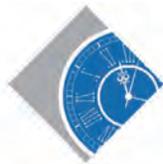
Hobart Rowland
Editor-in-Chief

Discover why your neighbors are moving to Sycamore Springs!



HOME IS WHERE YOUR STORY BEGINS. This sign hangs by the front door in Bob and Rosey Hess's home in New Holland. Bob and Rosey celebrate the new story they started in June 2020, when they moved to the Sycamore Springs neighborhood at Garden Spot Village. Since moving, their story has included connecting with their new community, spending time with their family and making memories.

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NOTED *Winter*

BY MELISSA JACOBS

2020



Model trains
at Brandywine
River Museum of Art.

CARLOS ALEJANDRO / COURTESY OF BRANDYWINE RIVER MUSEUM OF ART

Holiday Magic at Brandywine

Oct. 31-Jan. 10
CHADDS FORD, PA.

Brandywine River Museum of Art's beloved model trains make their annual appearance, joined by some owned by Andrew Wyeth's sons, Ann Wyeth McCoy's dollhouse, and trees decorated with lights and ornaments made by volunteers during the quarantine period. *Visit www.brandywine.org.*

A Longwood Christmas

Nov. 20-Jan. 10
KENNETT SQUARE, PA.

Masks are required and reservations advised for Longwood Gardens' annual indoor lighted tree festival. There's also plenty to do outdoors, with a railway, lighted trees and gardens, and fire pits. *Visit longwoodgardens.org.*

Kennett Square Holiday Village Market

Dec. 5-6, Dec. 12-13
KENNETT SQUARE, PA.

The Creamery's courtyard comes alive with a socially distanced outdoor market that features artisan-made crafts, food trucks and seasonal brews. *Visit www.kennetholidayvillage.com.*



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Yuletide at Winterthur

Nov. 21-Jan. 3
WINTERTHUR, DEL.

An outdoor 3D light show, a house tour with holiday decorations, a Christmas tree tram, and brunch with Santa make Winterthur's holiday festivities both special and safe. Also expect carolers, concerts, mulled wine, workshops and pop-ups. *Visit www.winterthur.org.*

continued on page 11

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Cookie making and socially distanced visits with Mr. and Mrs. Claus are part of this year's Holidays at Hagley.

continued from page 9

Holidays at Hagley

Nov. 27-Jan. 3
WILMINGTON

Socially distanced Santa visits, gingerbread-house contest entries, a winter wonderland selfie station and individually wrapped cookies are all part of this year's holiday celebration at the Hagley Museum and Library. Visit www.hagley.org.



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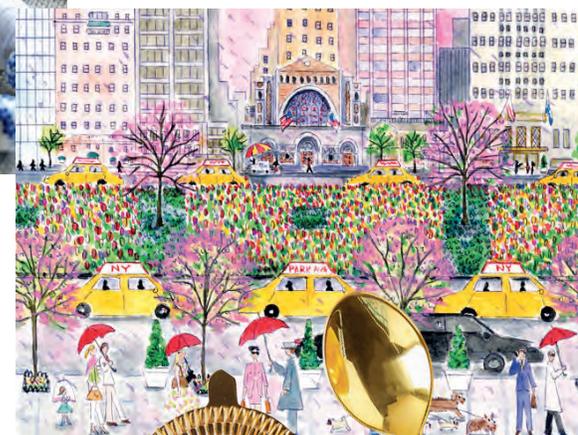


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New Beginnings

A Wilmington couple rings in
the New Year with a winter wedding.

By LISA DUKART
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DP STUDIOS



Like so many modern romances, Katie Warren and Pasha Alekseyev began online. The pair met via a dating app, though Katie was skeptical at first. Pasha, however, was determined, and he eventually landed a first date. The pair hit it off, deepening their connection over four years.

On Christmas Day 2018, the couple was celebrating at Katie's family home in Newark, Del., when Pasha discreetly pulled aside her father and asked for his blessing. He popped the question at dinner. A year later, on Dec. 31, Katie and Pasha were married at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Wilmington. "I've always wanted to get married on New Year's Eve," says Katie.

A graduate of Padua Academy, Katie was conferred at St. Anthony's. She also received her diploma there, later coaching soccer at the school. "It just has a special place in my heart," she says.

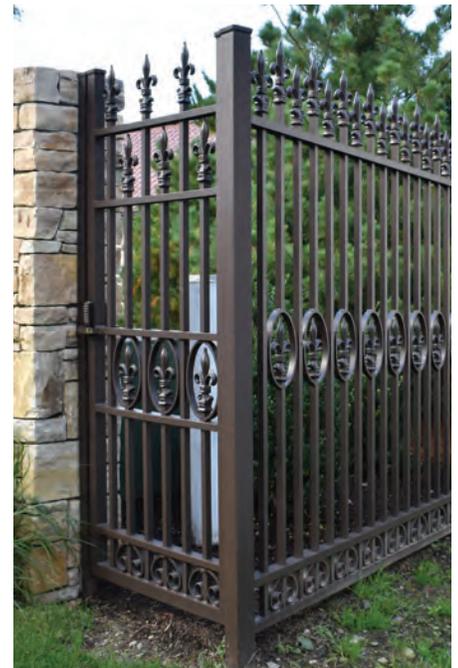
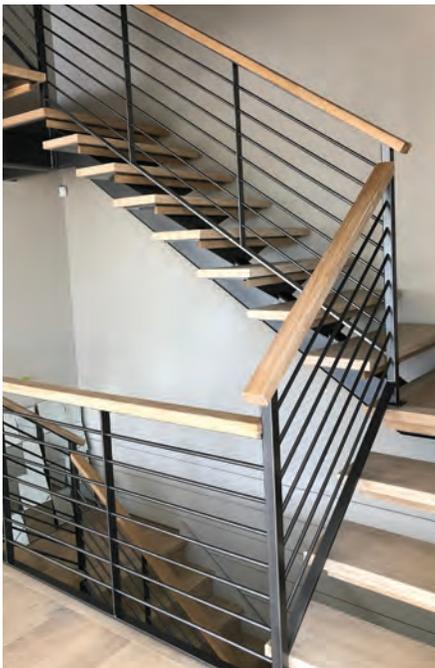
Katie wore her late grandmother's fur stole, while Pasha's mother—who owns Salon Pasca in Wilmington—helped with Katie's hair and makeup. Also on hand was Pasha's aunt, who flew in from Russia for the occasion. A former jeweler in Russia before moving to the United States, Pasha's father crafted the wedding band for his future daughter-in-law. *continued on page 19*







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CELEBRATIONS

continued from page 17



Surrounded by Christmas trees and poinsettias, the two were wed in an evening ceremony, the bridesmaids' silver sequins matching the bride's rhinestone Betsy Johnson booties. Later, guests headed to Deerfield Golf Club for dinner and dancing. As midnight approached, the newly married couple joined everyone in welcoming 2020 with confetti and a champagne toast.

Details

Wedding date: Dec. 31, 2019.

Ceremony: St. Anthony of Padua Church, Wilmington.

Reception: Deerfield Golf Club (deerfieldgolfclub.com).

Number of guests: 165.

Officiant: Rev. Mark Wrightson.

Bridal gown: Kenneth Winston, L&H Bridal (lhbridal.com).

Bridesmaids' dresses: Revelry (shoprevelry.com).

Groom's and groomsmen's tuxes: Formal Affairs Delaware (formalaffairsnewark.com).

Hair and makeup: Salon Pasca (salon-pasca.com).

Florist: Kirk's Flowers (www.kirksflowers.com).

continued on page 20

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CELEBRATIONS

continued from page 19



Cake: Desserts by Dana (dessertsbydana.com).

DJ: Wired Up Entertainment (justgetwired.com).

First dance: Frank Sinatra's "The Way You Look Tonight."

Photographer and videographer: DP Studios (dpstudios.tv).

Honeymoon: Antigua.

Careers: Katie is a nurse at Christiana Hospital; Pasha is a carpenter at Master Interiors.

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Call of the Wild

Chester County's Christine McGowan is helping to preserve a unique heritage horse breed.

BY LISA DUKART | PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM GRAHAM







(Here and the next three pages) Christine McGowan and her daughter, Neva, tend to their Nokotas at the Preserve in Chester Springs.



In the vast plains of North Dakota's Little Missouri Badlands, thousands of native horses once roamed free. They evolved into hearty stock, revered for their power, intelligence, adaptability and ability to weather the difficult northern winters. They've even been linked to Sitting Bull, the iconic leader of the Lakota tribe.

These undomesticated heritage horses survived climate shifts and western expansion. But with the creation of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, a number of them were inadvertently fenced into federal land. Others were wiped out or sold, many for slaughter. And while their enclosure provided some protection from predators, the horses ultimately weren't welcome in the parks. Over several decades, the National Park Service rounded up and removed many of the last remaining





“At any given time, anywhere from 10 to 14 horses roam Christine McGowan’s 14-acre farm.”





horses, maintaining only a small herd for demonstration purposes.

Thousands of miles from North Dakota, Chester Springs is the unlikely home to a select number of Nokotas. At any given time, anywhere from 10 to 14 horses roam on Christine McGowan's 14-acre farm, which she's dubbed the Preserve. Right now, McGowan has 14 Nokotas, plus a pet duck, four dogs, three goats and two cats. "We're tiny and mighty," McGowan says of her nonprofit, which was officially established in 2016. *continued on page 56*



REASON TO
CELEBRATE

UNIONVILLE SADDLE'S **DAVID FERRON** LAUNCHES
HIS UNIQUE **READY-TO-WEAR** LINE.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM GRAHAM

STORY BY MELISSA JACOBS

Photographed at West Chester, Pa.'s Greystone Hall. Hair by Mary Hauer, Artistic Edge Salon, Kennett Square, Pa.

THE RACHEL GOWN. This black Fortuny jersey dress has a high turtleneck, grosgrain ballerina ties at the waist, and slightly bell-shaped sleeves with slits at the hem that mirror the center back slit.





THE MEG GOWN.
An off-the-shoulder
drape continues
around the back of
this black Ponte knit
dress, accenting
cutouts made of
liquid amber satin.

THE SUSAN GOWN.

This pleated, bias-cut halter gown in liquid amber satin has grosgrain ribbon details, a high-low hem and a double-bow cross back.





THE RACHEL MINI. This army green variation of the Rachel Gown has a crewneck collar and a shorter hem. The headband is a vintage tulle veil with flocked bow motifs.

Call it a pandemic pivot with a side of twirl. This fall, designer David Ferron unveiled his new ready-to-wear line for women. Sprinkled with sequins and strategically placed grosgrain ribbons, garments include both special-occasion and casual pieces. “It’s my first stab at retail and online sales with my own brand,” says Ferron. “I’m hoping to serve more clients and in a different way.”

The Stephanie cape, Julia denim jacket and other items are named for Ferron’s clients and inspired by the pieces he made for them. “Working with real women is what I love to do,” Ferron says. “The fashion industry doesn’t always serve their needs.”

In the three years since opening Unionville Saddle in Kennett Square, Pa., Ferron has become one of the region’s rising fashion names. A 2011 graduate of Parsons School of Design, from which he won Womenswear Designer of the Year, Ferron is known for his body-conscious tailoring and using luxurious materials in eco-friendly ways. “There’s so much waste in the fashion world,” Ferron says. “We can do better—with better design.”



THE JULIA. An amber-colored cotton-velvet bustier with asymmetrical strap details and D-ring closure is paired with the black/black Sunburst Skirt in pleated silk lame chiffon with grosgrain waistband.





THE JENNY BODYSUIT. Gold sequins on nude power mesh with ballerina grosgrain ties combine with the gold/white Sunburst Skirt.

That ethic was supposed to be on full display at a runway show scheduled for this past March at the Brandywine River Museum of Art. “It would’ve taken place throughout the museum, in a ‘fashion is art’ way,” Ferron says. “The museum and the entire Brandywine Valley played huge roles in my childhood and are part of my inspiration. It would’ve been a full-circle moment for me.”

When it was cancelled due to the pandemic, Ferron thought he’d reschedule the show.



THE LYNN JACKET, SUIT AND TROUSERS. A tropical-weight wool suit jacket is paired with a black sequin shirt and high-waisted wool pants.

Eventually—after busying himself sewing nearly 5,500 masks for Nemours/A.I. duPont Hospital for Children—Ferron gave up on his plan. But the pandemic pause nudged his creativity in new directions. “I’m still making clothes for women of all sizes and in a sustainable way—just in a new venue,” Ferron says.

Ferron’s new line is available at Unionville Saddle’s Kennett Square shop and online at davidferron.com.



THE AMY MINI.

Made of sunset floral velvet burnout, the dress features sheer, puffed sleeves and a caterpillar belt made of ostrich feathers and grosgrain ribbon with a D-ring closure.

THE ANN GOWN. Dolman sleeves, a power mesh sheer cutout in the back, shoulder pads, a built-in shaper lining, and an empire waist provide structure for this full-length rayon matte jersey gown.





THE SAM GOWN. A flyaway back drape accents the power mesh cutout details on the sweeping draped back of this ankle-length silk satin gown.



Abstracts



In Bloom

VICKI VINTON REINVENTS HERSELF (AGAIN)
IN A BLAZE OF FORM AND COLOR.

BY ROGER MORRIS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM GRAHAM



Vicki Vinton addresses a canvas the way a potter would throw a hunk of clay on the wheel or a sculptor would take a chisel to a block of Carrara marble. She might roll a pinecone in fresh paint or glue a piece of industrial fiber onto its surface. Or she may just attack it with a trowel the way a house painter would approach a wall in need of spackling. Indeed, a Vinton canvas typically endures a workout before finally being mounted.

It's sometimes funny where life takes you as you cross its statistical midpoint, and Vinton is happy where she's landed at the moment. On a warm Monday morning in August, the artist and avid equestrian has already been out riding. The clouds from a morning shower have reluctantly left the skies over Oxford, a quaint farming town in southern Chester County. Here Vinton has rented a narrow storefront on South 3rd Street, the main drag through town. Lately, she's fallen under the spell of an abstract vision full of vigor and color.



Vicki Vinton at her Oxford, Pa., studio with some recent work.

A few decades ago, Vinton was supervising landscape installations. She's also known for her faux painting and plein air work. "When I was maybe 12, I was painting watercolors of daylilies, and Lyn Blish—who was a friend of my mother—liked them and sort of took me under her wing," Vinton remembers.

Better known to the art world as "Carolyn," Blish was famous nationwide in the late 1960s for her gauzy landscapes and beachscapes. "She and my mother would get together and paint abstracts in the driveway," says Vinton.



"Artists are breaking away from realism, but in a refined way. Vicki's work is in collections where the owners also have Wyeths."



Vicki Vinton's artistic ambitions have gotten waylaid from time to time. She's the impatient sort—and also good at things that are more lucrative. As a student at the Tower Hill School, the Wilmington native consulted with her older brothers about college. “They both said that, if they had it to do over, they would’ve gone to college out west,” she says.

Vinton first chose the University of Denver. “I wanted more training, but I found out that the art instruction was not that good,” she says. “Looking back, Tower Hill really had a much

better art department than I realized at the time.”

So she left Colorado and enrolled at Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, training ground for generations of American painters in the realism tradition. After college, Vinton headed in another direction, starting a landscaping company. “I'm not a very good delegator,” she laughs. “For many years, I was doing hard physical labor.”

That eventually led to a 25-year career as a faux artist. “Back in the day, every grand house in the region had walls painted by Vicki,” says Vickie Manning,

owner of Somerville Manning Gallery, which has hosted Vinton's most recent exhibitions.

At one time, Vinton had three employees. “We did a lot of work in Delaware houses and vacation homes,” she says. “Although I no longer do faux, I still use many of the tools and techniques in my paintings.”

About 10 years ago, when the economy went south and “decoration slowed down a bit,” Vinton returned to painting. She also married Wilson King, whom she knew through riding and carriageing. A member of the Cheshire

continued on page 84



ON THE HUNT

IN HIS NEW BOOK, ***BOUND TO THE COUNTRY***, JIM GRAHAM DOCUMENTS
THREE DECADES OF A CHERISHED CHESTER COUNTY TRADITION.



Huntsman Ivan Dowling leads the hounds out into the field.
(Below) Remy Winants (left) was about 4 when this was photo taken over 20 years ago. She now manages the hunter barn for Mr. Stewart's Cheshire Foxhounds.



Arnon Siskind once said, “Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you’ve caught on film is captured forever. It remembers little things long after you’ve forgotten everything.”

Some 30 years ago, I embarked on a self-assigned project in Unionville, Pa. I’d left a staff position at the *News Journal* in Wilmington and needed something to occupy me during my down time—and at that point, I had a lot of down time. I didn’t expect to be returning over and over again, but as I continued to ride with the late Mrs. Hannum, master of the hounds, I realized there was more to learn and more to see. During the season, I was a passenger in her Jeep Wagoneer three days a week for more than 15 years. She taught me so much about seeing, listening and being patient.

continued on page 51

Dowling sorts hounds
in the feed room.

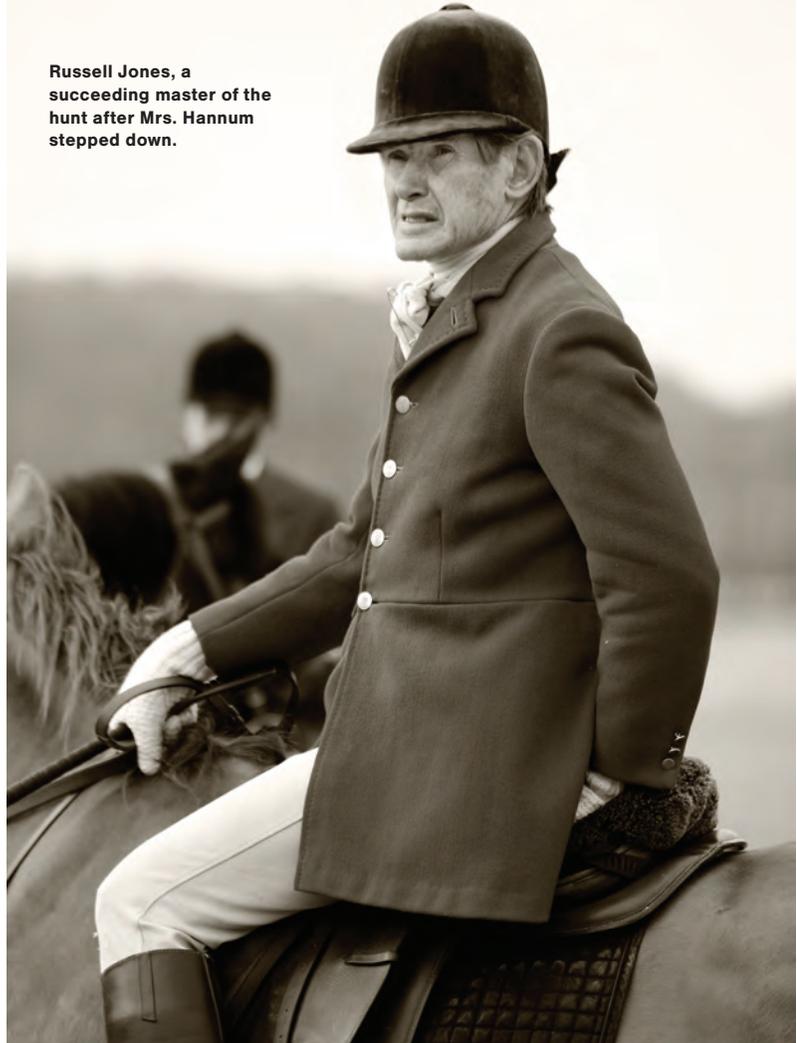








Russell Jones, a succeeding master of the hunt after Mrs. Hannum stepped down.



The Mrs. Elizabeth C. "Betty" Bird, one of the grande dames of the hunt.





ON THE HUNT

continued from page 46

Over that time, I've become keenly aware of the efforts by so many to keep the land free from development. Mrs. Hannum's stepfather, W. Plunket Stewart, purchased the parcel in the early 20th century. He later convinced Robert Kleberg, of the famed King Ranch in Texas, to acquire Lamot du Pont's holding, which amounted to almost 6,000-acres. Later, the Brandywine Conservancy and George A. Weymouth facilitated easements, conserving large portions of countryside.

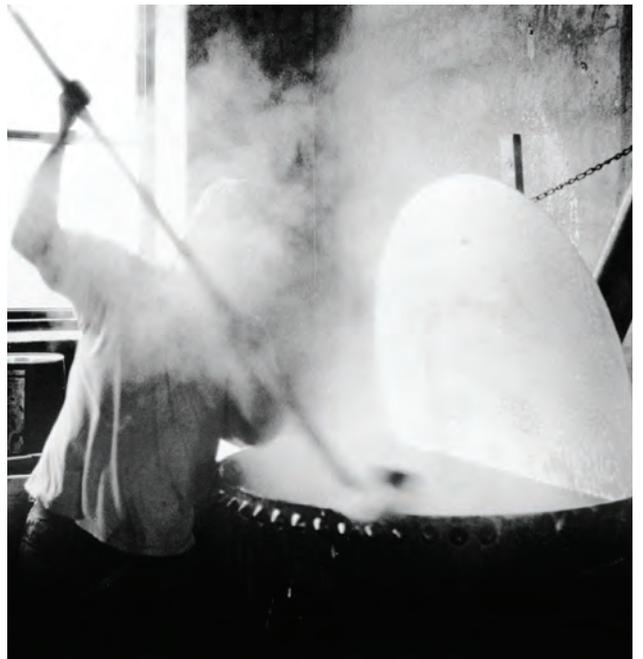
continued on page 54



Stephanie Speakman flies a fence.



Ivan and Stephanie Dowling lead the hounds home in December 2012.





(From left) Brothers Russell and Richie Jones in the field; Bob Carlucci cleans one of the cauldrons in the kennels; David Goodall follows the hounds out into the country; Mrs. Hannum speaks with huntsman Joe Cassidy.



Jock Hannum, chairman emeritus of the Cheshire Hunt Conservancy and one of Mrs. Hannum's three children, rides home with grandson Jack after a day in the field.

ON THE HUNT

continued from page 51

As the late Paddy Neilson noted, "Open space is the lifeblood of fox hunting." And the horse culture is far reaching in southern Chester County.

It took years for me to envision what I was doing in book form. It also took time for me to convince myself that I had something worth publishing. Again and again, encouragement from friends in the photographic community spurred me on. Their constant prodding—and a few swift kicks in the trousers—sped up the process this past February.

I enlisted David Griffin, the former director of photography at *National Geographic*, to help with picture selection and graphic design. Bob Tursack's Brilliant Graphics in Exton, Pa., was the right choice to print the book here in the United States. There is so much work that didn't make the book. Much of that is included on these pages. There is boundless more—perhaps enough for another two books. And I haven't finished shooting yet.

—Jim Graham

A photograph of a large, two-story stone building with a white portico. The building has a rustic, stone facade and several windows with dark shutters. A large tree is in the foreground on the left, and a paved driveway leads to the building. The sky is blue with some clouds.

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Long a horse enthusiast, McGowan was introduced to the Nokotas by a neighbor who rode over on one, toddler in tow. She was immediately struck by the horse's temperament. “[Being around the horse] gave me a different sense of calm and worth that I'd really not experienced before or after,” she recalls.

Learning about the Kuntzs, McGowan and her family traveled to one of their clinics in Ohio. A graduate of the Baldwin School and the University of Pennsylvania, she'd had a long career with Ralph Lauren and other fashion houses. But she was looking for a sense of connection and purpose. “I was particularly interested in the quality of the mind,” she says of the Nokota.

continued on page 82

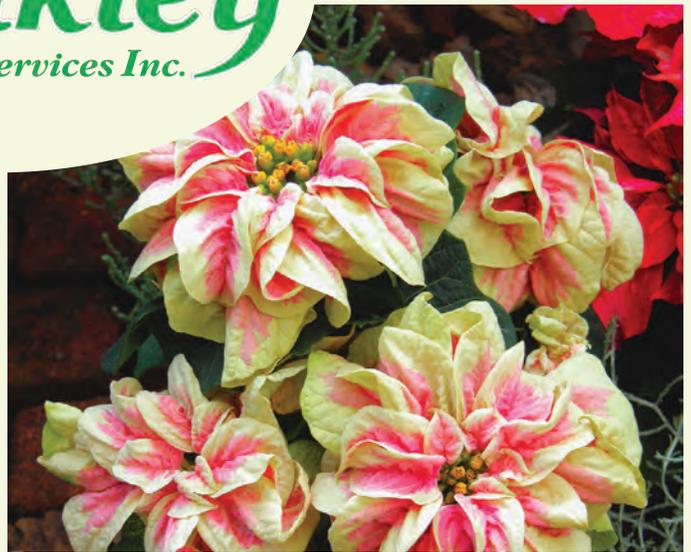
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Contents



04 Cheese, please!

Craft your holiday charcuterie board with help from Crumb & Cow.

By Meg Ryan



10 Serving Looks

Decorate your dining table with items from the heart.

By Frances Nguyen

12 That's a Wrap

Rolls of wrapping paper no more! Go natural with our tips.

By Ashley Breeding

18 Holiday Happenings

Fill your calendar with fun (and safe) events this season.

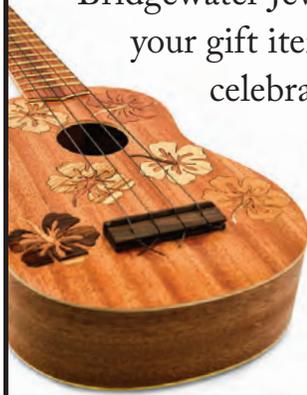
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Kristen McCoy turned her love of entertaining into a business with Crumb & Cow, creating artful charcuterie boards.



THE ART OF THE BOARD

THE OWNER OF CRUMB & COW OFFERS HER EXPERTISE ON HOW TO CRAFT THE PERFECT CHARCUTERIE BOARD FOR YOUR NEXT HOLIDAY GATHERING.

BY MEG RYAN

One could say charcuterie boards have become an art form—and Kristen McCoy is a charcuterie board artist.

The owner of Crumb & Cow, a small company specializing in charcuterie boards, platters, grazing boxes and tables, McCoy turned her “fun and creative outlet” into a brand.

As a hostess who frequently crafted charcuterie boards for her guests, she soon realized she wasn't the only one browsing the cheese section before a gathering. As these became staples at her parties, she noticed artfully designed boards covered with cheeses, meats, spreads, fruits and nuts emerging as a trend across social media.

Not everyone has time to head to the store and scour for the perfect board items, though, so McCoy jumped at the business opportunity.

“We step in and take over the stress and hassle for them,” she says.

While COVID-19 has changed Crumb & Cow's business model, McCoy says customers are still reaching out to order boards and boxes for virtual gatherings or smaller, socially distanced events.

Crumb & Cow puts the items together in their commercial kitchen in Delaware and offers local delivery in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Customers can choose from boxes in a variety of sizes, plus larger boards and gathering

continued on page 6



Owner Kristen McCoy loves to make charcuterie boards for her friends that include a variety of meats, cheeses and spreads.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF KRISTEN MCCOY

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The Art of the Board

continued from page 4



Customers can also order picnic styling to take the stress out of planning an outdoor holiday gathering.

tables. McCoy also offers s'more boxes for parties with a sweet tooth and picnic styling for those who want to throw an outdoor feast.

Most items need at least 48 hours' notice and are completely customizable based on dietary restrictions, allergies and personal preferences.

For those who want to try their hand at charcuterie board artistry, McCoy offers some tips and tricks, plus her advice on how to gather safely in the era of coronavirus.

Cheese, please!

When it comes to selecting the right cheeses for your board, McCoy suggests offering guests a variety. You want to appeal to everyone's palate, so choose two to three ranging in texture, milk type and taste.

For the holidays, McCoy recommends a goat cheese, as many are rolled in dried fruits, nuts or herbs. A mild cheese, like a brie, is almost always a hit and can be dressed up with nuts or baked in a puff pastry.

Pairing meats

Just like the cheeses, McCoy recommends two to three meats to serve on your charcuterie board. The wintertime is perfect for items like peppered salami and prosciutto.

McCoy says not to worry about how each meat pairs with each cheese, since part of the charcuterie board experience is mixing and matching flavors.

"Nothing really 'goes' with one thing or another," she says.

Art on display

Now, it's all about finding the perfect accoutrements to the meats and cheese.

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Crumb & Cow's Boxes are perfect for a couple or small group to enjoy thoughtfully chosen cheeses and meats.



When you begin to decorate your board, McCoy suggests starting with dip bowls and then styling the cheese and meat around them.

McCoy suggests picking a few dips and spreads, and then adding nuts, dried fruits or olives to go the extra mile. During the holidays, even sweet touches like peppermint bark are welcome.

Placing everything onto the board can seem intimidating, but it's easiest if you map it out (literally) or start with your dip bowls and then place everything around them. McCoy says she likes the items on her boards to overlap, getting rid of any empty space.

"The whole thing is making it an adventure," she says.

For the crackers or small toasts, McCoy selects a variety and places them in a separate basket next to the board.

Gathering safely

Right now, the charcuterie board isn't the most important thing at the party. Instead, it's the safety precautions.

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McCoy packs all of the boxes and boards in her Delaware commercial kitchen.



Charcuterie boards and boxes can be made pandemic-friendly with individual tongs and toothpicks.

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- As the next generation grows up, they will one day ask about those who came before them. At some point, no one will remember where their loved one's earthly remains are or even when they lived.

BENEFITS OF A FINAL PLACE OF REST

- All friends and family members have a special place to visit, remember and pray for their departed dear ones, a place to bring flowers or make dedications in honor of a birthday, anniversary or any special occasion.
- Cemeteries will always be there, open to visitations by one and all. Your loved one is laid to rest in the community of their faith.
- Grave markers will always provide a permanent record of your loved one's life, with their name and brief history for all to see.

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McCoy suggests providing guests with toothpicks or disposable individual tongs to pick items off the boards, so no one touches the food with their hands. She also recommends taking the party outside with heaters and blankets so there's adequate airflow and space to socially distance while staying warm.

If you must hold a gathering indoors, she recommends giving guests a heads up so they can bow out if they feel uncomfortable and to make sure there is proper social distancing for the guests who do attend.

No matter where you hold your gathering, it may still be recommended to limit your guest list, so you might need to let some friends and family know they're on the "naughty list" this year but will be invited back next year, she says. **HC**

For the most up-to-date COVID-19 guidelines, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). To find out more about Crumb & Cow or to order a charcuterie board, visit [CrumbandCow.com](https://www.CrumbandCow.com).



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ALL DRESSED UP

TAKE YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE SETTINGS UP A NOTCH WITH TIPS FROM AREA DESIGNERS AND A RESTAURATEUR.

BY FRANCES NGUYEN

suffice it to say that this holiday season is unlike any other in recent memory. Many of us are hosting a much smaller group than in previous years—or, even further from the norm, one that’s socially distanced. But complying with social distancing restrictions doesn’t mean we have to sacrifice closeness during the holidays. In fact, there’s plenty of opportunity to revisit and reimagine what it looks like to gather with your loved ones, starting with the meeting place: around the dinner table.

“The holidays are all about bringing together the people you love and sharing

special moments,” says Josephine Kurtz of Kurtz Collection (1010 N. Union St., Wilmington; 654-0442; kurtzcollection.com). We sought advice from Kurtz, along with several other experts, on inventive ways to dress the dinner table this year.

Turn to nature

“Look no further than your backyard,” says Liza Nicole of Liza Nicole Interiors (Wilmington, 808-861-6112; lizanicoleinteriors.com). “Using simple, locally sourced natural décor in creative ways is a surefire way to make an impression with your guests.” For her

table, Nicole has magnolia trees readily at her disposal. “Their leaves are perfect for spreading around the table—or in a wavy pattern down the center—along with candles,” she says. “I also love adding sprigs of rosemary over a folded napkin and wrapped in twine as part of my table setting. The color, texture and scent are just perfect.”

Chef-Partner Tyler Akin, who helms Le Cavalier at The Green Room in Hotel Du Pont (42 W. 11th St., Wilmington; 594-3154; lecavalierde.com) has more than one kitchen to manage over the holiday season, so a quieter celebration at home was already

Don't be afraid to mix old with the new by using vintage glass and flatware.



Making the place cards and table settings personal lets your guests know you're thinking of them.

in the cards. That's exactly where he's drawing his inspiration from for his table. "We're excited to clip holly from our new backyard, which will serve as a centerpiece," he says. "And I will be filling vintage vases with rosemary for an aromatic touch that is more cost-efficient than poinsettias."

Likewise, Kurtz will be taking advantage of what's around her. "My own tablescape at Christmas this year will consist of gathered foliage and flowers mixed with decorative elements like tealight votives and candlesticks," she says. "I love the mix of natural textures and colors."

Old meets new

"Our style at Kurtz Collection focuses on layering the new with the old," Kurtz

says. "Mixing antique pieces on the table with newer pieces adds some drama and interest."

Chef Akin agrees. With plating, he recommends making it family-style, placed on the table for a display that's good enough to eat. "Buffet lines are for cafeterias, and food looks beautiful when it's plentiful," he says. "Pull out whatever old-school big plates you have or find some at a flea market. The holidays are a time to embrace the retro."

Get personal

With greater intimacy comes greater opportunities to sprinkle in some sentiment. Nicole suggests using photos of your guests as place cards and adding personal notes to them. "This can be a fun

and sentimental activity of reflection for you as the host while also making your guests feel special and loved." Or, she adds, "Leave them a memento. Pick out simple cloth napkins or coasters from your favorite store and work with a local calligrapher to add your guests' names or favorite memory." A good friend of Nicole's who is also a calligrapher (Dianna DeStefano of Paperly Studio, thepaperlystudio.com) did personalized coasters for her last Thanksgiving.

Kurtz agrees with the gesture of personalized gift-giving. "I'm all about layering in meaning and personal touches to a table or room." She recommends leaving a small, personalized gift for each guest at their seat at the table to add one such special touch. "Opening them is a fun way to start or end the meal—it brings out the kid in all of us to see a surprise waiting for you!"

Remember what matters most

As devastating as the pandemic has been, it does offer us the opportunity to take stock of what really matters most and what makes occasions like the holidays so special. Ultimately, a more intimate gathering is never a bad thing. "For me, the most important dressing to a table is family, friends and love," says Chef Akin. "As long as my partner Gia, our child-to-be, and my daughter Marlowe are at the table—and the dogs are around stalking for scraps—I'll be a happy person. These are all infinitely more timeless table dressings than gourds or holly." **HC**

DIY gift-wrapping is a fun endeavor for anyone who's drawn to natural shapes and textures and enjoys playing with a glue gun.



THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

WHEN IT COMES TO HOLIDAY GIFT-WRAPPING, WHY NOT MAKE IT PERSONAL?

BY ASHLEY BREEDING

In the era of Amazon—where a gift arrives in a cardboard box with a “personalized” note printed across a packing slip—receiving a hand-wrapped gift, especially when accompanied by a handwritten card, feels extra special.

Amid the pandemic, it's not only important to support local shops when perusing holiday presents but, after months of isolation, we could all benefit from putting more thought and creativity into what we give one another. Plus, let's face it: What else are we going to do with all this time at home?

Over the years, I've participated in many a workshop and photo shoot where I've watched some of the most talented prop stylists create magic

continued on page 14



Decorate with organic items like twigs, dried citrus and shells, and get creative.

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Think Outside the Box

continued from page 12



on set. This has taught me practical tools I can pull from the pages and into real life. Enter DIY holiday gift-wrapping, a fun endeavor for anyone who's drawn to natural shapes and textures and enjoys playing with a glue gun. I especially like the simplicity of this style and continue to play with different designs each year.

First, you'll need to go on a scavenger hunt. Outdoors, collect ornaments like pinecones, twigs, seashells and even small stones. At your local grocer or farmers market, gather cinnamon sticks, eucalyptus (it's not only pretty but adds a delicious earthy fragrance too) and citrus fruits like lemon, lime and blood oranges. (Slice the citrus and bake in a single layer at 200 F for two hours or until dry.)

Then, wrap your gift box in burlap or craft paper. I prefer plain beige paper, but if you (or your recipients) love color, add a pop with a fun print. You can even have kids create their own drawing or painting on the paper, or a stamp collage.

Next, use thick twine to tie a neat, traditional cross; for a perfectly imperfect look, wrap the twine around the box several times and tape it.

Last, fire up your glue gun and lay out a design. For each present, pick objects in varying sizes—such as large pinecones, medium-sized citrus wheels and small twigs—and play with the arrangement

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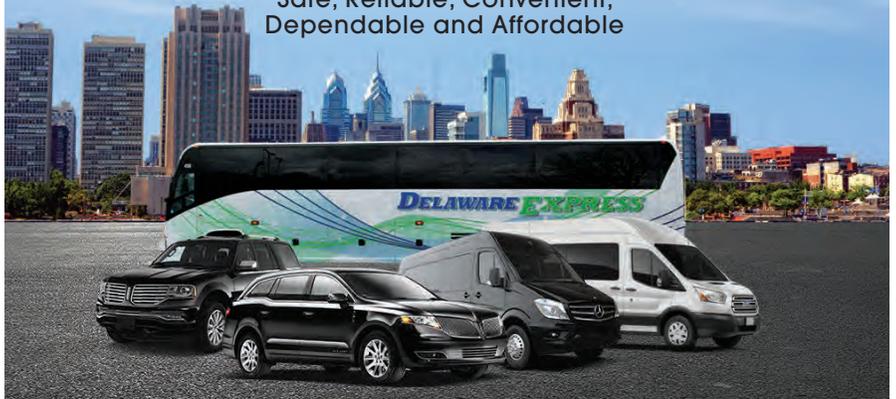


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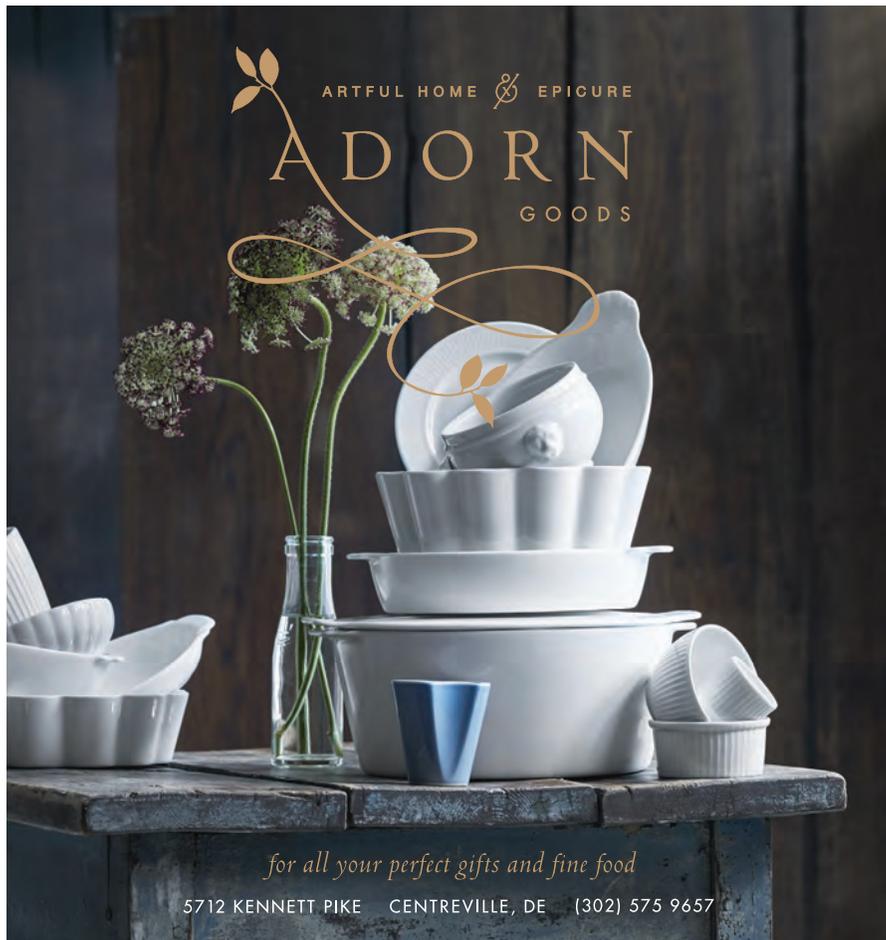
until you find one you like. Starting with the larger pieces, squirt a bit of glue onto the back and hold it against the paper for a few seconds. Repeat until you've used all the pieces, adding the smallest objects last.

For those who appreciate a more ornate than organic look, simply swap ingredients: bold paper, colorful ribbon or string, and even potpourri, which “presents” an array of fun shapes and a customized scent.

Of course, a present should be custom designed for your recipient. While I find this simple look most elegant, some call for a bit more flair. Dress it up with print paper or colorful ribbon. Swap potpourri for other ornaments like flowers or tiny toys. I find gift boxes are much more fun than gift bags, but if you're wrapping in a hurry, try fastening a bundle of greens to the handle or side. **HC**

TOP: KENDAL RILEY

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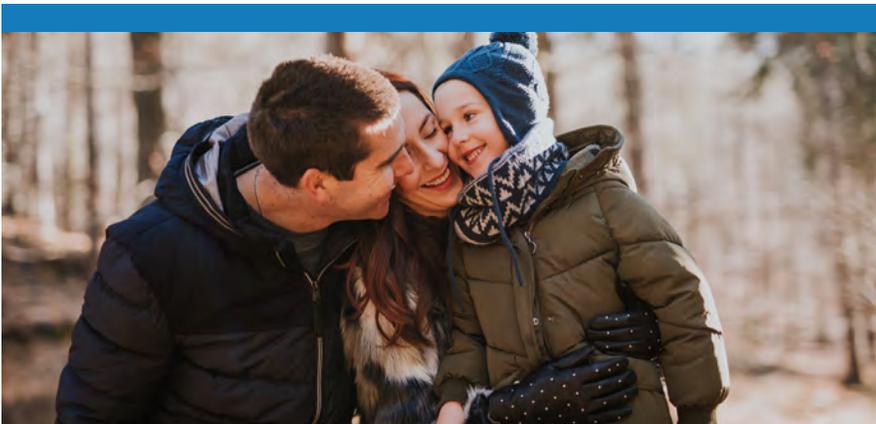
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HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

SEASONAL EVENTS MIGHT LOOK A LITTLE DIFFERENT THIS YEAR, BUT THESE TRADITIONS CARRY ON—WITH A FEW ADJUSTMENTS.

COMPILED BY GABBY HOUCK

At press time, these local events were still scheduled. Check the events' websites to stay up to date.

QVC West Chester Christmas Parade

In its 41st year, this parade brings enough Christmas cheer to last the entirety of the holiday season and then some with marching bands, floats and antique vehicles.

12/4 • Downtown West Chester, Pennsylvania; greaterwestchester.com

An Inside Out Christmas in Odessa

You might not be able to go inside the homes this year, but you can still stroll through the town of Odessa on a self-guided tour and enjoy the decked-out doors of 18th- and 19th-century houses.

12/5 • Odessa, Delaware; eventbrite.com/e/an-inside-out-christmas-in-odessa-2020-tickets-116459297895

Lewes Christmas Parade

The 89th annual parade begins at 5 p.m., followed by a tree-lighting and caroling in Zwaanendael Park.

12/5 • Downtown Lewes, Delaware; leweschamber.com

Christmas Tour of Lewes

Get into the holiday spirit in the first town in the first state with this holiday tour. Homeowners open their doors to the community virtually and Historical Society properties are open and decorated for the season. Pop into the Holiday Village for a greens sale, located at the Historical Society's main campus on Shipcarpenter Street.

12/5 • Lewes, Delaware; historiclewes.org

continued on page 20

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Holiday Happenings

continued from page 18

At Longwood Gardens, revel in the holiday displays indoors and out, running through Jan. 10.



Kennett Square Holiday Village Market

Shop for handcrafted gifts at this open-air market taking place throughout two weekends at The Creamery.

12/5-6, 12/13-14 • Kennett Square, Pennsylvania; kennetholidayvillage.com

Winter Festival

The Delaware Arts Museum festival takes place outdoors and promises to enliven your holiday senses with carolers and artisan Christmas decorations.

12/12 • Wilmington, Delaware; delart.org

Santa Cause 5K

Throw on your best ugly sweater and run for a good cause at this 5K. All proceeds go toward the Friends of Fusion Foundation, providing assistance and support for children and first responders throughout the state. The race is also offered virtually, where participants can run or walk the 5K at any time and place. Each runner receives an ornament and a pint glass.

12/12 • Newark, Delaware; runsignup.com/Race/DE/Newark/SantaCause5K

Philadelphia Orchestra's Favorites from *The Nutcracker*

Presented on The Philadelphia Orchestra's digital stage, this performance provides selections from Tchaikovsky's timeless ballet, led by the orchestra's assistant conductor, Erina Yashima.

12/17 • Virtual; philorch.org

Holly-day Hike at Cape Henlopen State Park

Start your morning early and look for holly, mistletoe and pines across this state park. Discover what the local wildlife is

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up to this time of year. Pre-registration is required for this family-friendly event by calling 645-6852. \$2 per person with a limit of 10 per group.

12/19 • Lewes, Delaware; destateparks.com

Cut Your Own Christmas Tree at Linvilla Orchards

Bring the whole family to the farm and celebrate the holiday season with Cut Your Own Christmas Tree. On Saturdays and Sundays, you can also get a chance to secure a spot on the nice list during a visit with Santa. The Philly Waffle Cabin food truck is on hand to serve warm, delicious Belgian sugar waffles.

Through 12/23 • Media, Pennsylvania; linvilla.com

Hedgerow Theatre's A Christmas Carol

This Rose Valley, Pennsylvania, theater performs their rendition of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* annually. This year, the show must go on—virtually.

Through December • Virtual; hedgerowtheatre.org

Philadelphia's German Christmas Village

The Christmas Village once again brings the charm of an authentic German Christmas market to the City of Brotherly Love with 110 vendors selling authentic European food, ornaments, and arts and crafts from all over the world. Held at Philadelphia City Hall.

Through 12/24 • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; philachristmas.com

Christmas at Colonial

On select weekends throughout December, take a walk through Phoenixville's Colonial Gardens and experience holiday nostalgia at Christmas at Colonial. There's even a light show synchronized to classic holiday songs.

Through 12/27 • Phoenixville, Pennsylvania; colonialgardenspa.com

Wilmington & Western Railroad's Holiday Lights Express

Improved for 2020 with more seating and more lights, the Holiday Lights Express takes you on a 45-minute ride inside of heated vintage coaches. En route, you'll see homes that have gotten into the Christmas spirit.

Through 12/30 • Wilmington, Delaware; wvrr.com

Winter WonderFEST

As the region's leading philanthropic cultural celebration, this event brings several holiday attractions to the area that helps raise money for various charity

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Watch Winterthur transform with its Yuletide programming running through Jan. 3.



organizations. The VisitDelaware.com Ice Rink, Christmas Village and Light Spectacular are just some of the highlights of its family-friendly programming. *Through 12/31 • Milton, Delaware; wonderfestde.org*

Winter in Wilmington Drive-Thru Holiday Light Show

Celebrate the holidays with this socially distanced event presented by The Grand. Drive your car through the Wilmington Riverfront and view thousands of lights taking the shape of holiday memories like Santa and his reindeer. The show includes animated installations, interactive music, and of course, holiday cheer. Running Thursdays through Sundays. *Through 1/3 • Wilmington, Delaware; TheGrandWilmington.org*

Holidays at Hagley

The Hagley Museum and Library gets decked out in holiday cheer for Holidays at Hagley—a monthlong celebration featuring a gingerbread house contest, a socially distanced visit with Mr. and Mrs. Claus, and a selfie station at Santa's workshop. *Through 1/3 • Wilmington, Delaware; hagley.org*

Brandywine Christmas

The Brandywine River Museum of Art's annual Christmas celebration includes a gallery filled with an expansive model train display, trees decorated with eccentric ornaments, and a wide selection of holiday events and programs for the whole family. *Through 1/3 • Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania; brandywine.org*

Rose Tree Park's Festival of Lights

Following a tradition that dates back more than 30 years, Media's Rose Tree Park transforms into a twinkly Christmas dream each night from 5:30 to 10 p.m. *Through 1/3 • Media, Pennsylvania; delcopa.gov*

Yuletide at Winterthur

One of the Brandywine Valley's most spectacular holiday showcases is providing a variety of jolly programs this season. Different events take place throughout the Winterthur grounds and indoors, including brunch with Santa, holiday craft workshops and a 3D lightshow displayed on the outside of the historic Du Pont mansion. *Through 1/3 • Winterthur, Delaware; winterthur.org*



Holidays at Hagley, running through Jan. 3, includes a gingerbread house contest and more.

A Longwood Christmas

Revel in tall trees laden with one-of-a-kind ornaments and bask in the horticultural artistry at A Longwood Christmas. The iconic holiday attraction transforms the 1,000-plus-acre garden and conservatory into a sparkling winter wonderland complete with an outdoor model train display. *Through 1/10 • Kennett Square, Pennsylvania; longwoodgardens.org HC*

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In Ohio, McGowan and her daughter, Neva, acquired Moon and Kachina, two mares. “There was a huge learning curve,” she admits. “The horses were very tolerant.”

These days, McGowan is focused on maintaining the Nokotas’ way of life, encouraging natural horsemanship and understanding and preserving their language.

“Rather than trying to force-feed the horse with our information, you try to draw out a successful behavior,” she says.

That methodology is decidedly different than what many modern trainers employ with thoroughbreds. Rather than breaking a Nokota, it’s about establishing trust and

encouraging particular behaviors, often without much tack equipment. Nokotas have traditionally been considered a prey animal, so trust is crucial. “When you get next to a horse—especially a feral horse that’s worried about being eaten—their choices for forming relationships are highly acute,” says McGowan. “They become an incredibly good read on character and authenticity.”

Nokotas try to match their heart rate to anything they consider a potential predator, including people they’re unfamiliar with. “It creates this incredible response in the human,” she says.

The dean emeritus of the Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research and a special assistant to the president, Dr. Darlyne Bailey was at a crossroads when the Nokotas came into her life. Having recently lost her mom and weighing career options, Bailey found peace when she adopted Ana. “It was a time when all your senses are acute because you’ve been cracked wide open,” recalls Bailey of the difficult loss of her mother. “That started a whole series of questions about remembering how fragile life is, how short it can be, how precious it is, and who I wanted to be. How do I want to show up? What’s calling me into existence for this next phase of my life?”

Nokotas would provide part of the answer. Like McGowan, Bailey had loved horses but wasn’t familiar with the breed. “There’s something very magical and mystical about horses in general—and Nokotas in particular,” she says.

After visiting the preserve, Bailey soon had Ana, a once frail and sickly foal that almost didn’t survive. Thanks to plenty of nurturing from McGowan and Neva, she thrived at the preserve, where she boards. Bailey believes Ana’s early struggles helped her develop into the strong and resilient horse she is today. “She’s been given so much love,” Bailey says. “And because of the ancient wisdom that these horses carry, the combination has made her very otherworldly yet very grounded.”

A specialist in macro social work, Bailey has teamed up with McGowan and Bryn Mawr alum Ryan Bailey to write a guidebook on the relationship between herd and organizational leadership. Looking at the ways the horses communicate and relate to one

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another, they want to learn from and preserve their unique language. “We’re concerned about losing that dynamic,” says McGowan. “That original language is something that, once lost, will not be re-found.”

From the research, Bailey has developed seven elements of effective leadership, a model she believes is applicable in both the field and the boardroom. “Human beings tend to rush and be very impatient—not only with ourselves but also with others,” she says. “Working with Ana, I’ve learned to focus more on setting her up for success and waiting until she’s ready to do something—even something as simple as coming to me. It’s taught me much more about patience than any books or classes.”

As with the techniques applied to the Nokota, natural horsemanship is at work in their research. “There’s no breaking that goes on at all, unless it’s breaking past the stereotypical images we human beings have of these horses,” says Bailey.

McGowan notes the Nokotas’ resilience through time and trauma. “What we can learn from them is immeasurable,” she says. “Their language is so much more refined and sweet. And it’s so delicate, where our language is loud and almost overbearing. It’s actually these little tiny movements, like a flick of an ear or a gesture, that you can see when they’re with each other.”

The book is expected to be out sometime next year. McGowan hopes it will be used “almost as a manual” for people who work with horses and those in organizational leadership positions. Also expected next year: *Vanishing Knowledge*, a documentary film by Ejaz Kahn that shares the story of the horses, along with the story of the Kuntzs, McGowan and others working to preserve their legacy.

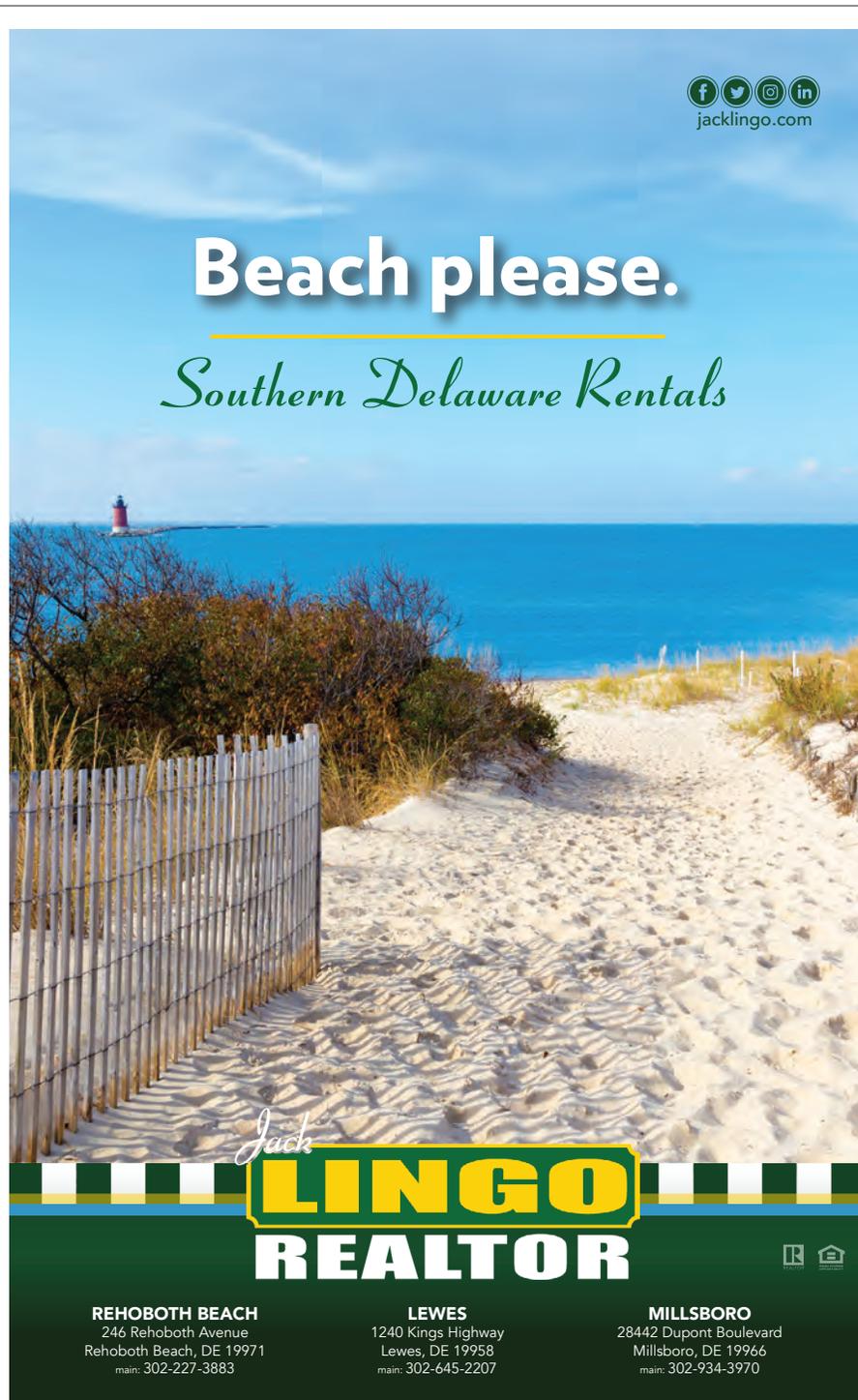
Meanwhile, McGowan continues to focus on the day-to-day aspects of preserving the species, both here and in North Dakota. Each fall, a trailer of 15-20 horses arrives in Chester Springs, most headed to new homes across the East Coast. Their arrival always generates excitement in the community, which turns out for the event in late October. This pandemic year, things are a bit different, but the goal remains the same. It’s a major fundraiser for the Preserve. “It’s almost an impossible task financially to do what’s being done,” McGowan says of the Kuntzs’ work in North Dakota.

At present, approximately 2,000 horses are listed on the Nokota breed registry, a vast majority existing in two managed herds in North Dakota. Others live with owners like McGowan throughout the country. Since launching, the preserve has found homes for about 40 Nokotas, and McGowan hopes her farm can serve as a model for others. “There

are a number of areas in our country where a preserve like this could reach out to a whole new group of people,” she says, insisting she’s simply a bridge on the horses’ journey.

But a bridge is a key piece of infrastructure on any journey. It’s a link to hope.

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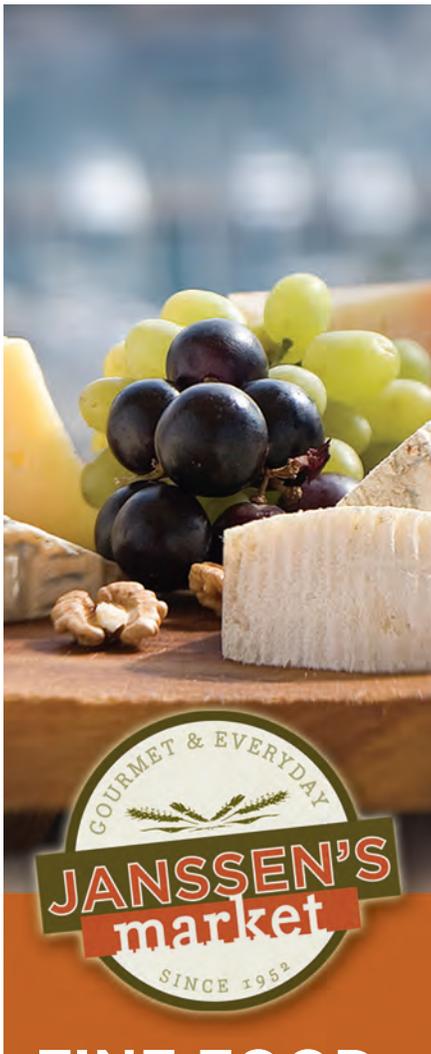
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VICKI VINTON

continued from page 43

Vinton may be getting restless.
She recently tried her hand at sculpture.



Hunt, Vinton still rides to the hounds. "Wilson lived near Frolic Weymouth and did some farming for him," says Vinton. "He told Frolic he'd do the farming if Frolic would teach him to drive carriages."

Although King has a degree in agriculture from Penn State University, he later left farming to establish Outback Trading Company, which is headquartered in Oxford. "We moved out here to Oxford, which is the Wild West of art," says Vinton.

At first, Vinton leaned on her academy training in realism for her new career. "I'd go out into the fields and paint plein air," she says.

A friend pushed her to produce a body of paintings and mount a show. "But my head was in abstract," she says. "I realized there were others who might do realism better."

Although Vinton and Manning were long-time friends, the artist was surprised when she was asked to show a couple of her abstracts at Somerville Manning. "She does mainly realism painters, so I had to ask myself if that was the best place to show," says Vinton. "But they sold. Then she took a couple more—and they sold."

"I love her textures, which she transferred over from faux in a more focused way," says Rebecca Moore, manager at Somerville Manning. "She does a lot of subtraction methods—first layering, then taking away. Artists are breaking away from realism, but in a refined way. Vicki's work is in collections where the owners also have Wyeths."

That said, Vinton may already be getting a bit restless. She recently tried her hand at sculpture, creating a solid-red signage-style figure of a woman dubbed "Stand with Presence." "I came up in the Aquarian Age," she says. "I meant [the statue] to have us take the time to breathe, to get in a touch with ourselves ... stop, breathe, be present."

Vinton has produced smaller replicas of "Stand," including one at Somerville Manning. "The first one has been purchased and is going to Sidney, Australia," she says.

Apparently, Vinton is not about to take her foot off the accelerator—wherever it takes her.

View the digital catalogues for Vicki Vinton's most recent Somerville Manning exhibitions at somervilllemanning.com.



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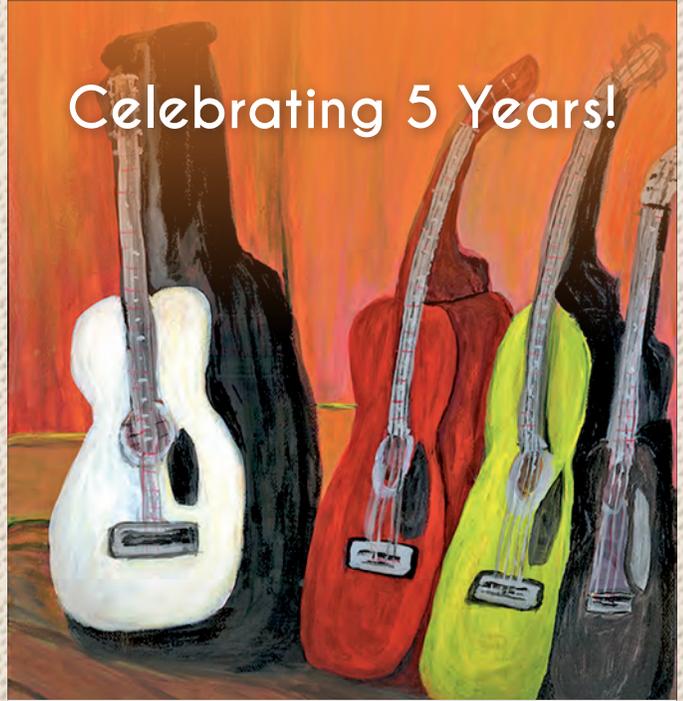


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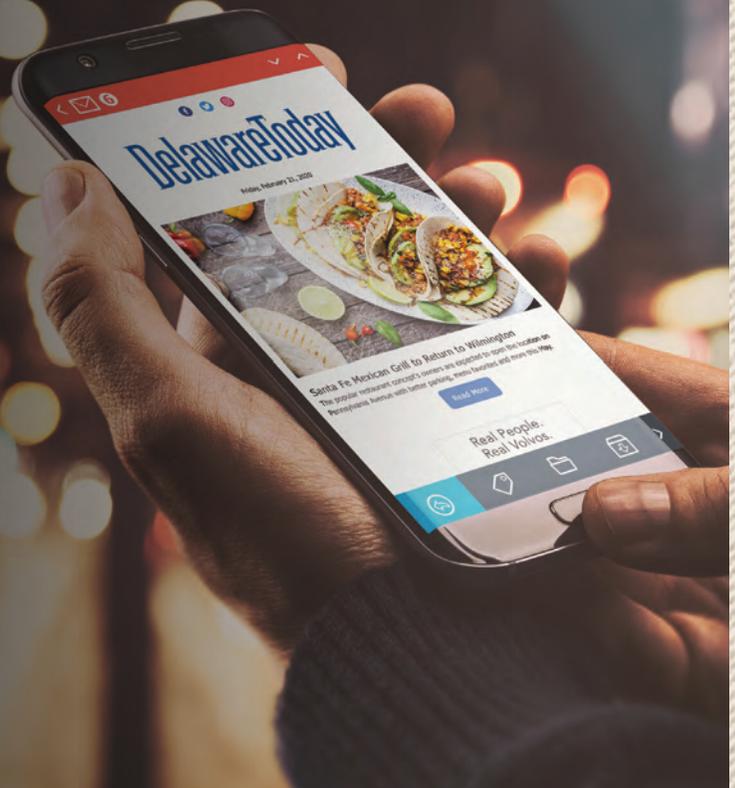
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Bûche de Noël, also known as a Yule log. (Opposite page) An entry in Hagley Museum and Library's annual Gingerbread House Competition.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this holiday season will be much different for all of us. But it may also be somewhat special, with so much time at home reawakening many of us to the joys of baking. In March alone, the 230-year-old King Arthur Flour brand experienced a 2,000 percent boost in sales, and it was weeks before it started reappearing on supermarket shelves.

Unlike Thanksgiving—high season for baking fruit pies—December is the time for cakes. That kicks off locally with Hagley Museum and Library's annual Gingerbread House Competition, which runs Dec. 1, 2020, through Jan. 3, 2021. The event usually attracts about 30 entries, which are displayed in the Millwright Shop on the Hagley grounds. The space allows visitors to comfortably wind their way through the exhibit with adequate social distancing. "This is our third season," says Jill MacKenzie, Hagley's executive director. "Families create houses together and then come out and see the results."

Making a gingerbread house is much easier than it looks. Its four walls

are cut from baked dough, two of them peaked. Roof panels are joined together by cake icing. For a great online tutorial, visit the Wilton bakeware company at wilton.com.

Pastry chef Michele Mitchell won Hagley's first gingerbread competition. She was so good at it that its organizers talked her into coming back as a judge and making a demonstration house. "Whether you're making gingerbread houses or cookies, the key is to find ways to personalize them using colored cake icing," says Mitchell, who worked for 20 years with Hotel du Pont before starting her own company, MM Pastry Designs.

Aside from gingerbread, fruitcakes are a necessary holiday dessert, even if they're not for everyone. They're best when crammed full of nuts and glazed fruits—and moist from soaking for several days in rum or other brown spirits. A dense, damp fruitcake can be slivered off into small slices before being re-wrapped and tucked back in the fridge. Opt for a glass of Cognac or Armagnac to help get in the spirit of things. "My mom is English,

so her fruitcakes were very dense and very spicy, with lots of currants and raisins,” says Mitchell.

For the French-inspired *bûche de Noël*, sponge cake is iced and rolled to resemble a Yule log, the English name it’s sometimes given. An Irish coffee or spiked cappuccino is a fine accompaniment. “Beginners can use the same recipe they would for making a jelly roll from a Betty Crocker cookbook,” says Mitchell, who suggests rolling up the cake in a kitchen towel while it’s still warm.

In honor of her English heritage, Mitchell also enjoys making Christmas trifle. Assembled in a clear, decorative bowl, the deep-dish dessert is not unlike a parfait. Mitchell starts at the bottom with fruit in Jello, tops that with a layer of sponge cake, adds custard, then finishes with freshly made whipped cream.

And from Eastern Europe, there’s the braided—often chocolate-layered—*babka* and the syrupy, creamy rum *baba*. You’ll need a glass or two of crisp champagne to counter all that richness.

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For some holiday bakers, a cake can be too much work and too little variety. That’s where cookies come in. Susan Teiser makes them for her Centreville Cafe & Montrachet Fine Foods. In a good year, she’ll bake as many as 150 dozen—sugar cookies with green and red sprinkles, oatmeal, chocolate chip, gingersnaps, snowballs, hand-painted cookies in holiday shapes, meringues, bourbon balls. “Spritz

cookies are my favorites—made with a die-cut piece in a cookie gun, then sprinkled with sugars,” she says.

Part of the preparation involves finding good cookie cutters in various shapes. It helps if they emboss patterns, as well. Searching out flea markets for vintage cutters is always fun. Of course, eating the finished product is even more fun. **TH**



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Christmas in Charleston



One of the South's most historic cities offers a Lowcountry spin on the holidays.

One can think of a lot worse things than heading south during the winter months. And while Charleston, S.C., may not offer southern Florida's predictable warmth, it is a manageable day's drive or a quick flight from the Brandywine Valley. Founded in 1670, Charleston is a multifaceted historical gem along the lines of Philadelphia and Boston—though in a quainter package. Only Savannah, Ga., comes close to equaling the Holy City's vintage Southern charm. The aforementioned nickname refers to the many steeples and spires visible throughout the downtown area, where ordinances prohibited building anything higher than 55 feet—though that has since been modified to 85 feet as a concession to tech startups.

If you're lucky enough to find your way to Charleston during the holidays, you'll see its historic homes all decked out in historically accurate seasonal décor dating back to the 1800s.

(Opposite page) The City of Charleston Christmas tree in Marion Square.

(Above) The lobby of the Belmond Charleston Place, with its holiday replica of the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.



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Charleston's walkable downtown features cobblestone streets, horse-drawn carriages, and the pastel antebellum homes of the cozily elegant French Quarter and Battery districts. The Battery promenade and Waterfront Park both overlook Charleston Harbor. There, you can view Fort Sumter, a federal stronghold where the first shots of the Civil War rang out. For a festive take on the city's maritime roots, spend your Dec. 12 evening checking out the 39th annual **Charleston Harbor Parade**, which features boats decorated for the holidays.

continued on page 92



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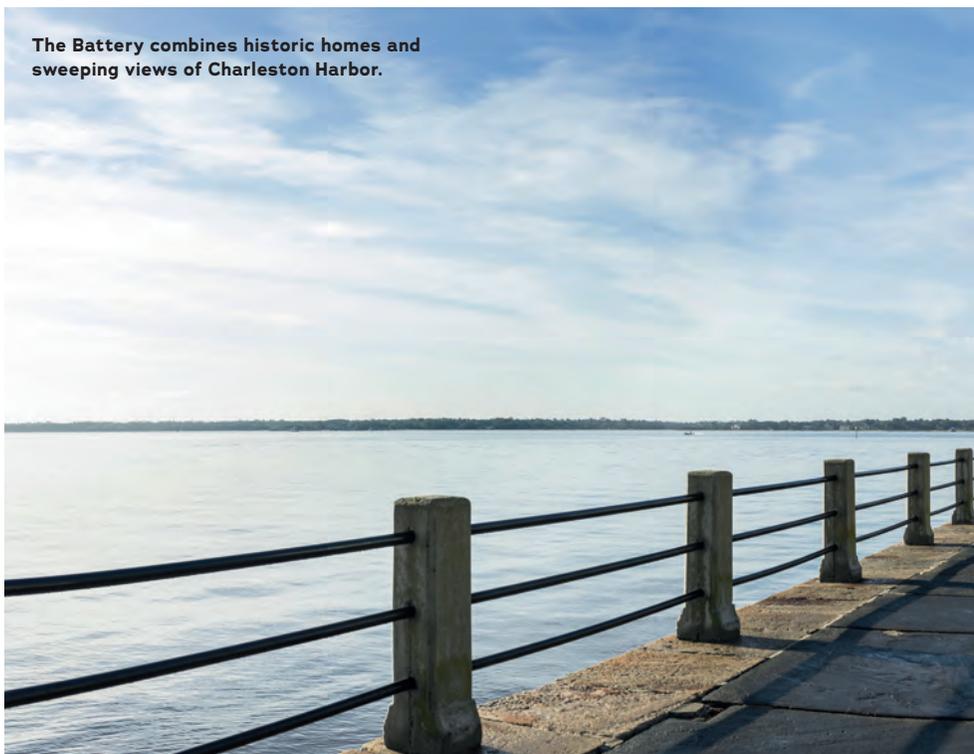


WHERE TO STAY

Located in Charleston's historic district, the **Belmond Charleston Place** deftly balances Old World charm and sleek sophistication. You'll find a pool with a retractable glass roof and a cutting-edge spa, plus the award-winning Charleston Grill and a selection of high-end shops. A private club level offers boutique-style amenities. Over the holidays, a fully operational replica of the famous Venice Simplon-Orient-Express luxury train chugs along in the lobby. *\$331-\$2,650 per night (December-February). 205 Meeting St., (843) 722-4900, belmond.com.*

An artful fusion of boutique-style luxury and intelligent design, **The Restoration** is comprised of five buildings, all modernized with a dual nod to Charleston's rich history and the offbeat effervescence of the New South. Staying in one of its eight suites is like renting an apartment from a city native with impeccable taste. Public spaces include a library, a coffee bar, and a rooftop pool with

The Battery combines historic homes and sweeping views of Charleston Harbor.



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WHERE TO DINE

Widely considered one of America's best food cities, Charleston has a more vibrant and competitive dining scene than many metro areas twice its size. It offers fresh seafood, Southern barbecue, authentic Lowcountry cuisine, and outstanding spins on pretty much everything else—and the city's award-winning chefs relish putting a seasonal spin on the classics (think pumpkin-bread pudding). There are numerous exceptional spots in Charleston. Here are a few to get you started.

Coast Bar & Grill wisely lets the fresh seafood and local produce do the heavy lifting, with a menu that makes the most of the restaurant's custom wood-burning grill. Highlights include fish tacos, braised grouper over cheese grits, and the fried shrimp plate. There's also a raw bar. *\$5.99-\$35.99. 39 John St., Suite D, (843) 722-8838, holycityhospitality.com.*

A 130-year-old family-owned institution, **Hyman's Seafood** could've easily gone the mediocre way of countless aging seafood spots. But while it is popular with tourists, it remains on point, offering ample build-your-own platters, killer po' boys, and an array of no-frills Lowcountry classics. Try the Carolina Delight—a lightly fried grit cake topped with your choice of shrimp, salmon or a salmon croquette, smothered in Hyman's signature Parmesan cream sauce with a hint of Cajun spice. *\$5.95-\$36.95. 215 Meeting St., (843) 723-6000, hymanseafood.com.*

Though it's been open since 1976, **Poogan's Porch** has the feel of a culinary institution that's been around for centuries, partly due to its circa-1888 Victorian digs. Nothing surprising here—just Southern comfort delivered with impeccable skill, whether it's the pimento cheese fritters with green-tomato jam, a bowl of rich she-crab soup, the signature buttermilk fried chicken, or decadent shrimp and grits. *\$8-\$33. 72 Queen St., (843) 577-2337, poogansporch.com.*

The more casual little brother to Poogan's Porch is a first-class barbecue joint called **Poogan's Smokehouse**. Both are run by chef Daniel Doyle, who's as adept in the kitchen with meat as he is with seafood.

THE HUNT
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Dubbed "America's first museum," the Charleston Museum was founded in 1773. Its armory collection is particularly impressive.

Braver carnivores will revel in the sampler combo of pulled pork, chicken wings, ribs, pork belly and smoked sausage, served with two sides (the collard greens are a must) and cornbread. \$7-\$60. 188 E. Bay St., (843) 577-5665, pooganssmokehouse.com.

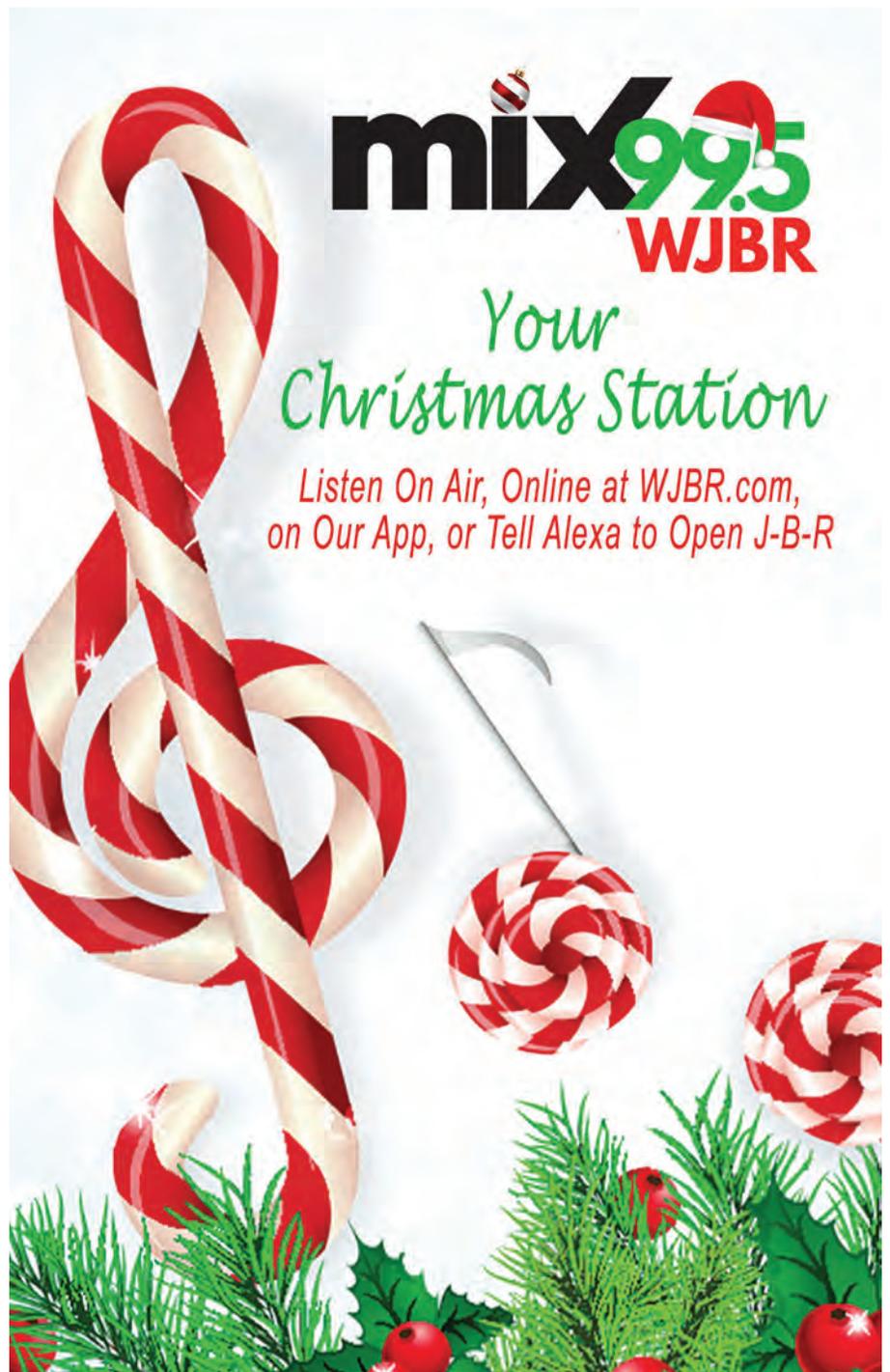
Enjoy a breakfast splurge in the sunlit **Palmetto Cafe** at the Belmond Charleston Place. Indulge in the Palmetto Omelet, with fresh lump crabmeat, lobster knuckles, mozzarella and spring onions. The hearty corned-beef hash is like none you've ever tasted. \$5-\$22. 205 Meeting St., (843) 722-4900.

WHERE TO BEGIN

Palmetto Carriage Works is the oldest carriage company in the city, and that experience is embodied in its witty, knowledgeable guides. It's the best way to get acclimated to Charleston. From \$25. 40 N. Market St., (843) 723-8145, palmettocarriage.com.

Follow up a morning carriage ride with an afternoon tour of the Charleston Harbor aboard the **Carolina Belle**. The 90-minute excursion covers over 75 points of interest, including Forts Sumter, Moultrie and Johnson; the *USS Yorktown*; St. Michael's Church, which survived the Revolutionary and Civil wars; and the stately homes on the Battery. From \$25. *Charleston Maritime Center*, 10 Wharfside St., (843) 722-1112, charlestonharbortours.com.

Dubbed "America's first museum," the **Charleston Museum** was founded in 1773. Its collections, exhibitions and events celebrate the history of Charleston and the Lowcountry. Its armory collection is particularly impressive, with examples of personal and military weaponry dating from 1750 to the 20th century. The museum also maintains the historic **Joseph Manigault and Heyward-Washington houses**. \$5-\$25. 360 Meeting St., (843) 722-2996, charlestonmuseum.org. **TH**



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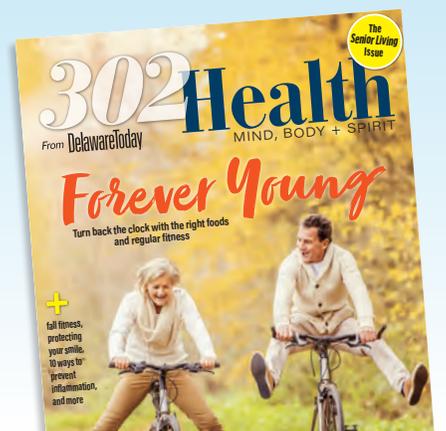
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Taken a number of years ago at the home of Chester County restaurateur Jack McFadden, this striking image marked a holiday evening full of good food, fine wine and fellowship. Sadly, McFadden—who helped put downtown West Chester on the culinary map—passed away this past September. But his passion for community and camaraderie will live on among those who remember him.



PHOTO: HEIDI'S BRIDGE



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