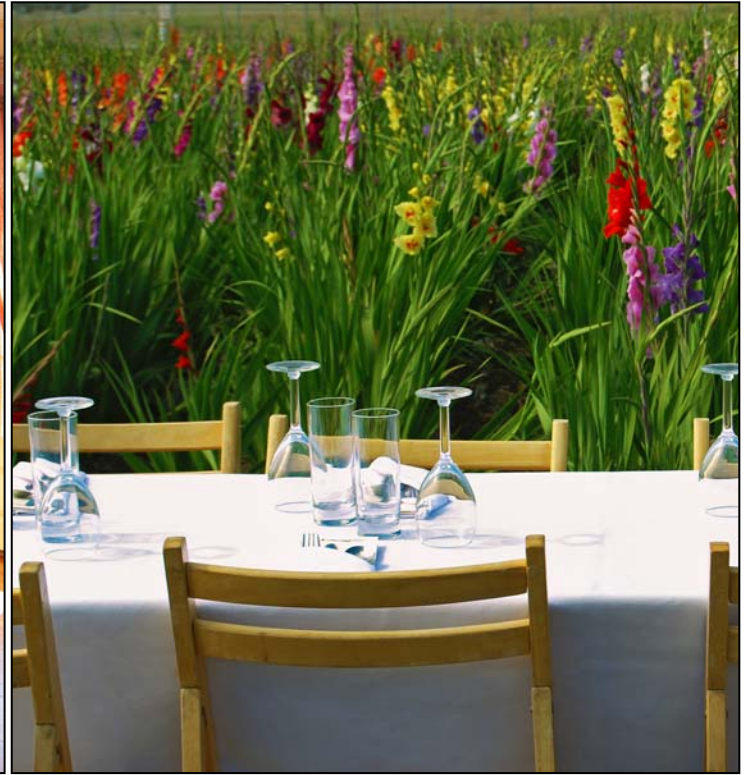


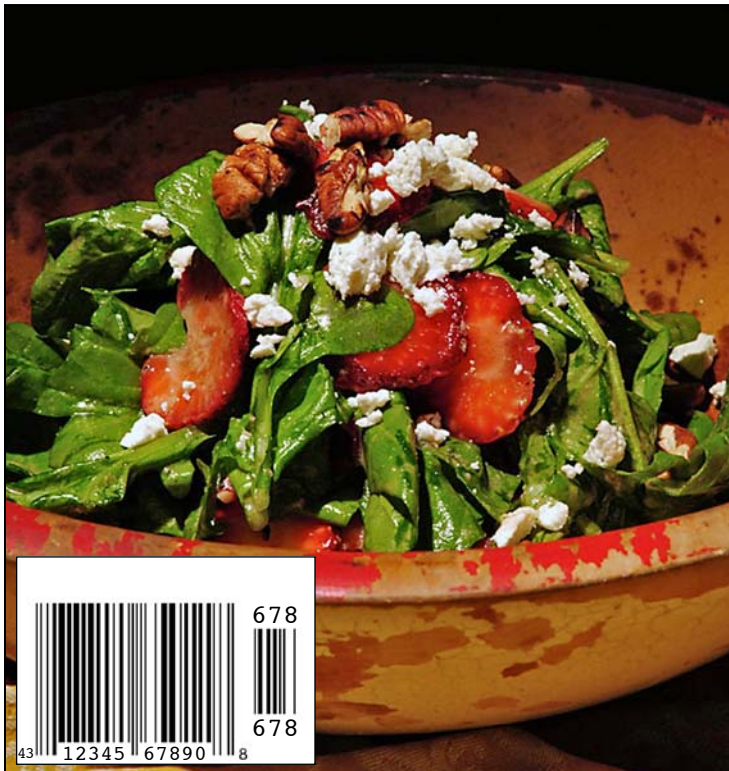
Compliments of Dan and Stacey Shanner

# AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA



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# American Lifestyle magazine

Dear Bill and Judy,

Welcome to American Lifestyle magazine!

We wanted to take the opportunity to connect and share this terrific gift as a thank you for your continued support through business and referrals. American Lifestyle is a celebration of the flavor and flair of life in the United States, and takes the reader on a journey of the nation's sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. This 48-page publication features articles on interior design, travel, technology, restaurants, and culture. Entertaining writing coupled with gorgeous photography makes this magazine a must read.

We hope you will enjoy receiving this magazine periodically and that you will allow us to continue to provide great service to you in the future. Please feel free to share this issue with friends and colleagues. We would love to hear what they think of the magazine too.

Thank you again for always keeping us in mind.

*The Shanners*

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## Front of Tear Out Card 1

**AMERICAN LIFESTYLE**

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**STRAWBERRY**  
**Arugula Spring Salad**

½ c. pecan halves, optional  
6 c. (about 5 oz.) loosely packed baby arugula  
1 pt. (2 c.) strawberries, hulled and thinly sliced  
1 small sweet onion, thinly sliced  
3 tbsp. grapeseed oil  
2 tbsp. white wine vinegar, rice wine vinegar, or white vinegar  
2 tbsp. granulated sugar  
1 tbsp. sesame seeds  
1 tbsp. chopped onion  
½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
¼ tsp. smoked paprika  
¼ tsp. kosher salt  
½ c. goat cheese, crumbled, optional

## Back of Tear Out Card 1

**STRAWBERRY Arugula Spring Salad**

Recipes excerpted from *Edible: A Celebration of Local Foods* by Tracey Ryder  
COURTESY OF EDIBLE CAPE COD (MASSACHUSETTS)

- In a small skillet, toast the pecans, if using, over medium heat, tossing frequently until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Place the pecans into a small dish; set aside.
- In a large salad bowl, add the arugula, strawberries, and sliced onion. In a blender, combine the oil, vinegar, sugar, sesame seeds, chopped onion, Worcestershire sauce, paprika, and salt. Blend until the ingredients are pureed. Taste, and adjust seasoning as needed.
- Toss the blended vinaigrette into the salad bowl ingredients. Garnish with the pecans and goat cheese, if using, before serving.

**4 SERVINGS**



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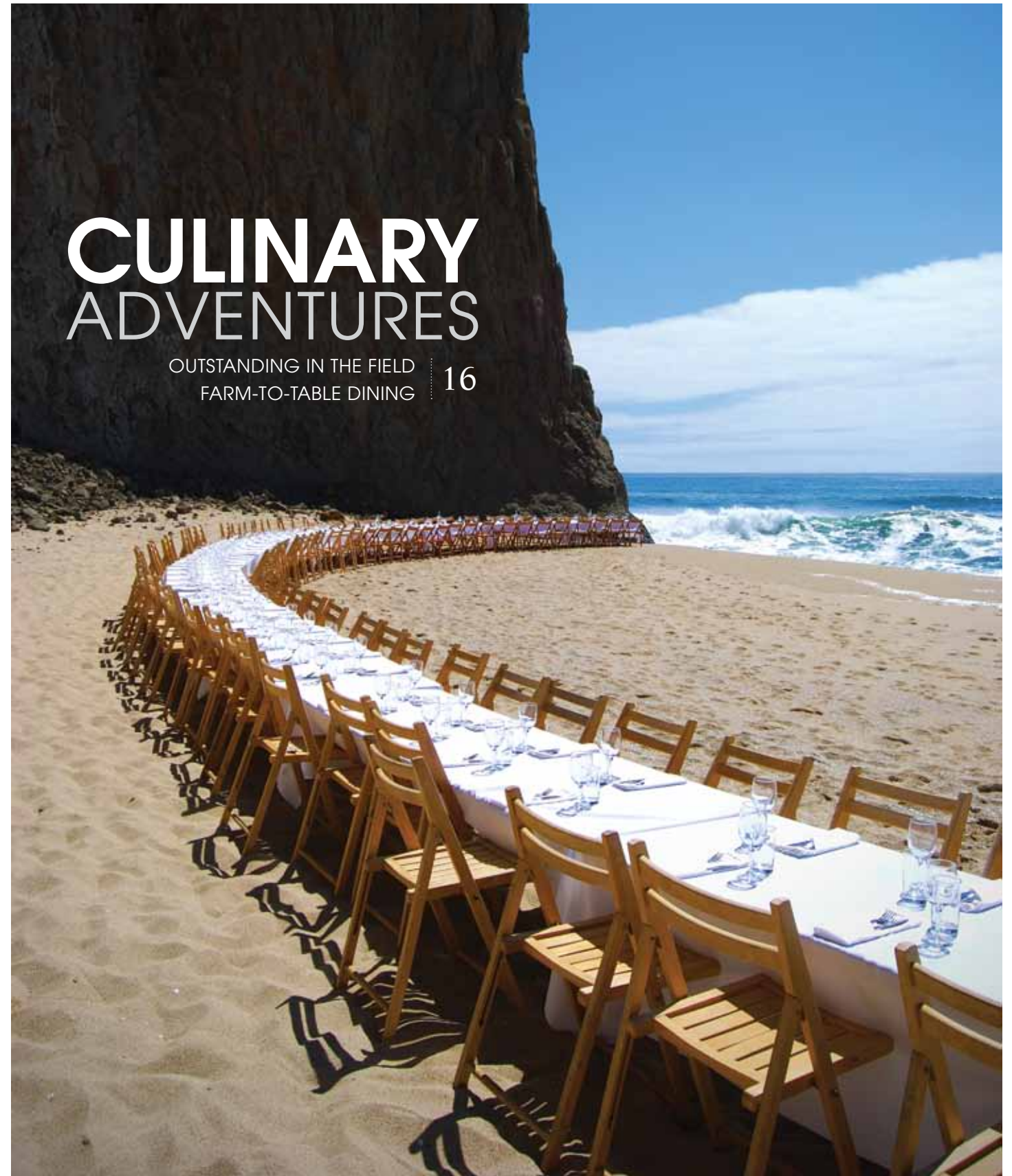


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WITH AN ALPACA



# CULINARY ADVENTURES

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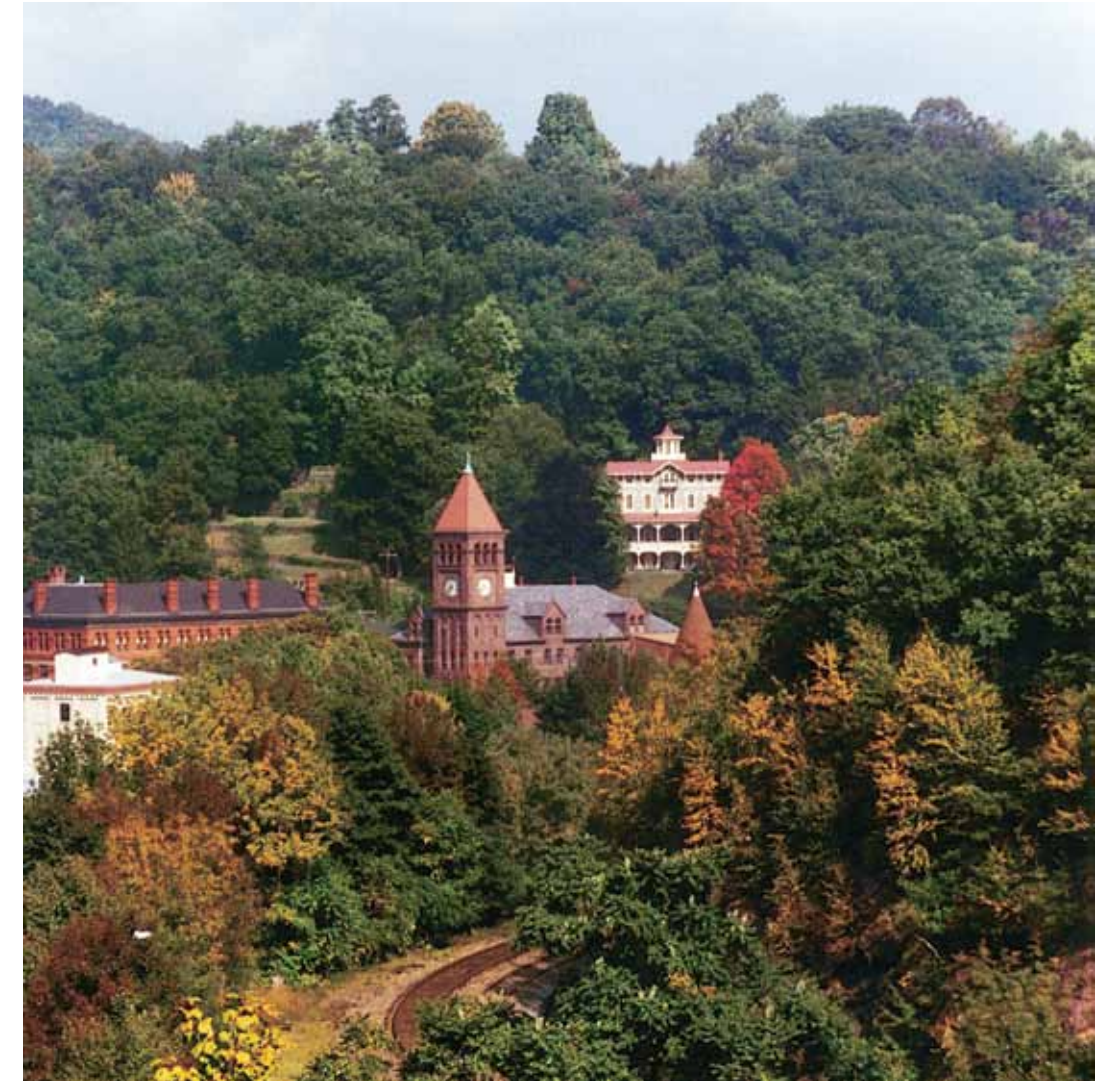
Before visiting the Pocono Mountains, my vision of it was hazy at best. I had heard of heart-shaped tubs in hotels for honeymooners and a kitschy, bygone-era pulse proliferating.

And while one can find heart-shaped tubs (and even enormous champagne-glass-shaped varieties), they are but one metaphorical tree in the literal forest that is this vast four-county expanse in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Outdoor activities and exploring quirky, boutique towns are pastimes I relish, and the Pocono Mountains accommodate in spades.

Warm-weather choices include boating, fishing, camping, horseback riding, golfing, and ziplining. Fall brings world-famous fall foliage, hiking, and biking. Winter activities include skiing, ice skating, and hunting.

My summertime adventure started at Lake Wallenpaupack, Pennsylvania's third largest man-made lake. While my friend rested comfortably in a boat next to the captain, my knees rattled off the insides of the tube being pulled behind. I endured dozens of twists, turns, and bumps, but finally met a wake I couldn't handle and was tossed off like a rag doll. The sound of splashing water, the motorboat, and my gasping breath mercifully muffled my friend's laughter.

After tubing, we checked out an art gallery in nearby Honesdale, called The Hanson Gallery and Decorium. Sophisticated



and impressive, yet unpretentious, this charming shop offered something for every shopper's budget. Next came a late lunch at a café called Branko's Patisserie du Jour. The bread was outstanding—warm and soft. I asked the young waitress how many loaves they made in a day. "Several dozen," she replied. It was easy to see why.

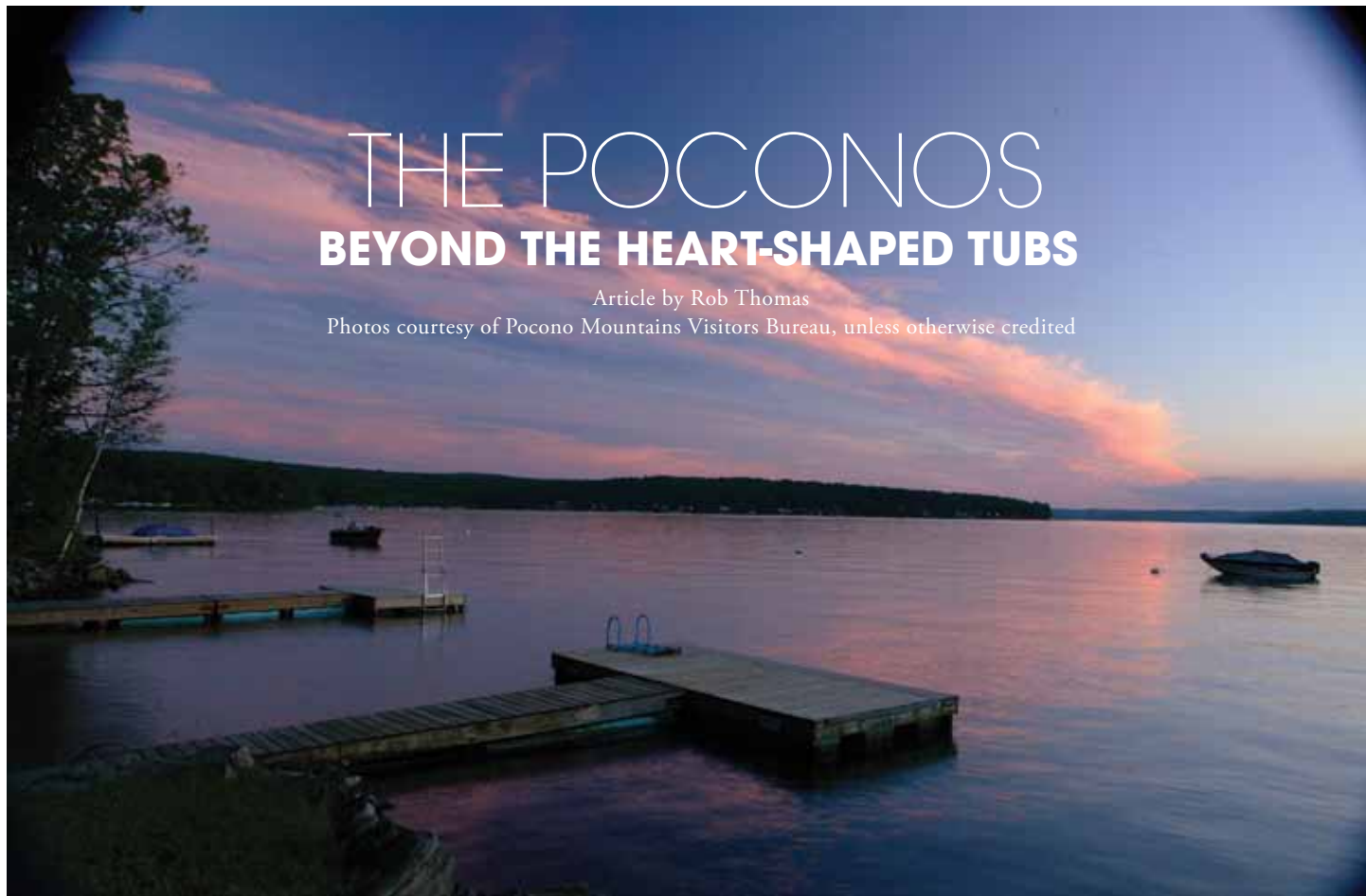
Tubing and shopping left us tired and ready to check out our hotel for the night—The Lodge at Keen Lake. My room was new, condo-like, and upscale. The bathrooms, kitchen,

**The architecture screams Switzerland. In fact, the town is known as “The Switzerland of America”—with pointed cathedrals and hills overlooking the town on each side.**

## THE POCONOS BEYOND THE HEART-SHAPED TUBS

Article by Rob Thomas

Photos courtesy of Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau, unless otherwise credited





and bedrooms were immaculate. I'm a bit of a room snob, and The Lodge passed in flying colors.

Day two brought a bike ride organized by Pocono Whitewater Rafting, in the town of Jim Thorpe, which is a good trek south of Keen Lake. Hitting the road at six in the morning, mist was rising off the fields, and the sky was an endless pale blue—signs boding well for the day.

Once there, a quick tutorial ensued, and we were on our way, in a group of ten cyclists. We rode down the Lehigh Gorge, paralleling the river. At one point, we stopped to see the old foundations of bridges built many years ago. While we admired them, a group of rafters floated by, waving hello. We cruised through the home stretch, and then were shuttled back up to the starting point.

I mentioned my fondness for quirky towns, and I haven't visited many quirkier than Jim Thorpe. Let's start with the name. Many years ago, the towns of Mauch Chunk and East Mauch Chunk were looking to attract tourists. Oklahoma, Jim Thorpe's home state, was not in a hurry to build a monument honoring the legendary Native American Indian and athlete.

So, his wife Patricia agreed to give his remains to the small Pennsylvania towns, which erected a monument and changed their name to Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania. Thorpe never set foot in the town that now bears his name. I found this both interesting and wacky, but I think Mr. Thorpe may have approved of the outcome, given the town's many charms.

Famous for its downtown shops, Jim Thorpe reminds me of Philadelphia city blocks lifted and placed in the Pocono Mountains,

thanks to the abundance of row house-style structures. The architecture screams Switzerland. In fact, the town is known as "The Switzerland of America"—with pointed cathedrals and hills overlooking the town on each side. As I wandered from store to store, I got my fill of people watching and was reminded that the area is roughly ninety minutes from New York City—the ultimate melting pot. This vibrant town has it going on.

I was there the weekend of the Jim Thorpe Birthday Celebration. It started with a Native American tribute, with seemingly the whole town out celebrating with food, craft vendors, shows at the famous opera house, and dancing.

For a change of pace, I drove the few miles to Beltzville Lake, in one of the region's nine state parks. This lake is almost 3,000 acres and a fine place for fishing. I cast from the shoreline, and caught and released a few bluegills and a foot-long bass.

Then, it was back to stay at The Inn at Jim Thorpe, a place steeped in history. The Inn was built in 1849 and exudes old-world charm. I took advantage of the spa package, a relaxing experience which, along with the wonderful breakfast served at the new Broadway Grille and Pub, had me refreshed for my trip back home.

My short trip limited my experiences. Given more time, I would have caught a show at Penn's Peak, where Robin Trower and Peter Frampton (longtime favorite rockers of mine) have played. Being a gaming fan, I also would have checked out Mount Airy Casino Resort, run by Harrah's, which offers an eighteen-hole golf course, another hobby I enjoy. And of course, who can resist the thrill of NASCAR; Pocono



Raceway is home to two races per summer. The Pocono Mountains also boast spas, outlet malls, bed and breakfasts, and wineries—all of which will be on my list of "things to do" next time I visit. Suffice it to say, the options are many and eclectic, sure to suit even the pickiest vacationer. This isn't just a spot for honeymooners anymore! [AL]

[www.800poconos.com](http://www.800poconos.com)

After tubing, we checked out an **ART GALLERY** in nearby Honesdale, called The Hanson Gallery and Decorium. **SOPHISTICATED** and impressive, yet unpretentious, this **CHARMING SHOP** offered something for every shopper's budget."



© Cynthia Hanson



Motivated by innovation and the **desire** to create something **exciting**, her work merges form with function to create pieces of art that also fulfill household needs.

If I tell you that the prominent sense to be awakened when stepping into a home will be your sense of touch, you'll probably think I'm mistaken. But once you find out that this home is adorned with tactile felt home-wares designed by artist Selina Rose, you'll quickly understand. "People's reaction is usually to touch and feel the textile products straight away," describes the artist, "which is exactly what I want. Felt is such a tactile material, and the surfaces that I try to create are intended to evoke the sense of touch."

Selina specializes in making intricately-cut felt products that boast "cut out" or "cut and fold" designs. Motivated by innovation and the desire to create something exciting, her work merges form with function to create pieces of art that also fulfill household needs. "I try to be as cutting edge and unique in my work as possible," Selina details. "Although my designs have an element of art and decorativeness about them, they are very much intended to be used and loved."

This up-and-coming artist has always been surrounded by a whirlwind of innate creativity, stretching back to her days growing up within a small rural community in Cornwall, England.

"My father was a draughtsman in the Naval drawing office, my mother a primary school teacher, and my older sister an illustrator," outlines Selina, "so I think there was an element of creativity in our genes."

Selina's passion for interiors and design became prevalent at an early age—she distinctly recalls sneaking into her mother's sewing room as a child to make a cushion or two, and by age thirteen, she took the initiative to decorate and wallpaper her entire bedroom. After one fateful trip to London to visit 100% Design, the U.K.'s leading design and architecture exhibition, Selina was certain she wanted to pursue a career in design upon graduating high school.

Selina spent the next five years studying textiles in college, eventually earning a B.A. (Hons) degree in Textile and Surface Design in 2005. It was during this time when she began her artistic partnership with felt. "For my final project at the university, I was hand-cutting felt and leather," remembers Selina. "I loved the way you could manipulate these materials—they have a paper-like quality in that you can punch, perforate, fold, and cut the surface without it fraying. The first felt product I made

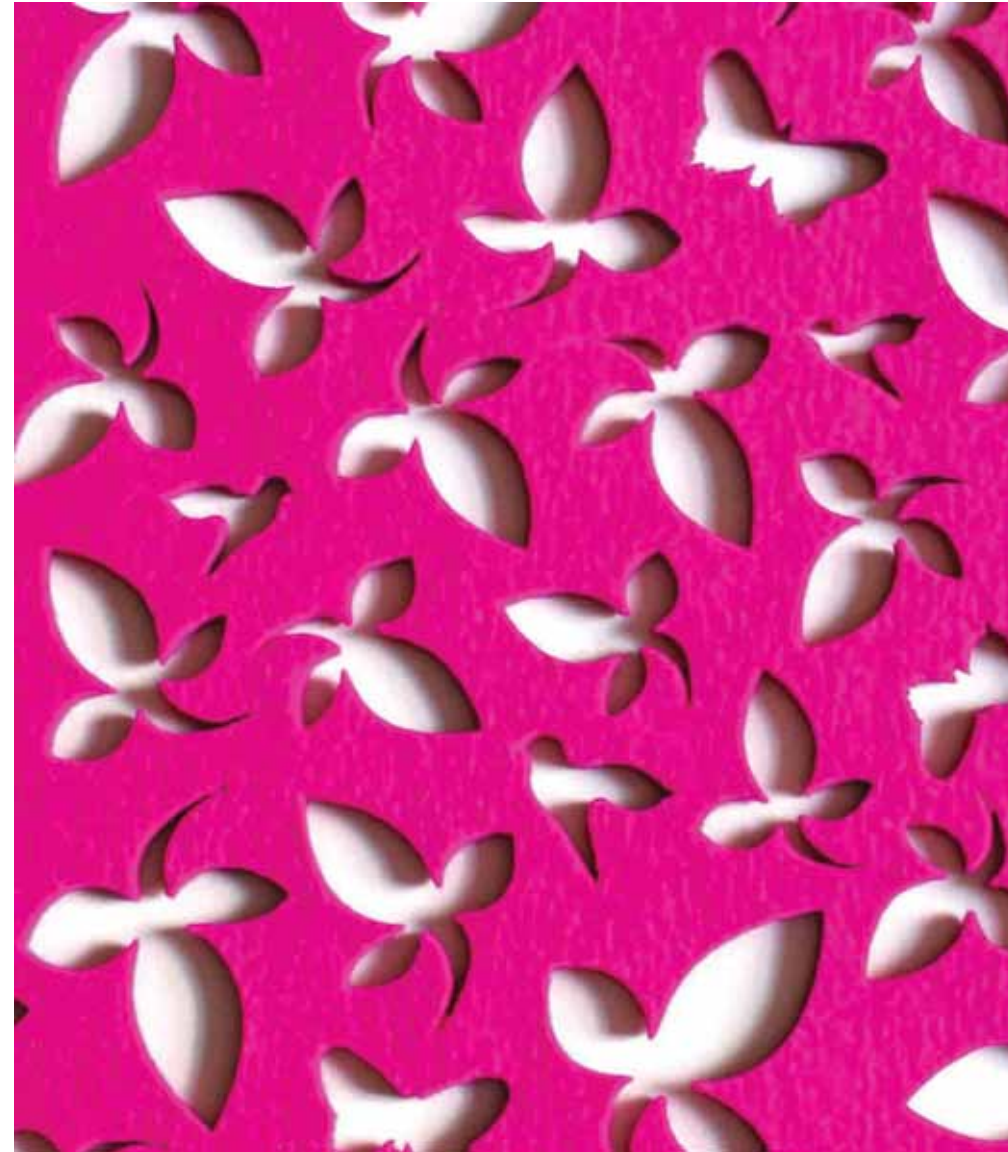


SELINA ROSE

## CUTTING OUT A NICHE IN TEXTILE DESIGN

Article by Marie Penn, based on an interview with Selina Rose





was a cushion, and for my degree show at the university, I created felt lampshades, cushions, panels, and rugs.”

At her premier exhibition, Selina landed her very first retail order and press coverage. Inquiries expressing an interest in her work began to pour in from that point on, and Selina was spurred to launch her own collection. With a grant from the

Arts Council England in tow, she was able to set up her creative practice and continue to develop product designs.”

Selina now works out of her own studio—which is currently housed inside of a beautifully converted basement—and offers a wide range of felt home-wares to the public. Her ready-made products include rugs, table runners, throws, cushions,

window panels, wallpaper, and room dividers. She also specializes in bespoke interior surfaces, where she creates custom, and sometimes three-dimensional, felt surfaces for residential and corporate clients. “My new cut and fold designs were inspired by traditional Japanese origami techniques,” she elaborates. “I am fascinated by paper folding and transforming a flat material into a three-dimensional surface.

“My inspiration comes from far and wide, but a lot of my patterns are inspired by nature,” Selina continues. “I do a lot of photography and manipulation of imagery and drawing of new motifs. I try to create sophisticated simplicity. Although my patterns are sometimes intricate and detailed, I try to balance this out with simple compositions and layouts. The scale of the pattern and the way it is

distributed across the material radically changes the surface. I have a ‘less is more’ approach, I think. It’s all in the execution.”

To create these elaborately designed products, Selina begins with drawings and sketches of pattern ideas. These are then drawn into the computer and developed into artwork ready to be cut out of the felt. “Originally, I hand-cut the designs, but over

the past five years, I have developed my technique using state-of-the-art cutting technology to enable me to cut the felt by machine,” she explains—although all of her products are still hand-finished in her studio.

The felt she uses is one hundred percent wool and colored using environmentally-friendly dyes. Available in a variety of thicknesses and in over thirty colors,

“My new **CUT AND FOLD** designs were inspired by traditional Japanese origami techniques,” she elaborates. “I am fascinated by **PAPER FOLDING** and **TRANSFORMING** a flat material into a **THREE-DIMENSIONAL** surface.”



Felt is one of the oldest **fabrics** known to man and has been used for thousands of years and will continue to be used as it is **practical, durable, natural, and sustainable.**

the material is also sustainable and biodegradable. “Felt is a joy to work with. I love its rigidity and robustness,” expresses Selina. “There’s something about natural materials, the longevity and reliable nature of them. Felt is one of the oldest fabrics known to man and has been used for thousands of years and will continue to be used as it is practical, durable, natural, and sustainable.”

The length of time required to make her homewares ranges depending on the size of the project. Some small bespoke projects can take six to eight weeks to complete. “Larger projects, such as my latest commission for Arup, have been spread over the year,” Selina reveals. “That particular project spanned two buildings and involved over 130 linear yards of felt. I have created felt acoustic panels and window treatments for seventeen rooms. Seeing this project finished and knowing it will be there for years to come for people to enjoy was quite a big moment for me.”

In between assignments and bouts of creative blocks, you’ll find Selina frequenting galleries and exhibitions, hosting family dinner parties, or taking weekend getaways. “I love traveling to European cities and exploring their art and design cultures,” she notes. “I am a member of two designers’ networks based in London, Hidden Art and Craft Central, which encourage designers to get out of the studio or workshop and meet up to network, which is a great way to

bounce ideas around and be inspired by fellow creatives.”

Spending this time amongst talented competitors helps to remind Selina that it is important to always maintain a visual style that is unique yet identifiable. “I think having a strong identity and brand is crucial for designers working in this hugely crowded and competitive industry. I want my products to be instantly recognizable and memorable,” she details. However, it was difficult for Selina to pinpoint the right words to describe her signature style. Asking for input from her Twitter followers, one supporter described the style as being, “Intricate patterns cut into natural materials that evoke an art feel in an everyday home accessory.”

“I thought that was a great description,” comments the designer. “I try to create a sophisticated simplicity in my work. My designs are bold, graphic, and tactile with strong eco credentials.”

You may choose to define Selina’s style any way you’d like, but there is no denying that she’s truly developed a signature all her own. One glance at a bright magenta rug adding a punch of color in a room, or a floral cut-out felt blanket creating an air of sophistication with maximum impact for minimum effort, you’ll know the hand behind the work—because no one else in the international design scene provides such a product, executed in such a way, as to be mistaken for Selina Rose homewares. [AL]



[www.selinarose.co.uk](http://www.selinarose.co.uk)

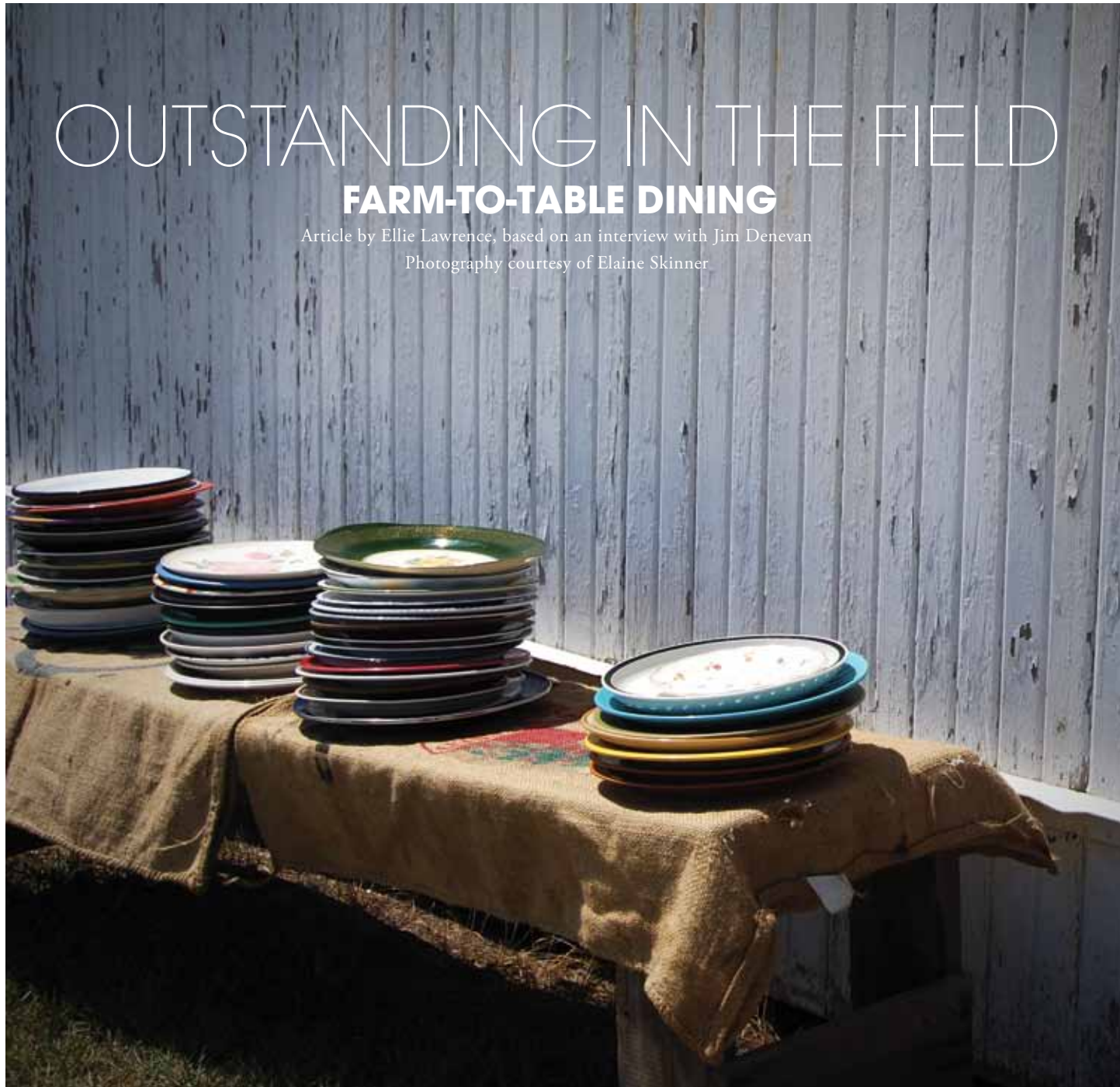




# OUTSTANDING IN THE FIELD

## FARM-TO-TABLE DINING

Article by Ellie Lawrence, based on an interview with Jim Denevan  
Photography courtesy of Elaine Skinner



Although the setting of their open-air restaurant is **EVER-CHANGING**—fluctuating anywhere from **A SEA COVE** in California to a lush and flowing New Hampshire **ORCHARD**—the mission of the event is simple: to **RECONNECT DINERS** to the land and the origins of their food, while honoring the local farmers and **FOOD ARTISANS** who cultivate it.”

A continuous ribbon of linen-draped tables spirals through a lush pasture, the white cloth contrasting brightly against the mountain ranges in the distance. Under normal circumstances, this sea of furniture might seem out of place in such a rural environment. But here, it becomes part of the natural scenery as if it had been there all along. And as guests begin to take their seats at one of the hundred-plus wooden chairs paired neatly with a simple place setting arrangement, this exquisitely designed setting comes to life—giving the host, Outstanding in the Field, a memorable platform on which to present its distinguished dinner party.

Outstanding in the Field is a traveling farm dinner series that delivers unparalleled culinary adventures to thousands across the nation. Every year, from May throughout the early fall months, Jim Denevan and his staff drift from coast to coast serving up exquisite fare made from almost all local ingredients and prepared on-site by a celebrated chef of that region. Although the setting of their open-air restaurant is ever-changing—fluctuating anywhere from a sea cove in California to a lush and flowing New Hampshire orchard—the mission of the event is simple: to reconnect diners to the land and the origins of their food, while honoring the local farmers and food artisans who cultivate it.

This notable dining series was founded by chef Jim Denevan—who, believe it or not, spent

several years in the restaurant industry before developing this deep appreciation for food that is so prevalent in his work today. As a teenager obsessed with surfing and little else, Jim began his unintentional career working as a night shift dishwasher at a local Santa Cruz restaurant. Despite eventually being promoted to second line cook, Jim had little interest in the kitchen—viewing food as merely “fuel between surf sessions.” It wasn’t until a couple years later, after a modeling gig landed him in Europe for several months, that Jim developed that certain *je ne sais quoi* toward food, becoming fascinated by the culture that surrounded this once basic commodity.

Jim returned to the States inspired, and took on several cooking roles at a handful of restaurants—immersing himself deeper into gastronomy as he ascended up the ladder rungs in the kitchen. By the late nineties, he was the head chef at Gabriella Café with full control over the direction of the menu. Being intentional about the quality of food he uses, Jim began shopping twice a week at the local farmers’ markets to gather the freshest produce, and ultimately turned the establishment into what could be considered as a classic farm-to-table restaurant.

“I wanted to promote farm-to-table dining,” recounts Jim. “It seemed to me like there was a cultural moment coming along in a few years. Interest was building, and I wanted to make it popular.” But for this idealistic chef,





servicing locally-harvested food wasn't good enough. Jim wanted to celebrate the connection these farmers have with the final cuisine, so in 1998, he held his first of many farm dinner events. Jim invited several of his restaurant's regular producers to join his patrons for dinner, where the entire menu consisted of dishes made from ingredients that came straight from their farms. The first dinner ended better than Jim could have imagined—once the farmer announced which ingredients came from their farm, the entire crowd sat with open ears, earnestly interested in hearing the stories behind the meal they were about to enjoy. “Just seeing people's appreciation for the farmer was amazing,” he adds, “but the main thing was creating an environment where the farmer could be appreciated for their hard work.”

Although the farm-to-table series at Gabriella Café was an instant success, the wheels continued to turn as Jim brainstormed ways to enhance the event. He wanted to really connect his patrons to the origins of the food while celebrating the efforts of the farmer. And Jim could think of no better way to do that than by taking the dinner out of the restaurant and back into the farm. Using a nearby farm as the dining destination, Jim organized the details for the restaurant without walls, and waited apprehensively, uncertain if anyone would even show up for the alfresco meal. But on that late summer afternoon, a crowd slowly trickled in with plates in hand, eager to explore the farm and appreciate the fruits of the farmer's labor.

A few seasons passed on the local farms—with guests returning time and time again—before Jim decided to expand the reach of these open-air feasts. Award-winning guest chefs were recruited to collaborate with farmers at

a range of ranches, vineyards, and farms. The support Outstanding in the Field received grew exponentially, and by 2003, the team was ready to breach state lines on their way to the East Coast. Since that fateful decision, the ambitious crew have resigned themselves to a nomadic lifestyle for seven months out of the year,

zigzagging through states in their red and white bus as they take their restaurant across North America and back again.

Despite the stress of living in close quarters and the occasional transportation meltdown, the team pushes forward to share the culinary adventure with as

many people as physically possible—their loaded schedule of dinners had Outstanding in the Field serving almost 9,000 people at over sixty events in twenty-five states during last year's tour alone. “We have guests come to the events repeatedly. There's one couple who came to thirteen events two years ago, and last

year they came to another six,” recalls Jim. “There are definitely those people who cross it off their bucket list—they go once, and we may never see them again. But then there's quite a number of people who come every year, especially those who come at the beginning of the season and then again for the late fall harvest. It

is a way to recognize the seasons and connect to nature, which is fulfilling for people.”

Outstanding in the Field sets up shop just about anywhere and everywhere—on a hilltop or valley bottom, alongside a cliff in the middle of nowhere or in an agriculture garden in the heart



A continuous ribbon of linen-draped tables spirals through a lush pasture, the white cloth contrasting brightly against the mountain ranges in the distance.



The farmer tells **FAMILY TALES** about the five generations of farmers who came before him. The **FISHERMAN** describes life out on the open sea. The **RANCHER** illustrates how sustainable farming practices create a relationship-based food system. And the captivated **AUDIENCE** listens attentively as they makes their way to the **LONG TABLE**—which is often situated only a few feet away from where the night's ingredients were grown."

of the city. "It is like the culinary circus comes into town," Jim jokes. "Maybe we don't have the big top, but we do carry around all of our items with us, and we can really go just about anywhere on earth and set up this table. The table is the magnet for meaning wherever it is."

Part of the restaurant's allure is in connecting to and exploring these new locations, so the team loves to find the most beautiful locations to place the table within the environment. "People often change their positions throughout dinner because the views are so spectacular, and they want to share it with others," describes Jim. "We had an event recently where the farmer had a field of flowering buckwheat which is really, really pretty. He was going to plow it in the next two days, so we had him come out there and carve a beautiful rectangle within this big field of flowering buckwheat. The buckwheat was about four feet high, so it looked like the table was floating in a sea of flowers. It was a pretty amazing setting."

No matter the location, the guests are escorted on a detailed tour of the site, where the farmer takes center stage to reveal their own distinct story that surrounds their particular crop. The farmer tells family tales about the five generations of farmers who came before him. The fisherman describes life out on the open sea. The rancher illustrates how sustainable farming practices create a relationship-based food system. And the captivated

audience listens attentively as they makes their way to the long table—which is often situated only a few feet away from where the night's ingredients were grown. "We try to hide the table during the tour of the site so that there is a bit of a theatrical reveal to it," explains Jim.

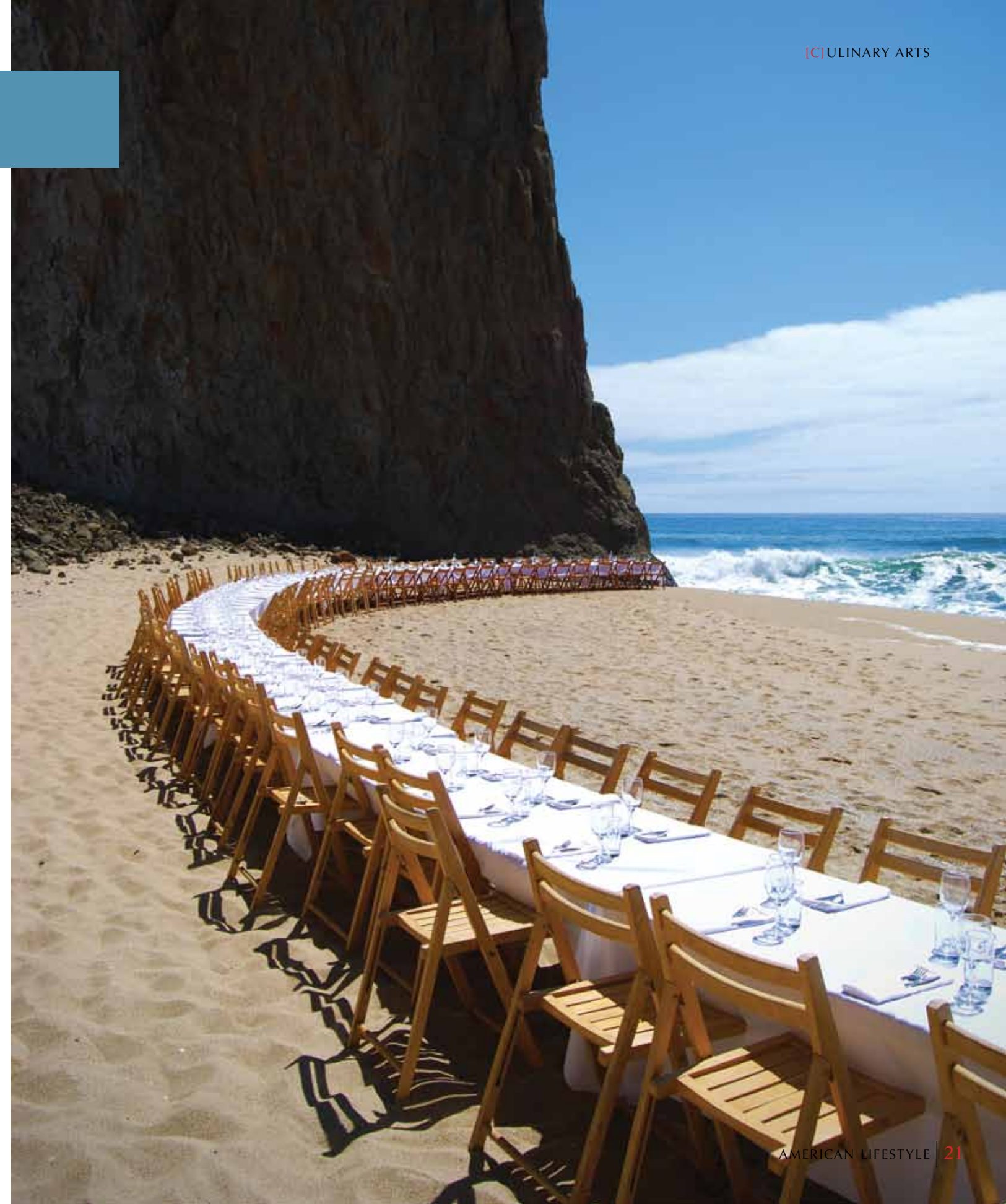
Although a farm dinner has the characterization of being homey and informal, the execution of Outstanding in the Field's five-course meal is nothing short of gourmet elegance. Distinguished chefs—who often boast honors like being *Iron Chef* winners or *Top Chef* contestants—use only the freshest produce available to create meals which highlight their talent and area of expertise. Squash blossom pizza, very fresh abalone, grilled escarole and treviso, beet greens and carrot top pesto—the dishes are always artistic, spontaneous, and of the season. Throughout the meal, local producers who provided additional ingredients for the menu—like the cheese maker or perhaps the beekeeper—will walk around the table to say hello as people dine on the different courses.

"What is most attractive about the events, even more so than the scenic environment, is that folks are able to walk away with a better understanding of where their

food comes from and the folks behind the meal. That changes the culture of food," Jim analyzes. "People are now celebrating that there's more diversity in terms of food and access to food. We even have people send us pictures of 'Outstanding in my Backyard,' where they'll gather with a couple neighbors and put together their home-grown version, using two or three tables and food from their vegetable garden. It is fun to see that kind of thing."

There is no denying that Outstanding in the Field has effectively used their open-air restaurant to elevate the farm-to-table movement to new heights in North America. But these results are just the beginning. With visions of bringing the farm dinner revolution to farms in South America, Australia, South Africa, and beyond, Jim and his team hope to show the entire world this better way to consume food. [AL]

[www.outstandinginthe.com](http://www.outstandinginthe.com)





# EARTH, TURF, AND WOOD

## JOURNEY OF A SELF-MADE BUSINESSMAN

Featuring an interview with Jarod Hynson, owner of Earth, Turf, and Wood

“Six years ago, I began to realize that there was a DEMAND for higher-end LANDSCAPE DESIGN building in the area. People know and understand good quality work, so we eventually turned our ATTENTION to design building.”

### WHEN DID YOU LAUNCH YOUR FIRST BUSINESS?

In seventh grade, I started mowing grass for some neighbors with my dad's tractor. One lawn became two, and two lawns became four. By the time I was a senior in high school, I was mowing about one hundred lawns a week, and had several employees working for me. It was a lot of responsibility at a young age, but I kept that business for about four or five years after I graduated high school.

### HOW DID YOUR PARENTS REACT TO THE GROWTH OF YOUR BUSINESS?

When I told my mom that I needed to buy a commercial mower at the age of fourteen, she informed me I would have to get a loan from the bank, expecting that I would never be approved for the money because I was underage. Undeterred, I contacted the bank president, and said, “I need a time to sit down with you and explain to you what I want to do.” He granted me an appointment, so I went in with my mother one afternoon for a \$2,000 loan for a lawn mower. He actually granted me the loan! My mother had to cosign. Then she had to come home and explain to my father how all this transpired, because this wasn't supposed to happen!

### DID YOUR AGE HELP OR HURT YOU AT THAT POINT?

It is a loaded question. Looking back on it, it was an enormous amount of responsibility for someone of my age. When my

friends would leave school and go play or go to athletic events, I'd leave and assume a business role at two o'clock in the afternoon because I had a business to run. It's a tremendous amount of responsibility. An income for a kid at that age—especially when you are still under mom and dad's roof—is tough when you don't have any true insight as to how to manage your finances. Would I change anything? No. Did I learn a lot? I learned a tremendous amount, to the point where the company we run today is debt-free.

### BACK TO SCHOOL:

I always knew that I wanted to further my education. But when I graduated high school, I just wanted to work and earn the money. In the back of my mind, I was always curious about what the books said. I eventually sold my business to a guy who merged my company with his, and I went to college for human resource management. While attending college, I made a point of working for a different landscape company each summer, to gain more experience and an inside look into several landscape contracting companies.

So many others go to the books and then get job experience. I did it backwards. As a matter of fact, during my first year of college, I took all 300 and 400 level business classes. I really wanted to get into the meat of it. I wanted to take a small business management class and financial management courses while the







**Our landscape architect will begin to do a base map of the project—shaping the patio areas and the outdoor living areas, the pool, and the buildings.**

real life experience was still fresh in my mind. I wanted to see if I was applying this correctly, or if I wasn't.

**RELAUNCH OF BUSINESS:**

After finishing up my undergraduate degree and working for one or two other landscape companies for about a year, I decided to start my current company (Earth, Turf, and Wood) in the spring of 2000. There was a lot of thought that went into deciding if we wanted to go down this road again. But after combining all the knowledge that I had, my wife and I went to a bank for a small loan and started this business with an emphasis on commercial grounds care and

maintaining commercial sites. After two or three years, we started pursuing landscape design building a bit more.

**DID YOU HAVE TO START FROM SQUARE ONE?**

We did. When we started this business, my wife and I decided that if we were going to launch another company, we would not take any money from family members or friends. If we were going to start this business, we were going to get a loan from the bank—if it fails or succeeds, it is on our shoulders, and we don't have to feel awkward around friends and family. It was risky, but we went to the bank for a \$13,000 loan for the first truck.

It was a little nerve-racking at first. But it seemed to take off. I knew the quality of work we wanted to do, and I knew the level of work the clients wanted and expected.

We started with one truck and a mower. By the second year, we hired one guy part time. After the fourth year, I was up to three full-time employees. That was about the time I stepped out of the field myself. I haven't been in the field for about six years now. Then we started getting foremen. Now we have eight employees full time, and we'll probably hire another eight to nine part-time or seasonal employees. We have an operations manager in-house,

and we just hired a registered landscape architect.

**HIGH-END MARKET:**

Six years ago, I began to realize that there was a demand for higher-end landscape design building. People know and understand good quality work, so we eventually turned our attention to design building. In our specialty, we will design the entire outdoor living area in the backyard—pool, outdoor kitchen, all landscape installations, lighting, and irrigation. We'll take the client in whatever direction they want to go, and really contour the design around the client's family and lifestyle.





A friend of mine told me once, 'If you **EVER** want to see how a contractor is going to **TREAT YOUR** property or treat **YOUR HOUSE**, take a look inside their work truck.' Ours are spotless, inside and out."

#### DESIGN PROCESS:

Once the client calls into the office, we will set up an appointment to meet with them at their residence and take a look at the proposed project. Then we will spend a couple weeks with the client, gathering thoughts and ideas. Our landscape architect will begin to do a base map of the project—shaping the patio areas and the outdoor living areas, the pool, and the buildings. The revision of the design process normally takes about one to two months by the time we really have something that the client likes. From there, we begin to look at the materials they need for their project, whether it be a natural stone, a flagstone, or travertine that we bring in from Turkey or Peru (which is a really neat paver). We'll begin to formulate the different phases of the project, and get it into the schedule. Start to completion on a decent sized residential project can be six months to a year.

#### OBSTACLES:

I think one hurdle is establishing trust with our clients. We are talking about major construction, and our clients are going to spend a lot of money on their property. They are buying a company who is going to take care of them in the long run, and not necessarily just buying a backyard. We have to establish a level of trust sometime between the initial meeting and the time that we get into the design stage, so the clients know we are not going to take advantage of them. We want what is best for the client. We will treat them fairly, and we will deliver the best possible service. I think once we come to that agreement, the projects move along much smoother.

#### GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Growing a business with morals and ethics intact. I go home each night knowing that we're doing things right. We are not trying to



take advantage of clients. I can walk away from projects knowing that they are done correctly. I have the best employees a company owner could ever ask for. They are truly the strength of the company. I would not be where I am without them. And I give them an enormous amount of responsibility on these projects. I have full faith in all of my guys. I won't visit a job site for two or three weeks, and I know that it is being done properly. I think that says a lot about the guys that work here. We are a tight family.

#### HOW IS YOUR COMPANY DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS YOU WORKED FOR?

The landscape construction industry as a whole has somewhat of a bad reputation because there is a general lack of professionalism.

Some landscapers pull up to a job looking like a bunch of guys that broke out of a local prison. Their trucks are dirty; stuff is falling out. Professionalism is something that I really made an effort to instill in this company from day one. And one of the things that has to go along with that is the caliber of employees that I hire to represent me at jobs. Unlike a lot of landscape contracting companies out there, our guys are in pleated khaki pants with polo shirts. There is absolutely no smoking allowed on any of our job sites. The trucks are washed every day before they go out.

A friend of mine told me once, "If you ever want to see how a contractor is going to treat your property or treat your house, take







a look inside their work truck.” Ours are spotless, inside and out. I think that is something that a lot of other companies in our industry just don’t get. It is not rocket science. It is a bucket of soap and a garden hose. You tuck your shirt tail in, and you look professional at what you do. And the clients will feel at ease about that. You’ll feel better about your work. You will want to be proud of the company that you work for. And that is really what we try and accomplish out there.

**FAMILY VALUES:**

Since we started this business, I have always made a point that we will never work weekends. The weekend is family time. We work Monday through Friday. What we don’t finish Friday at

five o’clock, we’ll start Monday at seven. I think my guys have really come to appreciate that. I know a lot of landscape companies work Saturdays, or a half day Saturday. But I will never waver from that. Go home, and be with your families. That is what this is about.

**FAVORITE ASPECT OF BEING A BUSINESS OWNER:**

Every day is a challenge. It is just a matter of moving forward and doing the best that you can do.

**WHAT’S YOUR LANDSCAPE LIKE AT YOUR OWN HOME?**

I let my wife worry about it! I did put a patio and a grilling area, and an area for the kids in the back, about five years ago. It isn’t super extravagant, but we do

spend quite some time out there. My house is usually the last one to get re-mulched and re-edged because I am just so busy with everything else.

**WHAT’S LIFE LIKE DURING THE OFF-SEASON?**

I seem to have less and less of an off-season every year, but usually it lasts about four to eight weeks. I enjoy water skiing, snowmobiling, spending time with the family, and just being outside. I also enjoy spending time on the boat in the lake with the family on weekends. I have three beautiful children, and we often vacation in Upstate New York in the Adirondacks. [AL]

[www.earthturfwood.com](http://www.earthturfwood.com)

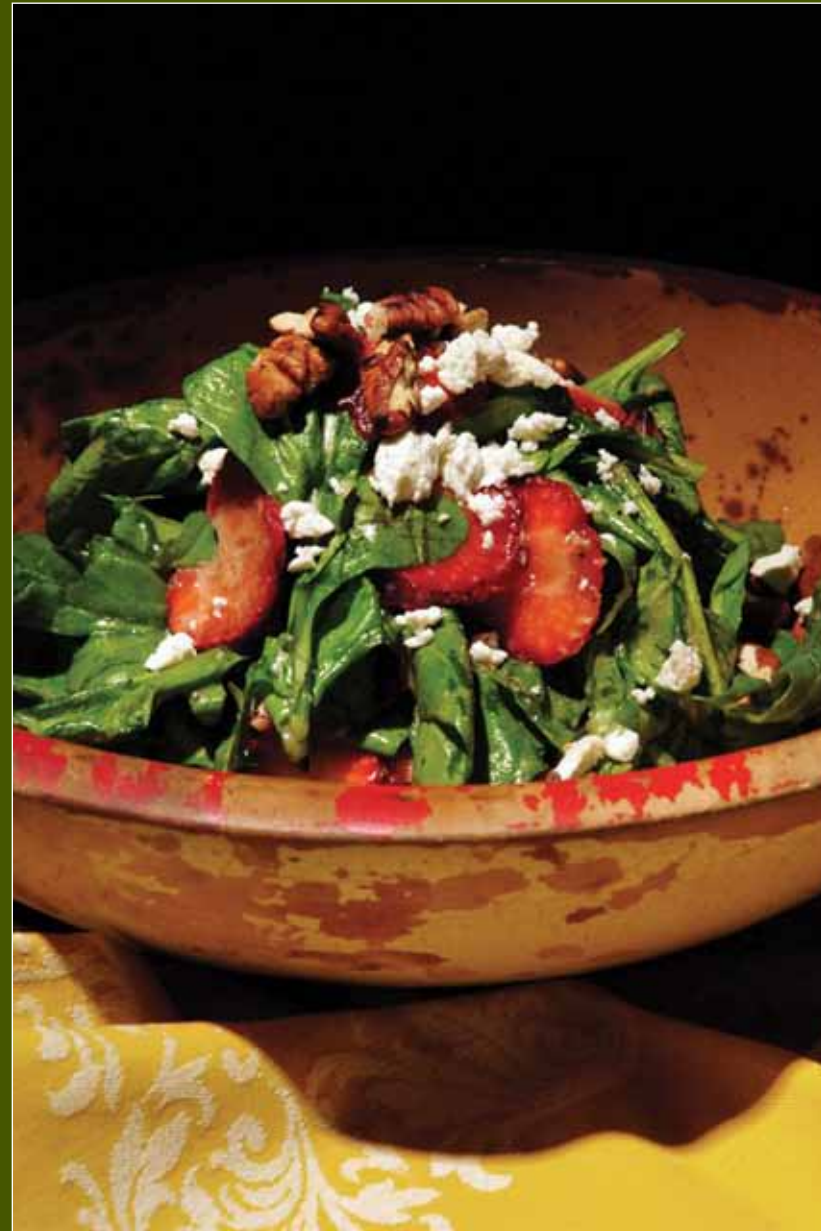




# CLOSE TO HOME

## THE BEAUTY OF LOCAL INGREDIENTS

Recipes excerpted from *Edible: A Celebration of Local Foods* by Tracey Ryder and Carole Topalian (John Wiley and Sons, Inc. Publishing, 2010) Photography by Carole Topalian



This is a lovely, simple celebration of spring. The combination of ingredients may seem unusual, but the sweetness of the fruit beautifully balances the peppery bite of the arugula. For the brightest flavors, make sure you buy freshly picked arugula and strawberries at your local farmers' market or farm stand. Serve with a loaf of good crusty bread. If you don't have grapeseed oil, use another neutral-flavored oil.

## Strawberry Arugula Spring Salad

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

COURTESY OF EDIBLE CAPE COD (MASSACHUSETTS)

### ingredients:

- ½ cup pecan halves, optional
- 6 cups (about 5 ounces) loosely packed baby arugula
- 1 pint (2 cups) strawberries, hulled and thinly sliced
- 1 small sweet onion, thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons grapeseed oil
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar, rice wine vinegar, or white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon chopped onion
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ cup goat cheese, crumbled, optional

### cooking instructions:

- In a small skillet, toast the pecans, if using, over medium heat, tossing frequently until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Place the pecans into a small dish; set aside.
- In a large salad bowl, add the arugula, strawberries, and sliced onion. In a blender, combine the oil, vinegar, sugar, sesame seeds, chopped onion, Worcestershire sauce, paprika, and salt. Blend until the ingredients are pureed. Taste, and adjust seasoning as needed.
- Toss the blended vinaigrette into the salad bowl ingredients. Garnish with the pecans and goat cheese, if using, before serving.





Grits are rather bland on their own, which is why they are so often overloaded with cheese, cream, and butter to add some flavor. This recipe was inspired by a treatment for risotto, bumping up the flavor with the sweetness of pumpkin, a touch of pungent thyme, and more modest amounts of butter, cream, and cheese. You can even use half-and-half or milk instead of the cream. The grits will still be creamy and flavorful.

## Creamy Pumpkin Grits

MAKES 6-8 SERVINGS

COURTESY OF MELISSA PETERSON/EDIBLE MEMPHIS (TENNESSEE)

### ingredients:

#### **Brown Butter**

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter  
3 tablespoons fresh thyme or sage leaves,  
finely chopped

#### **Grits**

3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 medium onion, very finely chopped  
2½ cups water  
3 cups whole milk  
1¼ teaspoons kosher salt, plus more if needed  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper,  
plus more if needed  
¾ cup stone-ground grits  
1½ cups canned pure pumpkin puree or  
sweet potato puree (unsweetened)  
½ cup heavy cream, half-and-half, or whole milk  
½ cup finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

### cooking instructions:

- **MAKE THE BROWN BUTTER:** In a 10-inch skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the foaming subsides and the butter has turned golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the thyme, and cook for 1 minute, stirring. Pour the butter into a heatproof bowl; cover and set aside.
- **MAKE THE GRITS:** In the same skillet, melt the 3 tablespoons butter over medium-low heat. Add the onion, and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 8 minutes; set aside.
- In a 4-quart heavy pot, bring the water, milk, salt, and pepper to a boil over high heat. Slowly add the grits to the pot in a thin stream while whisking, to blend them into the liquid. Reduce the heat, and cook the grits at a bare simmer (adjusting heat as necessary), stirring frequently with a long-handled whisk, and scraping the bottom and sides of the pot to prevent scorching, until the grits are thickened to the consistency of porridge, 30 to 35 minutes. If the grits become too dry, add more water or some milk.
- Add the cooked onion and the pumpkin puree, and cook, stirring continuously, for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat. Stir in the cream and cheese. Taste, and adjust seasoning as needed. Spoon into individual cereal or soup bowls, and serve immediately, drizzled with the brown butter.





Locally grown walnuts, pistachios, pomegranates, and lemons are in abundance in California in the wintertime, so that's the season to enjoy this variation on a traditional Persian dish. If you prefer a thicker sauce (the sauce here is quite thin), you can use a greater quantity of nuts, or add two tablespoons of flour to the onion and garlic mixture prior to adding the pomegranate juice. Serve with basmati rice to round out the meal.

## Braised Pomegranate Chicken with Walnuts

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

COURTESY OF CHERYL KOEHLER/EDIBLE EAST BAY (CALIFORNIA)

### ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more if needed
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more if needed
- 1 whole chicken (about 3½ pounds), cut into 8 pieces, or 4 chicken quarters of your choice
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or grapeseed oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom or cinnamon
- 2 cups pure pomegranate juice (unsweetened)
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar, optional
- 1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, plus more if needed
- ½ cup unsalted walnuts or pistachios
- Pomegranate seeds, optional

### cooking instructions:

- Sprinkle the salt and pepper evenly over all sides of the chicken pieces. In a large sauté pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Place 4 of the chicken pieces in the pan, and brown well on both sides, a total of 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the chicken pieces to a plate. Repeat with the remaining 4 pieces of chicken. Set aside.
- Pour off and discard all but 2 tablespoons of the liquid remaining in the pan. Reduce the heat to medium, add the onion to the sauté pan, and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, 7 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic and cardamom, and cook, stirring continuously, for 1 minute. Stir in the pomegranate juice; sugar, if using; lemon zest; and lemon juice. Cook for 2 minutes, scraping up any brown bits from the bottom of the pan.
- Add the chicken pieces and any juices back into the pan in a single layer, spooning some sauce over the top. Bring the liquid in the pan to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover the pan with a lid, and simmer until the chicken is tender and no longer pink inside, 35 to 40 minutes.
- In a small skillet, toast the walnuts over medium heat, tossing frequently until they are just barely beginning to brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat. Coarsely chop the nuts using a mini food processor, or on a sturdy surface with a mallet. Place 2 tablespoons of the nuts into a small dish; set aside. Finely chop the remaining walnuts, placing them in a separate small dish; set aside.
- When the chicken is cooked, remove the chicken pieces to a serving platter. Cover with foil to keep warm. Add the 2 tablespoons reserved walnuts to the cooking liquid in the pan, stir well, and simmer for 5 minutes. Pour the sauce over the chicken, and sprinkle with the remaining reserved chopped walnuts and pomegranate seeds, if using. Serve immediately.



With spices, a hint of brown sugar, and a seriously addictive frosting, this cake is sweet enough to qualify as dessert, but with all those vegetables, you don't need as much oil as you might with regular carrot cake. You may suspect there are too many vegetables, but they'll all blend in fine.



## Harvest Cake with Cider-Cinnamon Frosting

MAKES 16 SERVINGS

COURTESY OF EDIBLE RHODY (RHODE ISLAND)

### ingredients:

#### Cake

- 2 large carrots, finely shredded or grated
- 1 large parsnip, finely shredded or grated
- 1 medium zucchini, finely shredded or grated
- 1 tart apple, peeled, cored, and finely shredded or grated
- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- ½ cup grapeseed oil or another neutral-flavored oil
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- ¾ cup chopped pecans or walnuts, optional

#### Cider-Cinnamon Frosting

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup cream cheese, room temperature
- 2 teaspoons apple cider
- 1 cup powdered sugar, plus more if needed
- Pinch of ground cinnamon, plus more if needed, and ¼ teaspoon for garnish
- ¼ cup chopped pecans or walnuts, optional

### cooking instructions:

- **MAKE THE HARVEST CAKE:** Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 9-inch square baking pan. Line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper; set aside.
- In a medium bowl, toss together the carrots, parsnip, zucchini, and apple; set aside.
- In another medium bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, and ginger; set aside. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, granulated sugar, and brown sugar until light and frothy. Add the oil and vanilla, and whisk until blended. Add the flour mixture to the sugar mixture, and stir using a rubber spatula until just combined. Add the shredded vegetables and apple and the pecans, if using, and stir until they are completely coated with the batter. Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan.
- Bake on the middle oven rack until the cake is uniformly brown and quite firm when lightly touched in the center, and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, 45 to 55 minutes. Let cool on a cooling rack for 15 minutes, and then invert the cake onto the cooling rack. Peel off the parchment paper, and invert the cake back onto the rack to continue cooling for at least 1 hour.
- **MAKE THE CIDER-CINNAMON FROSTING:** In a small bowl (or the bowl of a stand mixer), add the butter and cream cheese. Using a hand mixer (or a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment), whip the butter, cream cheese, and apple cider together on medium speed until very smooth, about 3 minutes. At low speed, slowly add the powdered sugar and cinnamon, and beat until blended. Taste the frosting, and add more powdered sugar or cinnamon as needed.
- Spread the frosting evenly over the top of the cake, and on the sides if desired. Sprinkle lightly with cinnamon and the chopped pecans, if using. Cover the cake in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Serve chilled. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator.



# KIDTROPOLIS DESIGN

## WHERE FAIRYTALE ROOMS COME TRUE

Article based on an interview with Chris Jones



“As we get older and **BECOME ADULTS**, we get very set in *our ways* and in our styles (many times trying to mimic each other and styles). With **CHILDREN’S ROOMS**, *anything goes*. The rooms still have form and **FUNCTION**, but they also have endless **POSSIBILITIES** when it comes to the *final creation.*”

### CHILDHOOD:

I grew up building models and forts. As I got older, I made more and more things from scratch—building with my own materials rather than relying on kits. In high school, I was the guy that made the floats, and made the sets for the plays and musicals.

I joined the National Guard my junior year of high school and served active duty during Operation Desert Storm. I then attended West Virginia University and Corcoran School of Art and Design in Washington, D.C., and graduated from West Virginia with a BFA in graphic design. After leaving school, I worked for the CIA in graphic design and then worked for PRC (now Northrop Grumman) before starting a company with my current business partner, David Frank. David and I have run a marketing/graphic design firm for the past fourteen years now. After having children and in the midst of always creating things for family and friends’ rooms, David and I decided to open up an arm of MediaWorks called “Kidtropolis.” The name was taken from a neighbor’s joke referring to my home.

### WHEN DID YOU DECIDE YOU WANTED TO CREATE INTERIORS?

I was in my first year at West Virginia University, initially

majoring in Wood Science Engineering—of which I was not excelling at. I found myself at one point doing research and building a scratch model of a Greek trireme galley ship. My roommate, Ken, probably thought I was a little crazy. It was at this point I realized I should be in design. I also turned a bus into a movie theater during Desert Storm, among other interesting and random projects.

### DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AN INTERIOR DESIGNER?

I first consider myself a designer in general. Then I consider myself an artisan and sculptor. Somehow while growing up, I was able to attain a broad range of skills. I actually have never considered myself an “interior designer.” I was initially trained in graphic design and have an eye for color and space, which translates really well into the interior design field.

### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO FOCUS ON KIDS?

Having my own kids and wanting to create their own magical worlds led me to develop

Kidtropolis. As we get older and become adults, we get very set in our ways and in our styles (many times trying to mimic each other and styles). With children’s rooms, anything goes. The rooms still have form and function, but they also have endless possibilities when it comes to the final creation.

### IMPORTANCE OF A UNIQUE SPACE:

I think that having a room that the child feels is their own is very special. A place where they feel warm and invited. A place that when the parent says, “Go to your room,” the child jumps for joy. There is nothing more precious than walking into your child’s room late at night and seeing your child happily asleep in their bed.



**This room is a fairyland forest where a little girl can live as a princess in a mystical haven. Every element simulates a forest—the corner tree with a child-size door at its base, its overhanging branches, the tree-trunk bed, sticker stones on the floor, ceramic mushrooms, and birdhouses.**



#### YOUR CHILDHOOD ROOM:

My boyhood room had a ceiling with at least thirty model airplanes hanging from it, a full wall corkboard full of drawings, a wall of shelves with multiple tank models, and a very large drafting/drawing table as a desk in the corner. I also had a great workshop in the basement that I shared with my father, who was an avid model train set builder.

#### IDEAL CHILDHOOD ROOM:

My ideal room growing up would have probably looked like a castle. I can't tell you how many hours and years I spent drawing and building model

castles. I also would have liked an army room—as a boy, I always dreamed of being in the U.S. Army.

#### THE JOY OF DESIGNING KIDS' ROOMS:

Parents get so enthusiastic about their children's rooms. Every time I leave a finished room, my standard thoughts are, "This is the best one yet," as well as, "I wish I had this at home."

#### HOW DOES A PROJECT GO FROM THEME TO FRUITION?

After the overall design is finalized, we pick exact fabrics and colors. The next step is fabrication

of any items that can be built off-site. The final phase is the final room installation with shipping of the items or travel. The final step usually takes a week to ten days to complete.

#### WHAT INSPIRES YOUR DESIGN CHOICES?

I try to fill five major needs—theme, focus, storage, safety, and growth. Each year, I spend ten days at Disney and always get inspiration for projects. I am a huge Disney fan.

#### TELL US ABOUT THE FAIRYLAND PROJECT:

This particular project spanned

a bedroom and bathroom area, stretching approximately 225 square feet. Before I was brought into the project, the room was used as a master bedroom for the parents. The clients had a basic idea of a fairyland bedroom for their daughter—the daughter loved fairies and Tinkerbell. The only specifics were: a space for a television, a crib/bed that could be grown into, and a play room.

#### THEME:

This room is a fairyland forest where a little girl can live as a princess in a mystical haven. Every element simulates a forest—the corner tree with





a child-size door at its base, its overhanging branches, the tree-trunk bed, sticker stones on the floor, ceramic mushrooms, and birdhouses. The curtain rod and stays for the awning are actual tree limbs. Tiny lights in the tree twinkle like fireflies. The dominant color—soft, feminine pink—creates a pleasant, soothing atmosphere. The bathroom emulates the bedroom's design.

The six-foot-diameter circular bed is the centerpiece illuminated by two beautiful flower-shaped lamps. The imitation bark on the bed's exterior augments the room's theme and simulates sleeping in a forest. The three lily pads extending from the bark serve as steps to climb into the bed or to sit on. The bed is large enough for an adult, or two or three small children, to sleep in comfortably. One can also read beneath the lights, either resting on pillows or propped up against the backboard. Even with its twelve-foot ceiling, the room is surprisingly cozy.

#### BED:

The inspiration was a lily pad that eventually turned into a large, hollowed out tree. The bed is created from MDF, plywood, a sculpting compound, chicken wire, and paint. The most difficult part about the structure of the bed was just developing the scale and size in order for it to be transportable and fit together at the end install. The heights were dictated by standard crib safety guidelines, and the bed was built from there.

I found the lights from a company in London and found the mushrooms from a few companies on the internet. In order to construct the canopy, I had to wait until the overall frame was finished and the headboard dirt mount was framed. I then held string between the light bar and the headboard sticks in order to



figure out the exact sizes for the canopy fabric triangles. The large storage area on the one side of the bed served as safety and as storage. I wanted to keep a railing on half the bed, but also create a solid wall on the other half giving a feeling of safety when laying down. The position of the bed as it faces the windows also creates a shadow in the mornings with the storage wall of the bed, so the sunlight doesn't hit the child directly.

#### TREE:

I can't remember if the client asked for a tree or not. But I have done a few trees in rooms and always like using the small doors. The tree served as storage in the bottom door and had a flat screen TV in the top double doors. I have a few companies that I use to provide me with trees or elements created from foam, and then painted. The trunk of the tree was purchased, and then I fabricated the storage areas. To create the ceiling leaf area, I used quarter-inch plywood cut to an organic shape

This detail was **INSPIRED** from a small *company* that I found in Georgia that creates these **VERY SMALL HOUSES**. I had the idea of *purchasing three* of them—repainting them to fit my **COLORS** and using them as the supports for the overall **SHELF STRUCTURE**. One of the houses also has an LED *light inside* for use as a **NIGHT LIGHT.**"



and faux-painted to match the color and pattern of the leaves. The tree is also wired with LED soft blinking lights to give a calm glow to the room at night.

#### MUSHROOM STOOLS:

I purchased two sets of mushroom stools and used one set for a table and play chairs. The other set became additional elements attached to the headboard and next to the tree.

#### BIRDHOUSES AND SHELVING:

This detail was inspired from a small company that I found in Georgia that creates these very small houses. I had the idea of purchasing three of them—repainting them to fit my colors and using them as the supports for the overall shelf structure. One of the houses also has an LED light inside for use as a night light.

#### DOOR:

The main door to the room has been a hallmark to the company. It is used as a frame to the room as you enter. The first kid doors that I created were for my son and daughter many years ago. I couldn't stand the look of the typical baby gate and how it

ruined the look of a hall or room. That is when I started creating dutch doors with a small door in the bottom for the kids. The door is used as a full baby gate initially with the top always left open. During the toddler years, the child is given access to the small bottom door, and as they grow older, the door can be used as a full door.

#### FAVORITE ASPECT OF THIS PROJECT:

The bed became so functional—combining storage, lights, safety, and room for growth. It has now become my favorite piece.

#### WHAT WAS MOST CHALLENGING?

Installing the room within five days was very challenging. Each day was about twelve to fourteen hours of work. The hardest piece for fabrication was definitely the bed. It became very large, very quickly.

#### HOW PERMANENT ARE YOUR INSTALLATIONS?

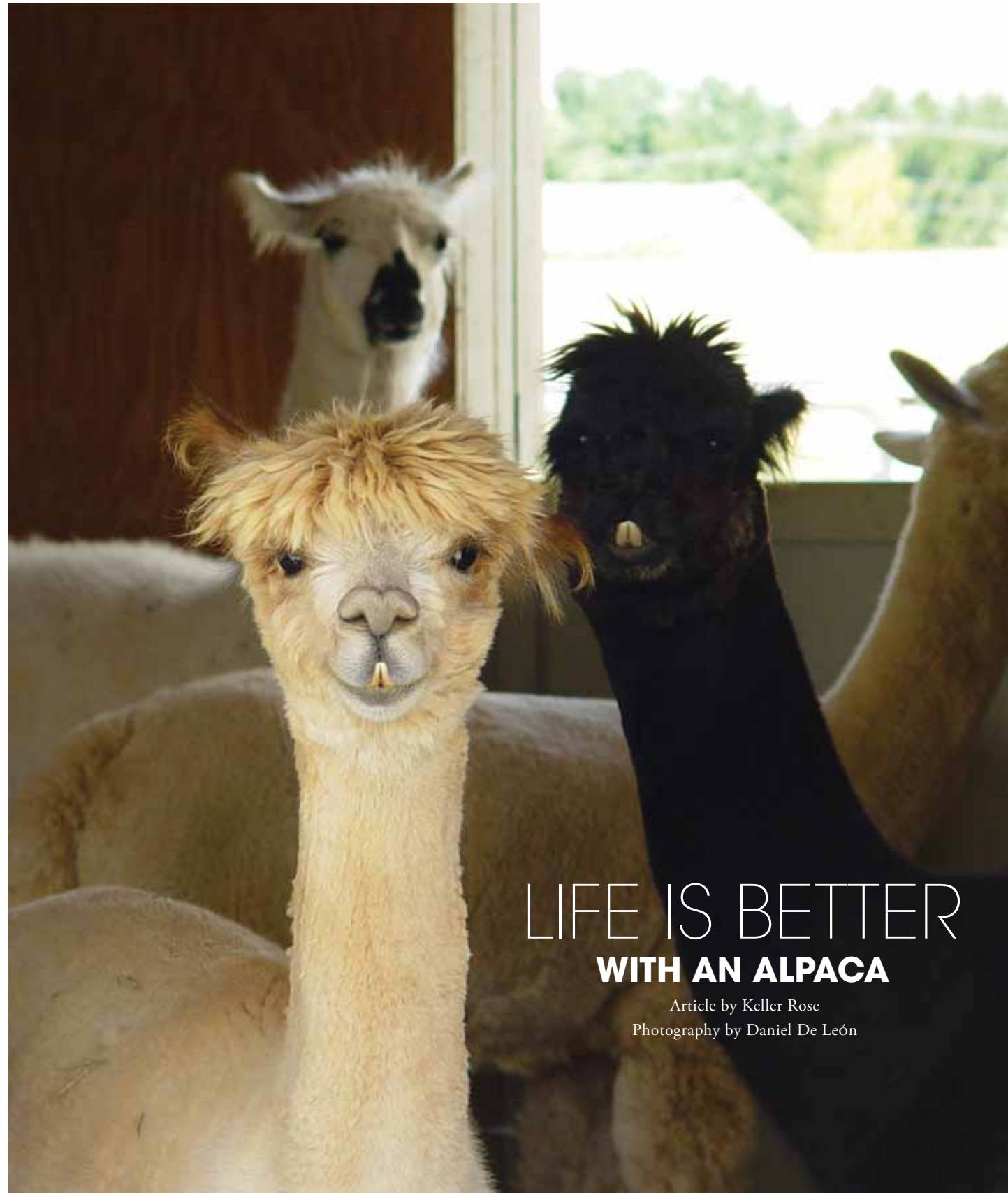
The installations are as permanent or as temporary as the client needs. The fairyland room needs to be moved to a new home, as the family is moving. The only aspect to that job that makes it difficult is the size of the opening needed for the tree to get into a room. The bed comes apart very easily, as do all the other elements. The only hurdle will be the tree—its removal and its new installation.

#### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF OUTSIDE OF KIDTROPOLIS?

I am always working on a project whether it be for a client, my house, or my kids. I am also very athletic and often think about projects while running or biking. Even though I work many hours on projects, I consider myself the luckiest guy in the world. I never feel like I am working. [AL]

[www.kidtropolisbuild.com](http://www.kidtropolisbuild.com)





## LIFE IS BETTER WITH AN ALPACA

Article by Keller Rose  
Photography by Daniel De León



Eastland Alpacas—the sign came into view suddenly, as I jerked my wheel sharply to the right and steered my car down a paved driveway. When I reached the barn, I parked my car and looked over to see four furry heads checking out the newcomer, the crisp breeze blowing the noodly locks of their hair over to one side. “Hi guys!” I said. The day couldn’t have been more perfect—blue skies with fluffy cartoon clouds, a delicious breeze, and warm rays of sunshine.

I threw on a sweater and strolled up to the main house on Risser Mill Road to find the owners. Kevin Zurin was the first to greet me with a friendly handshake and a big smile, inviting me into the gift shop in Mount Joy, Pennsylvania, near Amish country. His wife, Sue, appeared minutes later, and I received an impromptu tutorial of the yarn-making process. The alpacas are sheared every year, and the fleece is sent every other year to a small mill in New York. The Zurins had just sent in 500 pounds, where it will be cleaned, blended, and spun into fiber. The yarn can be used to craft blankets, sweaters, socks, and countless other fashions, many of which were displayed in the gift shop. The fiber is soft, breathable, and versatile. So versatile, in fact, that waste fleece (from the legs) was gathered from alpaca farms all over the region and sent to private marinas to help with the Gulf oil spill in 2010. The fleece was stuffed into nylons and floated on the water to absorb the oil.



On the counter at the gift shop were two pieces of fleece, one from each breed of alpaca—the Huacaya (wah-KI'-ya) and Suri (SIR'-e). A large percentage of alpacas are Huacaya, with puffy fleeces that have a crimp or zig-zag indentation in the fiber. Less common Suri alpacas have long, stringy fleece, as if they overturned a bucket of spaghetti onto their bodies.

After basic knowledge was relayed, it was time to play with some alpacas! The first pen held males over the age of three. A llama strolled around in a nearby pasture. The Zurins have two llamas on the farm, primarily to show visitors the difference between alpacas and llamas. They are both related to the camel, but they are two completely different species. Llamas are much larger—280-450 pounds, and around six feet tall, and are bred as a pack-carrying animal.







Kevin appeared with a baby alpaca, called a cria, in his arms. The fleece was much softer and finer than adult alpacas. He also still had a gel pad on his foot, in place to protect the mother's womb from his kicking. Healthy cria are generally up and running within a half hour after birth. The Zurins often don't see the births occurring, though they've occasionally had to reach in and grab the other leg if it gets stuck. They have a vet that makes house calls, as well. Later that day, they had scheduled deworming and weighing. When school children come through, they often let them stand on the scale, always a highlight of the trip.

Before I headed out, we took a few alpacas for a walk around the farm. "Princess" Priscilla was content to stroll beside me, barely requiring any tugs of her harness. As we walked by the fence, two alpaca males raced over to check her out. She acted uninterested, as they wrestled with each other for her attention. Heartbreaker, that Priscilla.

With promises that I'd be back and a complimentary pair of alpaca socks in hand, I thanked the Zurins and bid adieu to my furry loves. [AL]

[www.eastlandalpacas.com](http://www.eastlandalpacas.com)

As we walked by the fence, two alpaca males raced over to check her out. She acted uninterested, as they wrestled with each other for her attention. Heartbreaker, that Priscilla.

Alpacas stand three to four feet tall, and weigh only 100-175 pounds. They are bred for their luxurious fleece.

After the stories I'd heard about llamas spitting, I was a bit apprehensive about being in a pen with a bunch of alpacas. Kevin teased me by opening the gate and then closing it behind me, with him on the other side, laughing as he joked, "I'll just stay out here." I turned to find an alpaca with a goofy overbite staring me down. But it turns out alpacas are quite gentle and very curious creatures. And boy do they have personality! All different ones, actually. Several pushed their faces close to mine, but when I reached my hand out to pet their head, they'd swoop

out of the way as if to say, "Hey! Watch the hair! I only give you permission to admire me with your eyes."

In another pen, I met Nick Fox, an alpaca born, out of sheer luck, during a news broadcast at the farm. He was named for the cameraman, Nick, and Fox News. Bluesbreaker is the stud of the farm, with dense fleece with a good crimp, a desired trait looked for when judging alpacas. The Zurins explained high quality breeding stock could cost up to hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single alpaca down to a few hundred dollars for a pet. Each of their animals is insured, as the farm is the Zurins' full-time career. They've raised alpacas for eight years, and plan

to continue until they are unable to take care of the farm. Not surprisingly for this warm and affable couple, they find great joy in giving tours and entertaining visitors. They accommodate school children and nursing home patients alike, and find the alpacas are very therapeutic.

While we chatted in the pen with the younger alpacas, Kevin scooped a handful of feed into my palm, and a mini stampede of fur came at me, gumming the little pellets out of my hand. Luckily alpacas only have lower incisors, so biting is not really a concern. I felt a tug on my clothing, and looked down to find Bluebell, a spunky tan-colored alpaca, happily snacking on the pocket of my sweater.

While we chatted in the pen with the YOUNGER ALPACAS, Kevin scooped a handful of FEED into my palm, and a mini STAMPEDE of fur came at me, gumming the little pellets out of MY HAND."





Front of Tear Out Card 2



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 **STRAWBERRY**  
**Arugula Spring Salad**

½ c. pecan halves, optional  
 6 c. (about 5 oz.) loosely packed baby arugula  
 1 pt. (2 c.) strawberries, hulled and thinly sliced  
 1 small sweet onion, thinly sliced  
 3 tbsp. grapeseed oil  
 2 tbsp. white wine vinegar, rice wine vinegar, or white vinegar  
 2 tbsp. granulated sugar  
 1 tbsp. sesame seeds  
 1 tbsp. chopped onion  
 ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
 ¼ tsp. smoked paprika  
 ¼ tsp. kosher salt  
 ½ c. goat cheese, crumbled, optional

Back of Tear Out Card 2

 **STRAWBERRY** Arugula Spring Salad

 Recipes excerpted from *Edible: A Celebration of Local Foods* by Tracey Ryder  
 COURTESY OF EDIBLE CAPE COD (MASSACHUSETTS)



- In a small skillet, toast the pecans, if using, over medium heat, tossing frequently until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Place the pecans into a small dish; set aside.
- In a large salad bowl, add the arugula, strawberries, and sliced onion. In a blender, combine the oil, vinegar, sugar, sesame seeds, chopped onion, Worcestershire sauce, paprika, and salt. Blend until the ingredients are pureed. Taste, and adjust seasoning as needed.
- Toss the blended vinaigrette into the salad bowl ingredients. Garnish with the pecans and goat cheese, if using, before serving.

**4 SERVINGS**



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