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Holiday Window Shopping
Dining Reviews & Recipes
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one of The Top 100
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RECOGNIZED IN:

<i>Barron's</i> – Top 100 Women Financial Advisors (from 2006)
<i>Fortune</i> – One of America's Top 100 Independent Advisors (2008)
<i>Wealth Manager</i> – 50 Most Influential Women in Wealth (2009)
<i>Worth</i> – One of the Nation's Top Wealth Advisors (2009, 2010, 2011)
<i>The 50 Top Women in Wealth</i> – <i>Wealth Manager Magazine</i> (May 2010)
<i>Philadelphia Business Journal</i> – #2 Top Wealth Advisor (2010)
<i>Registered Rep</i> – Top 50 Independent Broker/Dealer Women Advisors (2011)
<i>Barron's</i> – Top 1,000 Financial Advisors (from 2006) <i>Only 40 Recognized in Pennsylvania (And the Only Woman in 2012!)</i>

Raised in Radnor, PA, Patricia Brennan has been providing Wealth Management advice right here in West Chester for over 25 years. She is a Georgetown University graduate and earned her CFP® designation in 1990. She is a recognized leader in her industry and serves as the first Chairwoman on the National Advisory Board for Royal Alliance. On a local level, Patti, her husband, Ed, and their four children reside in West Chester, where she is also active in her community. Patti currently serves as a board member for the Chester County Economic Development Council, Cuddle My Kids, and for The Chester County Hospital and Health System.

Patti Brennan CFP®



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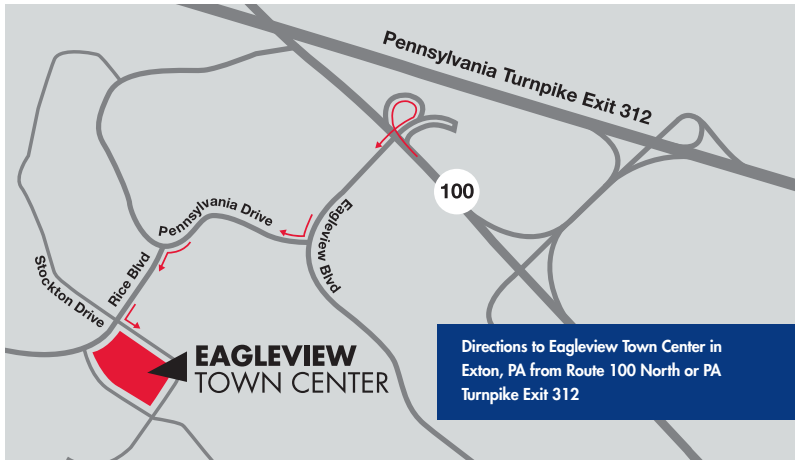
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From the Editor

A month of contrasts, December is when the days are short but the list of reasons to celebrate is long. And celebrate we will.

So we head for West Chester, where stores and streets are decked for the season. Carol-singing, bell-ringing and other merriment are just part of the Old-Fashioned Christmas spirit, along with the parade to bring Santa to town. Mark Yoder gives the scoop on the parade, while Malcolm Johnstone shares the latest in “West Chester’s Winter Wonderland.”

For holiday shopping, you *can* always get what you want at our super-abundance of boutiques, galleries and specialty shops. To find what you *need*, read “Holiday Window Shopping.” For hand-made gifts of wood—a sculpture, a chair, a pepper grinder—check out “In the Grain” and learn about crafters at work. If you’ve been extra good this year, consider a MINI—it’s on my list after a test drive.

Cooky McClung tells a holiday tale as only she can in “O’er the Fields We Go.” And Gina Pisasale makes the holiday Panto at People’s Light & Theatre—*Aladdin* this year—seem irresistible. If you’re in a museum mood, “On the Edge of Battle” is Chester County Historical Society’s take on the Civil War. For other options this season, we’ve compiled the Best Local Events Section, online and in print.

We also travel to The Farmhouse Bistro with Lise Monty for dinner. Laura Brennan devotes Brandywine Table to cupcakes, just in time for National Cupcake Day, December 15th.

Finally, December’s Local Hero is a PGA champ who remembers his local—specifically West Chester—roots. Read how Sean O’Hair gives to children as well as to golf. Another reason to cherish the holidays here at home.

The very best of the season to you and thank you for reading *County Lines* in 2012! See you next year for our January Dining Guide!

Jo Anne Durako
Editor

County Lines Magazine



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COUNTY LINES

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December 2012
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PUBLISHER
Edwin Malet

EDITOR
Jo Anne Durako

ART DIRECTOR / PRODUCTION
Alex Bianco

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Marci Tomassone

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
Jane Elizabeth Dols

DINING OUT EDITOR
Lise Monty

FOOD EDITORS
Laura Muzzi Brennan
Curtis Roberts

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
Sue Angelucci Sontagh
Rick Latham
Susie Smith

SALES ASSISTANT
Sharon Long

BUSINESS MANAGER
Debra M. French

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Laurel Anderson
George Fitzpatrick
Matt Freeman
Emily Hart
Cooky McClung
Carol Metzker
Kristin Collier Van Riper
William Woys Weaver

ASSISTANT WEBMASTER
Amy M. Guthrie

EDITORIAL INTERN
Jessica Ohnikian

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Contact us at:
ValleyDel Publications, Inc.
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West Chester, PA 19382.
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VALENTIN RADU, CONDUCTOR

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The Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia
- **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8 AT 7 PM**
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Chestnut Hill
- **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 9 AT 4 PM**
Daylesford Abbey, Paoli
- **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14 AT 7 PM**
Cathedral Basilica of SS Peter & Paul, Philadelphia
- **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15 AT 7 PM**
Nassau Christian Center, Princeton, NJ
- **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16 AT 4 PM**
St. Katharine of Siena Church, Wayne

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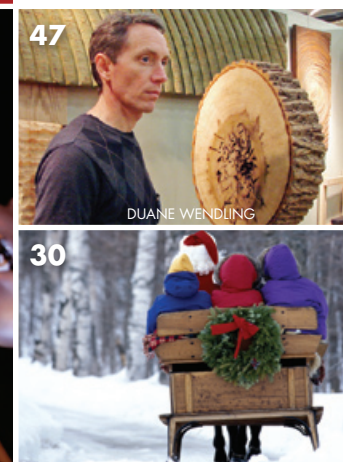
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CONTENTS

VOLUME 36, NUMBER 4 December 2012

COUNTY LINES MAGAZINE



DECEMBER 2012

25

ALADDIN: A MUSICAL PANTO
AT PEOPLE'S LIGHT & THEATRE

Gina Pisasale

29

LOCAL HERO: SEAN O'HAIR GIVES
BACK TO HELP KIDS

Zack Malet

30

O'ER THE FIELDS WE GO

Cooky McClung

36

WEST CHESTER'S WINTER WONDERLAND

Malcolm Johnstone

40

OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS IN WEST CHESTER

Mark Yoder

44

"ON THE EDGE OF BATTLE" EXHIBIT

Pamela Powell

47

IN THE GRAIN

Ed Malet

50

HOLIDAY WINDOW SHOPPING

58

"THE DAY" IN A MINI

JoAnne Durako

60

DINING OUT – The Farmhouse Bistro

Lise Monty

65

BRANDYWINE TABLE – Cupcakes

Laura Muzzi Brennan

DEPARTMENTS

13 GOOD TO KNOW

63 FOOD NEWS

15 OF SPECIAL NOTE

70 INDEX

16 BEST LOCAL EVENTS



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Good ^{to} Know

*Just a few things we thought
you'd like to know for December*



Festivus Fun. For a different way to ring in the holidays, celebrate Festivus on December 23. Made famous by a 1997 episode of "Seinfeld," Festivus is an antidote to the commercialism of the season. To start, replace your Christmas tree with an unadorned aluminum pole,

then have an "Airing of Grievances" ceremony, where all gather to express their annoyances with one another. And, it gets better! Festivus dinner is anything—from meat loaf to spaghetti in red sauce. To end the day, the head of the household must be pinned in the "Feats of Strength" wrestling ceremony. For more on a festive Festivus, visit FestivusWeb.com.



National Read a New Book Month. Take a break from the holiday hubbub and celebrate National Read a New Book Month. Dust off that book you bought down the shore the summer of '09, see what Oprah's Book Club is reading, or read a new book to

your child. Enjoy a tranquil moment at your local library or bookstore to find a special book, maybe one published in 2012 for a different kind of new. Try West Chester's **Second Reading Used Book Store** or **Thomas Macaluso Used and Rare Books** in Kennett Square. Celebrate the right way at a local bricks-and-mortar bookstore, like **Chester County Book & Music Co.**, CCBMC.com.



World AIDS Day. Across the globe, an estimated 33 million people are infected with HIV. To spread awareness, support those who are suffering, and commemorate those who have died (25 million between 1981 and 2007), December 1 is dedicated as World AIDS Day, the first-ever global health day, initially held in 1988. How can you mark this day? Do something as simple as wearing a red ribbon, visiting

someone afflicted with AIDS, or attending an event. Use this day to make a difference, and remember that the pandemic of AIDS is still far from eradicated. For more, WorldAIDSDay.org.

Nice Time for Narcissus.

Greek mythology tells the story of a young man who fell in love with his own reflection in a river and drowned after falling in. The Narcissus flower was said to have grown where he drowned. Now we appreciate the hardy flowering bulbs of Narcissus, one of December's flowers of the month (along with holly). To force Narcissus bulbs to brighten your winter, plan accordingly—they'll take 3 to 6 weeks to bloom when planted in soil or water. Beautiful Paper-white Narcissus will radiate small, elegant white flowers with strong scents of jasmine and hyacinth. Check local nursery and garden stores, including Exton's **Waterloo Gardens** and Newtown Square's **Mostardi Nursery**.



Very Superstitious. New Year's Eve is not only filled with celebration, it's stuffed with superstitions. Here are a few simple dos and don'ts to start 2013 with luck on your side: Keep all doors in your house open when the clock strikes 12—to let the old year escape and the New Year come in! Don't wash dishes, and be sure not to shower. Why? If you do, you'll wash away all your luck! Express yourself and make lots of noise. This will scare away evil spirits. Increase your luck even more for 2013, visit HappyWink.org.



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Winterthur Museum Exterior Photo: Rich Dunoff

Winterthur is nestled in Delaware's beautiful Brandywine Valley
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Of Special Note



Malvern's Victorian Christmas

December 7–8

Events begin in Burke Park, for the lighting of the town tree. Then stroll King Street and visit shops offering complimentary refreshments. Enjoy musical performances, children's shows, carriage and pony rides, strolling street performers, Santa and Mrs. Claus and more through Saturday. *Fri., 6 to 9; Sat., 10 to 2.* 610-296-9096; MalvernsVictorianChristmas.org.

Shrek: The Musical, DuPont Theatre

December 4–9

Everyone's favorite ogre comes to life on stage in this part romance, part twisted fairy tale. *DuPont Theatre, 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. Tues.-Thurs., 7:30 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 8; Wed, Sat, Sun, 2.* \$35-\$75. 800-338-0881; DuPontTheatre.com.



Vox Ama Deus — Handel's Messiah

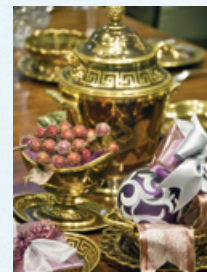
December 8, 9, 16

The memorable 1749 Covent Garden version will be performed on *Dec. 8, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 22 E. Chestnut Hill Ave., Philadelphia, 7 p.m. Dec. 9, Daylesford Abbey, 220 S. Valley Rd., Paoli, 4 p.m. Dec. 16, St. Katharine of Siena Church, 104 S. Aberdeen Ave., Wayne, 4 p.m.* \$25. 610-688-2800; VoxAmaDeus.org.

Yuletide at Winterthur

Through January 6

You'll be transported to a 19th-century market square to see how preparations for winter festivities began. *Rt. 52, 6 mi. NW of Wilmington. Tour is free to Winterthur members; \$5-\$20, nonmembers.* 800-448-3883; Winterthur.org.



The Nutcracker

December 1–30

A holiday tradition with many performances in *County Lines* country. Phone or check websites for schedules. *Dec. 1–2, Ballet Theater of Lancaster, 717-330-3451; BalletTheaterOfLancaster.com. Dec. 7–16, Brandywine Ballet, 610-696-2711; BrandywineBallet.com. Dec. 8–30, Pennsylvania Ballet, 215-551-7000; PABallet.org. Dec. 15–16, Wilmington Ballet Academy of the Dance, 800-338-0881; DuPontTheatre.com. Dec. 15–16, Central PA Youth Ballet, 717-534-3405; HersheyTheatre.com. Dec. 17–18, Chester County Ballet, 610-431-2333; HarrisonDanceStudios.com. Dec. 21–23, First State Ballet Theatre, 800-37-GRAND; TicketsAtTheGrand.org.*

Graystone Society & The National Steel Heritage Museum "Deck The Halls"

December 7

Terracina will be decorated with Victorian-style ornaments. The Lukens Executive Office Building has a multi-track O-gauge toy train layout. The Brandywine Mansion will be opened to tour. And Santa will greet guests from a vintage fire truck. Canned goods are requested for the Coatesville Food Cupboard. *Lukens Nat'l Historic District, 50 S. 1st Ave., Coatesville. 4 to 8.* 610-384-9282; SteelMuseum.org.



A Brandywine Christmas at Brandywine River Museum

Through January 6

A holiday tradition at the Museum featuring an O-gauge model railroad, a charming new dollhouse display, and natural "critter" ornaments made by museum volunteers and displayed on holiday trees. This year, on *Dec. 1–2*, the Annual Critter Sale features a new children's picture book, *Teasel & Twigs, 'Tis a Critter Christmas Tale*, available for purchase. Proceeds benefit the Volunteers' Art Purchase Fund. *Rt. 1, Chadds Ford. Open daily (except Christmas), 9:30 to 4:30.* \$6-\$12. 610-388-2700; www.BrandywineMuseum.org.

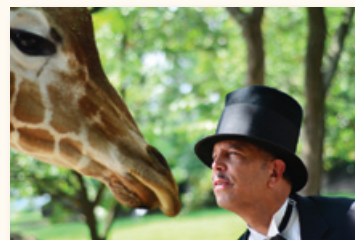
Best Local Events

Noteworthy in December . . .



Through December 31
Morris Arboretum's Holiday Garden Railway. The railway features loops and tunnels with different rail lines, cable cars, bridges and model trains. Displays and buildings are made of natural materials to form a perfectly proportioned miniature landscape. 100 E. Northwestern Ave., Philadelphia. 10 to 4; Dec. 15-31, until 5. \$7-\$16. 215-247-5777; MorrisArboretum.org.

Through January 27
Dr. Dolittle. The classic tale of kindness to animals and animal kindnesses trots, crawls and flies onto the stage in a big Broadway-sized family musical. Media Theatre for the Performing Arts, 104 E. State St., Media. Phone for curtain times. \$27-\$54. 610-891-0100; MediaTheatre.org.



December 8
Phoenixville's 9th Annual Firebird Festival. Burning of the Firebird (Phoenix) is back at the original location, off Main St., behind the old Superior Beverage building. The fun begins at 4, with arts and crafts vendors and refreshments. Burning of the Phoenix at 8. 610-917-1228; FirebirdFestival.com.

December 8
The Spirit of Christmas in New Castle, DE. A full day of concerts, house tours, crafts, shopping, refreshments and sharing the Christmas Spirit. Brochures at New Castle Presbyterian Church, 25 E. Second St., New Castle. 10 am to 5:30 pm. Candlelight Tours with food, music and holiday merriment from 6 to 9. All events are free. 302-328-3279; NewCastlePresChurch.org.



Art & Craft Shows

Through December 9
Main Line Art Center's Holiday Fine Craft Sale. Fine crafts including handmade jewelry, ceramics, glass, wood, fabric and more all handcrafted by professional artists from the region. 746 Panmure Rd., Haverford. Mon-Thurs, 9 to 9; Fri-Sat, 9 to 5; Sun, 9 to 4:30. 610-525-0272; MainLineArt.org.

Through December 31
Annual Woodworker's Competition at Wharton Esherick Museum. "Sticks and Stones" features 27 pieces of jewelry made primarily of wood. The Studio is located just west of Valley Forge Park and is open by reservation only. 610-644-5822; WhartonEsherickMuseum.org.

Through January 20
17th Annual Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital

Art Ability Exhibit and Sale. Artists from around the world with physical, cognitive, visual and hearing disabilities submit their work to this juried exhibition and sale. 414 Paoli Pk., Malvern. Show hours: daily 9 to 9. 484-596-5710; MainLineHealth.org/ArtAbility.

Through January 26
Wayne Art Center Presents Craft Forms 2012 Exhibition & Sale. Annual, international, juried exhibition, dedicated to enhancing awareness of fine contemporary craft. Open to all professional artists working in clay, fiber, glass, metal, wood or mixed media crafts. 413 Maplewood Ave., Wayne. Mon-Sat, 9 to 5. \$5 contribution. 610-688-3553; WayneArt.org.

December 1
Kimberton Holiday Craft Fair. Crafts and collectibles for the holidays. Benefits the fire company. Kimberton Fire Company, 752 Pike Springs Rd. Kimberton. 9 to 2. Free. 484-645-9033 or 610-917-2270.

Eat, Drink & Be Merry

December 8
Valley Forge Beer Festival. A variety of local, regional and international beers are featured. Benefits the Committee to Benefit the Children, providing resources for treatment, care and family support to children with cancer, leukemia and blood disorders. Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Ave., Oaks. Session 1, 12:30 to 4; Session 2, 5:30 to 9. \$40-\$60. 631-940-7290; ValleyForgeBeerFest.com.



Family Fun

December 1-2, January 5-6
12-13, 19-20
Schuylkill Valley Model Railroad Club Open House. Fun for kids of all ages with four different railroads depicted on a 1,000+ sq. ft. model, Thomas the Tank Engine, a scavenger hunt and more. 400 W. Main St., Phoenixville. 1 to 5. Free. 610-935-1126; SVMRRC.com.

December 15
Firebird Children's Theatre: Winter Holiday Revue at The Colonial Theatre. Celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, sing holiday music and watch a live musical comedy suitable for young audiences. 227 Bridge St.,

Phoenixville. 2 pm, \$10. 610-917-1228; TheColonialTheatre.com.

Fundraisers

January 17
11th Annual "A Taste of Phoenixville." A premier food, wine, beer event featuring selections from some of Phoenixville's finest restaurants and caterers. Live music and dancing. Benefits the Good Samaritan Shelter. Phoenixville Foundry, 2 N. Main St. \$75-\$85. 6 to 10. 610-933-9305; TasteOfPhoenixville.com.

Gardens

December 1
Scott Arboretum Holiday Greens Sale. Gorgeous fresh greens and holiday accents at the Wister Center, 500 College Ave., Swarthmore. 10 to 2. 610-328-8025; ScottArboretum.org.

Holiday Events & Tours

Through December 2
Mars drinks Old-Fashioned Christmas Celebration in West Chester. See West Chester feature in this issue.

Through December 2
Hay Creek Historical Assoc. Christmas at Joanna Furnace. Enjoy an evening in the parlors of colonial and Victorian families as they celebrate Christmas. Horse-drawn carriage rides, a Christmas Market, food, a bonfire, live nativity and walking tours. Rt. 10, 3 mi. N of Morgantown. Daily, 5 to 9. \$5; 12 and under, free. 610-286-0388; HayCreek.org.



Weekends, Through December 16
Devon in December: Christmas Tree and Wreath Sale. Fresh, locally grown Fraser and Douglas firs and holiday wreaths for sale; activities and surprises for children. Benefits Devon Horse Show and Country Fair Foundation. Horse Show Grounds, Rt. 30, Devon. Fri, 4:30 to 7:30; Sat, 9 to 7; Sun, 10 to 4. 610-964-0550; TheDevonHorseShow.org.

Through December 30
Historic Odessa Foundation hosts "A Story of Old Christmas." Odessa's Georgian-style Wilson Warner House (c. 1769) will be trans-

formed into the storied English countryside home, Bracebridge Hall. Tues-Sat, 10 to 4:30; Sun, 1 to 4:30. Odessa is located between Rts. 1 & 13. Houses: Corbit-Sharp House, Wilson-Warner House, Collins-Sharp House, Brick Hotel and Odessa Bank. 302-378-4119; HistoricOdessa.org.

Weekends, Through January 1
Family Christmas Activities at Hagley. Like the 19th-century families who lived on Workers' Hill, visitors can enjoy making Victorian Christmas paper decorations and ornaments, taste holiday cookies, admire the "Dear Old

Tree" and experience family Christmas traditions. 200 Hagley Rd., Wilmington. Weekends 11 to 4. \$4-\$11. 302-658-2400; Hagley.org.



A Brandywine Christmas

November 23 through January 6



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Through January 6

A Longwood Christmas. Wander through half a million twinkling lights, thousands of poinsettias and magnificent trees. Organists share the sounds of the season and fountains dance in this holiday wonderland. Rt. 1, Kennett Square. Daily 9 to 5. Timed admission tickets are required, \$8-\$18. 610-388-1000; LongwoodGardens.org.

December 1

Chadds Ford Historical Society's 27th Annual Candlelight Christmas. Self-guided tour to 20 distinctive homes (mostly built in

the 18th- and 19th-century) and historic sites in the village of Marshalton and its environs. 1 to 6. \$20 advance; \$25 day of tour at the Chadds Ford Historical Society; \$5, 12 and under. 610-388-7376; ChaddsFordHistory.org.



December 1

Annual Candlelight Holiday Tour. Beautifully decorated homes and churches, crafts, music and refreshments. Benefits Phoenixville Library and The Clinic. Tickets available at 2:30 at the Phoenixville Senior Center, 153 Church St. 3 to 7. \$20-\$25. 610-933-9181; PhoenixvilleHistoricalSociety.org.

December 1

Historic Newtown's Holiday House Tour. An annual tradition that takes visitors into five private residences and a few public buildings including the Half-Moon Inn, where you will enjoy period music, colonial cooking demonstrations and refreshments. All sites are within walking distance of each other. 10 to 4. \$25. 215-968-4004; NewtownHistoric.org.

December 1

Wayne Hotel's Old Fashioned Christmas. Visit with Santa on the Hotel's veranda, enjoy fresh baked cookies and hot chocolate and watch the parade along Lancaster Ave. featuring Radnor High School Marching Band and Cheerleaders and Valley Forge Military Academy Field Music Group. Wayne Hotel, 139 E. Lancaster Ave., Wayne. Parade begins at 10 am. 610-687-5000; WayneHotel.com.

December 1-2, 8-9, 15-16

Brandywine Valley Wine Trail Holiday Open House. The wineries will be decorated in their holiday finery and will be hosting carolers, holiday musicians and special holiday sale pricing. 866-390-4367; BVWineTrail.com.

December 2, 9, 16, 23

Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides in Kennett Square. Horse-drawn carriage rides throughout town, leaving from the corner of State and Union Sts. \$5. Sundays, noon to 3 pm. 610-444-8188; HistoricKennettSquare.com.



December 3

Brandywine River Museum's Young Friends Yuletide Reunion. The Young Friends of the Brandywine Conservancy host their annual reunion with hors d'oeuvres, cash bar, music and more. Rt. 1, Chadds Ford. 5:30 to 7:30. Members \$5-\$10; non-members \$10-\$15. 610-388-8315; www.YoungFriends.org.

Local Farm Markets

Bryn Mawr Farmers Market, Lancaster Ave. at Bryn Mawr train station. **Year-round,** Sat, 9 to 1. BrynMawrFarmersMarket.com.

Kennett Square Farmers Market, downtown. **Winter Hours,** 1st & 3rd Fri, 2 to 5. 610-444-8188; HistoricKennettSquare.com.

Lancaster Central Market, 23 N. Market St. **Year-round,** Tues, Fri, 6 to 4; Sat, 6 to 2. 717-735-6890; CentralMarketLancaster.com.

Lancaster County Farmers Market, 389 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne. **Year-round,** Wed, Fri, Sat, 6 to 4. 610-688-9856; LancasterCountyFarmersMarket.com.

West Chester Growers Market, Chestnut and Church Sts. **Dec-Apr,** 1st and 3rd Sat, 10 to noon. 610-436-9010; WestChesterGrowersMarket.com.

December 7

Historic Yellow Springs Holiday Stroll. Tree lighting ceremony followed by carol singing and refreshments, children's holiday crafts and a story time. Special food treats and a visit from Santa make this a fun-filled evening for all. Art School Rd., Chester Springs. 6 to 8:30 pm. Free. 610-827-7414; YellowSprings.org.



December 7

Christmas Parade in Phoenixville. The parade starts at 7 at Borough Hall, 140 Church St., and continues to Starr St. then Bridge St., for the tree lighting at the corner of Bridge and Main Sts. 8 pm. 610-933-8801; Phoenixville.org.

December 7-9

Friends of Hibernia present Candlelight Tour 2012, "Holiday Cinema by Candlelight." Eleven holiday movies are represented at the mansion under the glow of candlelight. Live music, refreshments and Santa. Hibernia Mansion, Cedar Knoll Rd., Wagontown. Fri-Sat, 6:30; Sun, 2. \$5; under 12, free. 610-388-3812.

December 5-23

Holiday Events in Media. **Dec. 5, 12, 19,** carriage rides departing from the front of Media Court House, Front St., 6 to 9 pm, \$5-\$10.



Dec. 8, Holiday Candlelight House Tour, 2 to 7, tickets, 610-328-8390. **Dec. 8, 19-23,** Visit Santa, Santa's Village, Franklin Mint Credit Union, State and Olive Sts. 3 to 7. **Dec. 31,** New Year's Ball Drop, ring in the New Year at State and Jackson Sts. 610-566-5039; VisitMediaPa.com.

December 8

Delaware Art Museum's 28th Annual Holiday House Tour. Tour 10 spectacular Wilmington-area homes bedecked for the holiday season and visit the Museum to view the 12 talented regional artisans, who will display their

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wares on tour day. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. 10 to 4. \$25/\$30 at the door. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

December 8
Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation's Christmas on the Farm. Get into the holiday spirit and visit the Plantation on its closing day for the year and enjoy the decorations, tea tasting, wassailing, plus textile, wood-working and long rifle demos, along with the plantation store sale. Ridley Creek State Park, Media. 11 to 6. \$8-\$10. 610-566-1725; ColonialPlantation.org.

December 8
Friends of Ridley Creek State Park's Annual Holiday Dance. The Hunting Hill Mansion will be decorated for this evening that includes music, dancing, open bar (beer and wine) and tours. Ridley Creek State Park, Media. 7 pm. \$40. 484-442-0223; FriendsOfRCSP.org.

December 9
Holidays at The Willows. Holiday entertainment, refreshments, music, crafts, face-painting and Santa. Willows Mansion, 490 Darby-Paoli Rd., Radnor. 2 to 4 pm. Free. 610-688-5600; RadnorRecreation.com.

December 9
Annual Historic Holiday Home Tour in Kennett Square. Historic homes will be decked out for the holidays and open to visitors to stroll through. Tickets required. 610-444-8141; KennettSquareHistory.org/Candlelight-HomeTour.html.

December 10-11, 26-29
Christmas at Ephrata Cloister. *Dec. 10-11*, Christmas at the Cloister with seasonal readings and holiday music in the 1741 Meeting-house, 6:30, 7:45, 9 pm, \$6. *Dec. 26-29*, Lantern Tours take you back in time to visit the Cloister as it may have been in the 1700s, 6:30 to 8. 717-733-6600; EphrataCloister.org.

Museums

Through January 6, 2013
Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library's "Uncorked! Wine, Objects & Tradition." An exhibition that explores the stunning range of objects associated with the history of wine drinking. 5105 Kennett Pk. (Rt. 52), Winterthur. Tues-Sun, 10 to 5. \$5-\$18. 302-888-4600; Winterthur.org.

Through January 6, 2013
Delaware Museum of Natural History Presents "Rainforest Adventure." A multisensory expedition that introduces visitors to tropical rainforests around the world. 4840 Kennett Pk., Wilmington. Mon-Sat, 9:30 to 4:30; Sun, noon to 4:30. \$9. 302-658-9111; DelMNH.org.



Through January 13, 2013
Delaware Art Museum - "Centennial Juried Exhibition." A juried exhibit featuring a variety of media and including artists living either within the State of Delaware or within 100 miles of the Museum. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. Wed-Sat, 10 to 4; Sun, noon to 4. \$6-\$12. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

Music, Dance & Live Shows

December 1
DuPont Theatre Presents Jim Brickman, "On a Winter's Night." Pianist and songwriter plays holiday favorites plus all his hits in one spectacular concert. DuPont Theatre, 1007 N. Market

St., Wilmington. 3 & 7:30 pm. \$40-\$75. 800-338-0881; DuPontTheatre.com.

December 1
Kennett Symphony's "Visions of Sugarplums." The Symphony's annual holiday concert is a family tradition. This year, they travel to the Kingdom of Sweets, where the handsome prince and Clara are entertained by the Sugarplum Fairy. Kennett High School, 100 E. South St. 8 pm. \$5-\$40. 610-444-6363; KennettSymphony.org.

December 1-2
75th Anniversary Performance of Handel's Messiah at Ursinus. A tradition here sung by the College Choir and Meistersingers. 601 E. Main St., Collegeville. Sat, 7:30; Sun, 2:30. \$10. 610-409-3000; Ursinus.edu/Messiah.



December 2
Vox Ama Deus Presents Renaissance Noel. Thomas Great Hall, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, 4 pm. \$25. 610-688-2800; VoxAmaDeus.org.

December 2
Immaculata Symphony. Christmas Concert featuring a selection of holiday favorites. Alumnae Hall, Immaculata University, King Rd., Immaculata. 3 pm. \$6-\$20. Visit ImmaculataSymphony.org.

December 9
Voices of Christmas at The Grand Opera House. Philadelphia's Mendelssohn Club chorus performs songs of the season including such well-loved carols as "Silent Night" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." 818 N. Market St., Wilmington. 3 pm. \$23-\$27. 302-658-7897; TheGrandWilmington.org.

December 2
Delaware County Symphony Concert. "Russian Fairy Tale" featuring the music of Rimsky-Korsakov. Neumann Univ., Meagher Theater, 1 Neumann Dr., Aston. 3 pm. \$8-\$10. 610-356-5673; DCSMusic.org.

December 14, 16
Lancaster Symphony Orchestra - "Sounds of the Season." Feel the inspiring power of Handel's "Messiah," the joy of Hanukkah and the warmth of Christmas. Franklin & Marshall College, Barshinger Center, College Ave., Lancaster. Fri, 7:30; Sat, 3 pm. \$19-\$43. 717-291-4420; LancasterSymphony.org.

December 16, 21
Brandywine Singers Holiday Concerts.



Dec. 16, "Peace and Love at Christmas," Washington Memorial Chapel, Valley Forge Nat'l Park, 4 pm. *Dec. 21*, Candlelight Concert, Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," Church of the Holy Trinity, West Chester. 7:30 pm. Tickets for both, \$10-\$15. TheBrandywineSingers.org.

December 22
Pennsylvania Symphonic Winds Holiday Concert at Exton Mall. Premiere wind band performs beautiful holiday selections to brighten your season. 260 Exton Sq. Pkwy., Exton. 2 pm. PennsylvaniaSymphonicWinds.org.



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December 8

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Outdoor & Sport Activities

December 1

Willistown Conservation Trust's Duck Hunt (With Binoculars and Scopes). Birders of all skills are invited to visit local ponds to see wintering ducks and other birds. Hunt leaders will have extra binoculars and spotting scopes. Meet at Rushton Woods Preserve, Delchester Rd., just S of Goshen Rd., Newtown Square. 8 to 11 am. 610-353-2562; WCTrust.org.

December 9

23rd Annual Jingle Bell Run/Walk for Arthritis. Kick off your holidays by helping others. Wear a holiday-themed costume and run or walk a 5K route with your team members and celebrate the season by giving. This is a dog friendly event. Great Valley High School, Phoenixville Pk., Malvern. Registration, 8 am; run at 10. \$15-\$25. JBRPhilly.Kintera.org.

In Towns & Burroughs . . .

December 7

First Fridays. Stroll through area towns to find exhibits, galleries, restaurant specials, entertainment and extended hours. **Berwyn**, 610-203-4543; BerwynDevonBusiness.com. **Kennett Square**, 610-444-8188; HistoricKennettSquare.com. **Lancaster City**, 717-509-ARTS; Lancas-terArts.com. **A Main Line ARTitude**, with free trolley from Bryn Mawr to Ardmore, 610-642-4040; First-FridayMainLine.com. **Oxford**, 610-998-9494; DowntownOxfordPA.org. **Phoenixville**, 610-933-3070; PhxFirstFriday.com. **Wayne**, 610-687-7698; FirstFridayWayne.com. **West Chester**, 610-738-3350; DowntownWestChester.com; **Wilmington**, 302-576-2100; ArtLoopWilmingtonDE.com.



December 8

Media's Second Saturdays. Media's version of First Fridays. 610-566-5210; Media-ArtsCouncil.org.

Theater

Through December 23

This Wonderful Life. In this delightful re-imagining, one actor portrays George Bailey, Clarence the Angel, Mary, Old Man Potter and the entire population of Bedford Falls. People's Light & Theatre, Steinbright Stage, 39 Conestoga Rd., Malvern. Thurs-

Sat, 8; Sun, 7; Sat, Sun, 2. \$35. 610-644-3500; PeoplesLight.org.

Through December 29

"Singin' In The Rain." The Fulton floods the stage with hundreds of gallons of water each night as they re-invent this beloved musical film. Sit in the front four rows (the splash zone), and get your own rain poncho so you can be part of the action. Fulton Theatre, 1 N. Prince St., Lancaster. \$20-\$35. 717-397-7425; TheFulton.org.

Through January 6

Aladdin: A Musical Panto. See article in this issue. ♦

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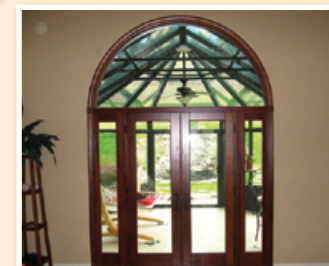


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Aladdin: A Musical Panto

Gina Pisasale

A holiday tradition for the young and young at heart

It's holiday Panto time at People's Light & Theatre! Over the past eight years, these original, music-filled and unfailingly entertaining productions have become a beloved and much anticipated tradition at People's Light.

This year's Panto is inspired by the ancient tale of *Aladdin*. But before your imagination jumps to the 1992 Disney adaptation of this thousands-of-years-old folk tale, think more along the lines of "The Family Guy's" parody of *Star Wars*, but with the additional elements of audience participation, local references, political satire, cross-dressing and pie fights. Sound like fun?

Far from Walt's Aladdin

Following the Panto tradition of taking well-known fairy tales or favorite children's stories and turning them on their ear, *Aladdin: A Musical Panto* is set in the distant land of Paolistein, full of magical lamps, treasures, flying carpets, sultans, princesses and "evil facial hair." Toss in references to *Star Wars*, *West Side Story*, the New Jersey boardwalk, martial arts B-movies and Bollywood dance numbers. Then mix.

Aladdin and his animal pals—Manny the Monkey and Morris Mantis—are scamps and ne'er-do-wells that cause Aladdin's

mother, Widow Twankey (played by a man), much concern. But when Princess Mai Tai escapes the watchful eye of her father, the Sultan (played by a woman), and catches Aladdin's attention, he's willing to undertake adventurous ordeals, despite their ties to the villainous Fu. And that's just the beginning.

What's a Panto?

The holiday Panto is a long-standing British performance form that evolved out of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* tradition, the Twelfth Night holiday, the Festival of Fools and Epiphany celebrations, and British music hall entertainments.

When the modern Panto became an established genre in the 18th century, writers turned to familiar stories that appealed to children and adults alike. These tales provide loose narrative outlines that form the basis for exaggeration, variation and topical social commentary, outrageous jokes, humorous songs, dances and, sometimes, a strangely affecting love story.

Popular tales that have inspired countless Pantos include beloved stories such as *Aladdin*, *Robin Hood*, *Cinderella*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Mother Goose*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Goldilocks* and *Snow White*.



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What to Expect?

The hero's journey in *Aladdin* is full of the traditional Panto conventions that audiences at People's Light have come to relish. Here are some of the familiar elements that you'll see in every Panto:

- A Hero (sometimes played by a woman) and a Heroine, the female lead
- A Villain: the hero's foil
- The Dame: a boisterous yet benevolent matriarch played by a man in drag
- A comic duo
- A story exploring themes of love, friendship and good vs. evil
- Music, dance and slapstick
- Audience participation: you'll boo, cheer, even argue with the characters onstage
- Satire of local events, government policies and famous people
- A "slosh scene" or "mussy bit": a slapstick routine with something wet, gooey or slippery.
- A "candy bit": actors throw candy into the audience, sometimes done by the villain's lackeys to get information about the hero
- Silly songs that the audience joins in singing

About Aladdin, the Panto

Aladdin was one of the first stories adapted for a Panto performance. Many know it as part of *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*, or *The Arabian Nights*, where Scheherazade tells stories within stories to King Shahryar to save her life.

Before the first written predecessor of these tales (*Hazar Afsanah*, A Thousand Legends) was translated to Arabic around 850 A.D., storytellers from India, Persia and China passed the tales orally as they traveled along the Silk Road. Although the framing story of Scheherazade has remained, individual stories contained within printed versions of *The Arabian Nights* have varied.

A written version of *The Story of Aladdin and the Magical Lamp* didn't appear until a French translation of *Nights* by Antoine Galland in 1704. It quickly gained popularity, exciting the European imagination and appetite for the mysterious and exotic. *Aladdin* was adapted for the stage in 1788 and performed in London's Covent Garden. Once the genre of the British Panto was firmly established in Great Britain, *Aladdin* was immediately added to the repertoire and its popularity has continued through today.

People's Light & Theatre is following this long tradition of *Aladdin* adaptations and the Panto performances. For the holidays, those ages 5 to 105 are invited to this raucous romp through a heartwarming tale with roots that reach far into the past, but with the renewed and joyful spirit that a Panto brings. ♦

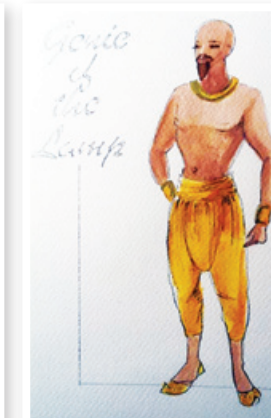
If You Go:

Where: 39 Conestoga Rd., Malvern

When: Through January 6

Box Office: 610-644-3500; PeoplesLight.org

What's Next: *A Winter's Tale*, Jan. 31–Mar. 3; *The Trip to Bountiful*, Mar. 13–Apr. 7; *Star Girl*, Apr. 20–May 12; *Barcelona*, May 29–June 23; *Noises Off!*, July 10–Aug. 4.



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LOCAL HERO:

Sean O'Hair Gives Back to Help Kids

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In 2009, West Chester resident Sean O'Hair was competing in the U.S. Open golf tournament on Long Island while, back home, his wife Jackie was expecting their third child at any moment. Then the number 13 player in the world, Sean describes having the approaching birth on his mind as a "good distraction, one that helped me maintain happy thoughts during stressful times on the golf course." Despite a potential drop in the rankings, he let it be known that he would immediately leave the tournament to be with his wife if circumstances required. "Seeing your son born is more important than a golf tournament," says O'Hair.

Sean's willingness to play in a distant tournament, despite the impending birth of his child, is a testament to his confidence in The Chester County Hospital. Undoubtedly, his comfort came from his years of close involvement with the Hospital, to which he's made sizeable donations as well as supporting an annual fundraiser—the FORE Health Invitational, held October 15 this year at the White Manor Country Club.

Serving Chester County since 1892, the Hospital has long been a cornerstone of the community, a resource committed to providing residents with ways to maintain a healthy life. Partnering with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, and the Cleveland Clinic, among others, The Chester County Hospital was given the Gold Seal of Approval in healthcare quality from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations in 2008 and 2010. Today, it's one of the last independent hospitals in our region.

It was the Hospital's deep roots in the community that attracted Sean to his charity work there. "It just felt right. As a West Chester resident, and someone who believes kids are our future, I was drawn to getting involved with the nonprofit Hospital, just down

the street from my home, that had one of best-regarded natal units in the area." The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit has the only Level III NICU certification in the county.

As a member of the victorious United States Presidents Cup team in 2009, Sean donated his share of the winnings to the Hospital. Sean's years of charitable work have funded Affinity Birthing Beds, Infant T-Piece Resuscitators, and other sophisticated equipment for the Hospital's Labor and Delivery Unit.

Sean began working on the FORE Health Invitational fundraiser after hearing from Andy Benton, who along with wife JoAnna had lost their first son during childbirth. The Bentons, of Downingtown, created a golf fundraiser that led to the purchase of neonatal equipment for the Hospital, and Sean increased the event's visibility by hosting and participating in golf demonstrations and clinics.

Raising funds for numerous charities focused on helping children, Sean's involvement extends to organizations like the First Tee of Philadelphia, a cause he enjoys because of its emphasis on character with a supplemental golf education, and Little Smiles, a charity that works directly with children receiving care in the pediatric unit of Chester County Hospital.

Sean is happy to call Chester County his home. "It's an East Coast version of what I grew up with: good family values and a great golf community." Sean and Jackie met in Boca Raton, Florida then moved up to West Chester, close to Jackie's family in Aston. His hard work—Sean turned pro at 17—philanthropy and family-values help Sean maintain "happy thoughts" for his four children—Molly, 7, Luke, 5, Grady, 3, and Trevor, 20 months, also born in The Chester County Hospital.

Sean's ongoing generosity and commitment to giving back make us proud to name him our Local Hero. ♦ - Zack Malet

O'er the Fields We Go

A city slicker discovers why Jesus was born in a barn.

Cooky McClung



It was December 24, and what I needed was another month to get ready for Christmas. What I needed was a crew from “This Old House” to shake magic dust over our half-remodeled kitchen. What I needed was a personal shopper to zip out and polish off my gift list so I could get everything wrapped before I ran out of scotch tape and baling twine.

What I didn't need was a surprise call from my mother announcing she had just that minute arrived at the airport and within an hour would be delivered to our doorstep by limo to spend her first Christmas with us on the farm.

Even if it had been mid-July, I wouldn't have had time to untangle the 40 zillion lights needed to line our long country lane, install Plywood Santa and his merry band of elves atop the roof, or even assemble our glow-in-the-dark angel, which, having spent the summer packed under a can of exploded glitter, now resembled Michael Jackson with antennae stalks.

Several house renovations were still underway, a newly-adopted Irish wolfhound puppy the size of Rhode Island (with no interest in potty training) was underfoot, the children were operating on a sugar-fueled holiday high and a 20-pound turkey remained frozen solid, offering little hope that Mother's unexpected, though not unwelcome, visit would morph into a Walton Family Yuletide.

Pilgrimage to Frontier Land

For starters, Mother was as much at home on a farm as Donald Trumps in a Dollar Store. City-born and bred, she kept in close touch with our family by phone, and during the two years since we'd moved from the suburbs, was yet to make a pilgrimage to Frontier Land (anywhere outside Manhattan proper). Instead, each year we'd load up the family on December 26 and drive into the city to pay her a holiday visit, the length of which depended on who we could coerce into the temporary care and feeding of 11 horses and ponies, three dogs, a deranged goat and between six and six million cats.

A country mouse with no kinship to the big city, I was as close to a different species as one could be from my sophisticated mother, and since moving to the farm had switched strategies to accomplish my holiday shopping. No longer trolling chi-chi stores draped in high tech tinsel and Styrofoam snow for upscale and generally useless gifts, I now (without even changing out of blue jeans and flannel shirt) merrily browsed our local tack shop and hardware store, or simply walked my fingers through catalogs and online pages for stores that promised to wrap, ship and deliver clever, useful gifts in time for Santa to slide them down the chimney.

Not only was I saving wear and tear on my psyche and car, I had more time to enjoy the winter wonderland surrounding our farmhouse, which, despite a few minor flaws (roof last repaired around 1723, collapsing porch, occasional snake in the dishwasher, and heating system from hell), I'd fallen in love with two years earlier.

Most importantly, the barn was superbly suited to accommodate our herd (aforementioned equine, psychotic goat and kitty committee) and, with a little help from friends, we were well on our way to correcting most of the major house flaws.

Christmas Eve Tradition

While there were many things about country life which delighted our family, we particularly enjoyed the Christmas Eve tradition we'd established during our first winter on the farm. We spontaneously hitched up our portly old driving pony, Leroy, to a lovingly restored vintage sleigh, tucked ourselves under piles of blankets and headed for neighboring farms to deliver holiday goodies and greetings.

It was always a magical evening, with a glittering layer of snow covering the network of unpaved roads and adjoining farms that provided a Hallmark setting for our journey.

Yet, however much fun it was for us to pile into a genuine horse-powered antique sleigh in sub-zero temperatures and dash along frozen roads under starlight, there was the off chance it might not appeal to Mother, whose holiday traditions had never included farm implements.

Understandably, residing in a penthouse apartment with ivory white rugs unsullied by muddy boots, and cream-colored velvet settees untouched by cats, dogs or dirty saddle pads, Mother had also never hung tinsel on hay racks, glue-gunned elves on a feed box or nailed holly over a barn door.

Of course, there was no lack of a different brand of Christmas glitz in Mother's gracious abode. Gold and silver garlands framed the doorway, beeswax candles blazed in solid crystal holders and a fat, shiny vinyl tree (in no danger of wilting or shedding) masqueraded as an evergreen in her pristine living room.

And now, I thought, dangling the phone in shock, ready or not, she was heading straight into our Christmas chaos.

Arrival at the Farm

Within five minutes of disembarking from the airport limo, impeccable Mother was sullied by chocolate hugs from the grandchildren and slobber from the mammoth puppy, who compounded his spontaneity by somehow managing to plant all four dirty paws squarely in the middle

of her Moroccan leather jacket. Sadly, it was too late for this outfit and no sense in telling Mother to put on old clothes, since she'd never owned any.

After as quick a tour of the house as I could manage to the background of Mother's “Oh, how interesting ... a cat in every room!” and “I'd never thought about burlap slipcovers,” we sat down to lunch, explained our tradition of driving the sleigh to neighboring farms each Christmas Eve, and asked her to join us.

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"Please come, Grandmom, it's really great," urged our six-year-old. "Leroy doesn't even poop until we're stopped," he said, hoping the tasteful addendum would be enough to sway her.

As one who rarely entrusted her body to a vehicle she didn't command, sitting in a sliding object without steering wheel or brakes, powered by a grossly overweight pony she secretly believed could rapidly turn malevolent would clearly be a feat of unparalleled courage for Mother.

But, though she wavered, eventually she caved in to the pleading of grandchildren who promised solemnly that sharing in our tradition would triple her chances of catching a glimpse of that other sleigh whizzing over the rooftops on its way to delivering worldwide gifts. With straight faces, they swore they'd seen it both years. Mother agreed to join us, but only if she was allowed a (three-hour) nap to prepare for the adventure.

Aboard the Sleigh

That evening, a dusting of snow began to blow around us as we gathered at the barn to board the sleigh, our family dressed in toasty down jackets and snug wool hats; Mother swathed in beaver coat, French kid gloves and elaborately feathered felt hat.

Looking askance at my arctic attire, Mother gently suggested that, despite the chill in the air, perhaps I might want to change into a fingertip coat and sensible heels, since we were, after all, "going calling."

I played deaf from the wind and boosted her into the sleigh.

Excited to be allowed out after bedtime, portly Leroy danced eagerly in place, merrily setting the harness bells to jingling and Mother's teeth to chattering. Even though I'd talked her into donning a pair of my winter long-johns, which peeked fetchingly from under her red wool Dior skirt, and despite being tucked under a heavy plaid blanket, Mother was already shaking.

And not from the cold.

Making the Rounds

All aboard, we sent a yee-haw signal to the pony, who moved forward with a lurch that set the horde (minus Mother) into rapturous giggles.

As we began our journey, the fine feathery dusting changed to serious snowflakes, adding much to the picture-perfect holiday scene, while doing little for Mother's mascara.

With Leroy trotting as smartly down the road as his portliness would allow, we began singing every Christmas song we knew, from "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" to the "Chipmunks" holiday greeting. Yet, though loud and off key, our raucous renditions failed to drown Mother's anxious litany of "What if the pony steps in a hole? Do you think we'll turn over? Will he run away?"—though running anywhere would have been a record book feat for a rotund equine pulling a full load of passengers.

Stopping at the first of our half-dozen neighboring farms, we distributed homemade cake and cookies, exchanged greetings and visited long enough to share reciprocal holiday fare; hot chocolate for the kiddies and, for the adults, something with a little more zip to ward off the nighttime chill.

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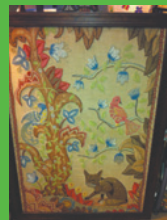
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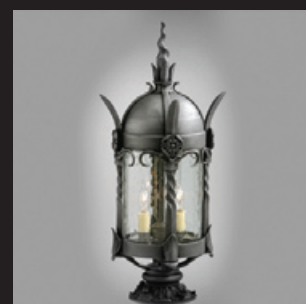


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By the time we left the fifth farm, I noticed that Mother was remarkably less tense. Not only had she joined in the singing, she was leading the chorus in her rich contralto—"O'er the fields we go, laughing all the way,"—with such resonant volume that both grandchildren and sleigh bells were all but drowned out.

On the Way Home

After sharing roasted almonds, gooey brie and rich port wine at our sixth and last stop, Mother stunned the younglings by suddenly flinging the lap robe aside, standing straight up and insisting on driving Leroy the rest of the way home.

"Let me take those reins," she whooped, smiling broadly, eyes sparking under the feathered hat that now resembled a gull that had taken a bad dive. Driving with one hand and conducting us with the other, Mother interrupted her innovative version of "Sleigh Ride" to shout, "Can't this thing go any faster?"—snapping the reins at Leroy, who responded by accelerating as quickly as his rotund little body allowed.

Upon arriving home, Mother insisted on helping to unharness the pony and "put him to bed." Wrapping her fur-covered arms around Leroy's neck, she planted a resounding kiss on his fuzzy nose ... a favor he returned by chewing a hole in her veil.

Then, tucking the tired pony in his stall with yet another kiss that left a "Rhapsody in Red" imprint somewhere over his left eye, Mother plopped down beside him in the hay and gathered the somewhat bewildered grandchildren around her.

A New Tradition

"Thank you so much for inviting me to come to your farm," she said, as if we had. "I'm beginning to think the Baby Jesus decided to be born in a barn because it's just so cozy," she added.

Then, pulling herself almost upright and slogging back to the house in kidskin boots sullied beyond redemption and feathers wilting around her face, Mother announced, "This has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But next time I'm wearing my 'wellies' and tweed to drive the sleigh."

And for the next 11 years, that's exactly what she did. ♦



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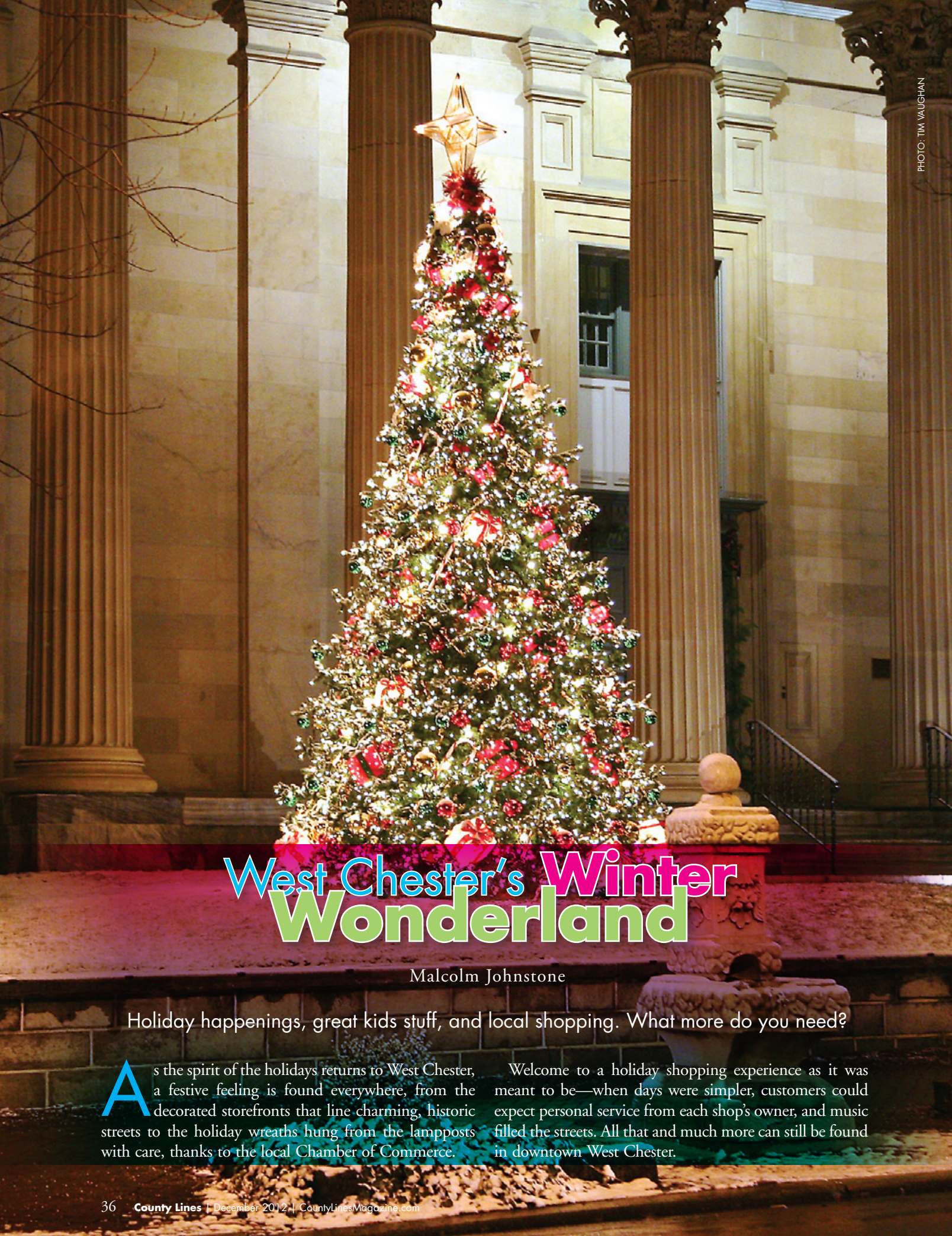


PHOTO: TIM VAUGHAN

West Chester's Winter Wonderland

Malcolm Johnstone

Holiday happenings, great kids stuff, and local shopping. What more do you need?

As the spirit of the holidays returns to West Chester, a festive feeling is found everywhere, from the decorated storefronts that line charming, historic streets to the holiday wreaths hung from the lampposts with care, thanks to the local Chamber of Commerce.

Welcome to a holiday shopping experience as it was meant to be—when days were simpler, customers could expect personal service from each shop's owner, and music filled the streets. All that and much more can still be found in downtown West Chester.

Now it's even easier to enjoy the season when you stay the night at the new Hotel Warner (120 N. High St.; HotelWarner.com). This centrally located hotel can make a perfect evening last all weekend. Enjoy an indoor pool, continental breakfast and free parking—all within steps of West Chester's great shopping and fine dining. Make this year's holiday shopping a mini-vacation, not an ordeal!

Holiday Happenings

West Chester has a full calendar of holiday events to entertain and get you into the spirit of the season. Here are a few of our favorites to entice you to visit West Chester. More events are included in our Holiday Fun listings after this article.

Enjoy the sounds of strolling musicians as they perform on the first three Friday nights and Saturday afternoons in December, sponsored by the West Chester Downtown Foundation. Time your shopping so you can be serenaded and maybe start humming your favorite carol.

Theater lovers have several choices this month. Experience the award-winning *Trial by Jury*, performed by the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Chester County, November 30-December 2, Chester County Justice Center. This Old-Fashioned Christmas tradition is at a new location (New & Market Sts.). A sparkling Gilbert & Sullivan musical comedy, this joyous farce tells the tale of love and marriage. GSSChesCo.org

Or catch *The Mousetrap*, Agatha Christie's favorite who-done-it, November 29-December 2, at the Madeleine Wing Adler Theatre, West Chester University. You'll be gripping the edge of your seat as you watch a group of strangers trapped in a house during a snowstorm discover that one of them is a murderer! For information, 610-436-2533.

Also at the Madeleine Wing Adler Theatre is the WCU Live! production of *A Christmas Wonderland*, performed by the Greater Ocean City Theatre Company, December 8-9. The enchanting cast of singers and dancers presents a high-energy, family-oriented tribute to the holidays. Details at WCUA.edu/oca.

For a classic holiday experience, catch the Brandywine Ballet's performances of *The Nutcracker*, as its genteel romance unfolds against a backdrop of picturesquely

animated action, December 7 through 16, at West Chester University. For information, BrandywineBallet.com.

Take your favorite music lover to hear West Chester University's Baroque Ensemble, performing music from the 18th century on authentic instruments while dressed in period costumes. Free concert at the Chester County Historical Society (225 N. High St.) December 2, at 3 p.m.

Visit ten beautifully decorated homes in West Chester during the "Holiday Home Tour," December 8, from 10 to 3 p.m. The tour features private residences spanning 130 years of home building history. Benefits the West Chester Public Library, 415 N. Church St. Ticket information, WCPublicLibrary.org.

Great Kids' Stuff

Families can enjoy Breakfast with Santa at the Chester County Historical Society (225 N. High St.). Children can sit with Santa to share their wish lists, so don't forget the cameras! Limited seating, so pre-registration is required. Saturday, December 1, seatings 8:30 and 10 a.m. Contact West Chester Borough Parks & Recreation, 610-436-9010.

And children will assemble and decorate Gingerbread Houses with holiday candies at the West Chester Municipal Building, 401 E. Gay St. Everything you need is supplied. Limited to 30, so pre-registration is required. Saturday, December 1, 2 to 4 p.m. Contact West Chester Borough Parks & Recreation, 610-436-9010.

Don't forget to book your trip on the West Chester Railroad's Santa Express. See the events listings in this issue for details. WestChesterRR.net.

Ready, Set, Shop

It's no secret that West Chester shopping offers both a great selection of gifts you won't see at the mall and the experience of being in a historic town with independently owned shops. You'll find it all in downtown West Chester—from cigars to chocolates, fine art to fine apparel, handcrafted gifts and even gifts you make yourself.

The first full weekend of December—December 7 to 9—offers three days of "Christmas Shopping Crawls." Shoppers can stroll the sidewalks and explore quaint boutiques with the best selections available.



Friday night is First Friday, when stores are open late offering specials and special hospitality, all adding to the Christmas spirit.

Downtown shops also make it easy for men to select that perfect gift. "Men's Night Out" events are happening at select stores during the first two weeks of December. See details at DowntownWestChester.com.

Shop Local and Shop Often

We did a some research to give you the inside scoop on shopping in downtown West Chester this holiday season.

Relatively new to the shopping scene is Bella & Betty (117 W. Gay St., 610-719-3259; BellaAndBetty.com), offering gift and home items from local and international artisans. Of special interest is their own hand-made soap—definitely not found anywhere else. Their gift baskets can be assembled to provide an assortment of special items for that personal touch.

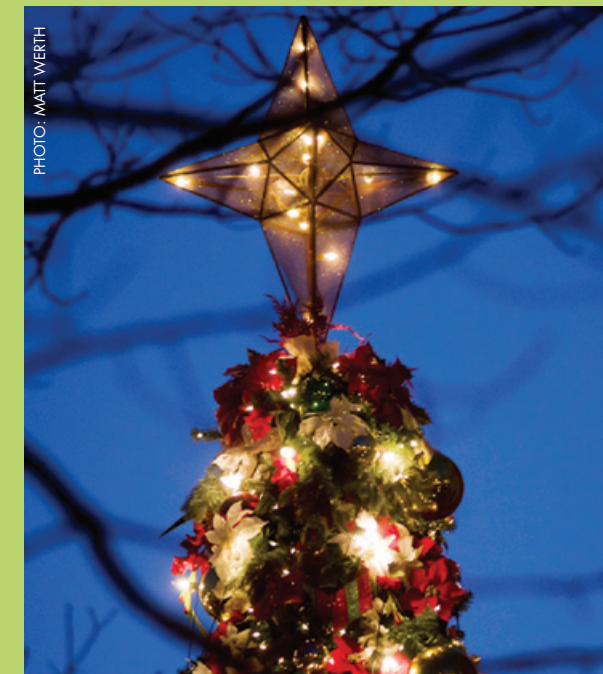


PHOTO: MATT WERTH

RIGHT: Bella and Betty; Eat. Drink. Om...
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Visual Expansion Gallery
 BELOW: Éclat Chocolat, The Five Senses,
 Green Eyed Lady, Stay Chic



What do you get someone who loves beer and chocolate? The Beer Lover's Chocolate Box! It's filled with beer truffles infused with Victory Hop Whallop, Calvados liquor caramels, and single malt whisky truffles. Éclat Chocolate (24 S. High St., 610-692-5206; EclatChocolate.com).

One of the more exotic items for this season is dichroic glass jewelry by Luminosity, available at The 5 Senses (133 W. Market St., 610-719-0170; The5Senses.com). This beautiful jewelry has a coating on the glass that reflects one color of light and transmits another. Colors shift depending on the angle of view, giving an opalescent and iridescent effect that seems nothing short of magical.

For a truly different shopping experience, have an entire store come to your doors with the Green Eyed Lady Fashion Truck. Perfect for that busy person who can't seem to find the time to get out. Contact the shop for details (132 W. Gay St., 610-431-2474; ShopGreenEyedLady.com).

There's nothing like a bicycle under the tree on Christmas Day, and that's where Hybrid Cycles (124 E. Gay St; 610-212-3070) comes in. Their commuter bikes are the perfect transportation option for getting somewhere without working too hard.

You'll find what you need to take the winter chill away with a glass of Holiday Wassail, made locally by Kreutz Creek Winery (44 E. Gay St., 610-436-5006; KreutzCreekVineyards.com). It's a blend of Niagara grapes, pumpkin, cloves and cinnamon. Tasty heated or chilled.

The Lincoln Room (28 W. Market St, 610-696-2102; LincolnRoomWestChester.com) will be decorated for the holidays and offering special retail sales when you make a lunch reservation at this classic tea room. Check out *Delectable Collectibles*, a Chester County cookbook with local recipes mixed with a little local history.

Recreate the way recorded music was meant to be heard with a new and affordable three-part vinyl record playing system that includes turntable, amplifier and speakers. The folks at the Mad Platter (111 W. Gay St., 610-431-1509) found the system that's a treat for your ears.

Pennsylvania Dutch Design (128 E. Gay St; 717-823-6249; PennsylvaniaDutchDesign.com) is a Brandywine Valley manufacturer of high-quality

wood furniture including tables, chairs, cabinets and bed frames. Each piece is quality Amish craftsmanship and can be customized.

December is a huge wedding month and Penwick design (132 N. High St., 610-431-2739; Penwickdesign.com) now offers a wedding registry with items such as Chamilia Jewelry, custom travel mugs and Casafina Stoneware.

Stay Chic (131 W. Gay St., 610-429-8161; StayChicWithUs.com) is a fun place to browse for trendy clothing and accessories at affordable prices. For the holidays or New Year's Eve.

Ladies, tell your man that shopping can be easy. All he has to do is go to Super Santa Men's Night at Sunset Hill Jewelers (23 N. High St., 610-692-0374; SunsetHillJewelers.com) on December 14 and save with 50% off in-stock jewelry.

More than 30 Brandywine Valley artists are represented at Visual Expansion Gallery (126 N. High St., 610-436-8697; VisualExpansionGallery.com), along with restoration and framing services. New to the gallery are vintage map reproductions and vintage art posters.

And finally, did you know there's a place where you can drop off your kids while you eat or shop at local restaurants and stores? Eat. Drink. Om... Yoga Cafe (117 W. Gay St., 215-499-8472; EatDrinkOm.com) offers just that. Besides providing yoga classes for all ages and abilities, they offer "drop & shop" along with "drop & dine." Just drop your kids off with a certified professional, and enjoy dinner, shopping or both.

That's over a dozen reasons to shop West Chester this holiday season! We bet you can find even more. ♦



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Old-Fashioned Christmas in West Chester

Mark Yoder

This is the start of the holiday season in West Chester. Ring in the holiday season with the [MARS Drinks Old-Fashioned Christmas Parade](#) in Downtown West Chester, set to kick-off at 7:15 p.m. on Friday, November 30.

Since 1980, the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce has presented this popular parade—the highlight of the four-day Old-Fashioned Christmas celebration, which runs from Thursday, November 29, through Sunday, December 2. The long weekend celebration features over 40 events including theatrical and musical performances, guided walking tours, the Jingle Elf Run, a holiday craft bazaar and breakfast with Santa.

As the event organizer, the Chamber is delighted to welcome MARS Drinks, a division of Mars, Inc., as title sponsor for the fourth consecutive year. “The Greater West

Chester Chamber of Commerce is proud to partner with MARS Drinks on this project,” said Mark Yoder, Chamber president. “Their continued title sponsorship of this much-loved parade demonstrates their support not only of the Chamber but of the entire West Chester community.”

“Mars Drinks is excited about our continued sponsorship of the West Chester Old-Fashioned Christmas parade,” said Brian Miller, Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Mars Drinks North America. “This is a great opportunity for us to give back to the community through one of the premier events in the area. Mars Drinks and our family of office beverage brands—Alterra Coffee Roasters, The Bright Tea Company, Flavia and Dove—will continue to participate in the local events that shape our community. We look forward to enjoying the festivities with everyone during the event.”



Adam Joseph, 6abc Action News, center, waits with the crowd for Santa.



Bolivian dancers return to enliven the parade.

The Fun Starts Early

Friday evening, before the parade, many businesses in downtown West Chester will host [Holiday Open Houses](#) featuring refreshments and seasonal entertainment. Stop in for some good cheer and local holiday shopping.

You'll find guides in period costumes who lead the [Walking Tours of Historic Downtown West Chester](#) for the 32nd year. Choose from two routes—both include stops at winners of the recent Historic Preservation Awards. Tours begin at 5, 5:10, 5:20 and 5:30 p.m. and start at The Lincoln Room, 28 W. Market Street.

And for those who love a road race no matter the weather, the [Fourth Annual Jingle Elf Run](#) kicks off at 6:30 p.m. at Market and High Streets with a 2-mile run and a 1-mile walk that follows the parade route (see below). Sponsored by First Niagara Bank, the run's proceeds will benefit the [West Chester Area Day Care Center](#), which provides a safe and nurturing childcare environment for children 6 weeks to 12 years. For more visit, [WCADayCare.org](#).

Highlights from the Parade

With [6abc Action News](#) meteorologists [Adam Joseph](#) and [Karen Rogers](#) serving as masters of ceremony, the parade promises spectators a mix of traditional and new elements.

You'll enjoy a host of local schools, businesses, volunteer fire companies and service organizations that are represented among

the marching bands, floats and antique vehicles that have become a mainstay of Old-Fashioned Christmas.

Spectators of all ages will be entertained by best friends [Liz Tool](#) and [Kris Neal](#), [West Chester University](#) seniors who are the featured singing performers at this year's parade. And new this year, [DNB](#) and the [Rotary Club of West Chester](#) are supporting a float celebrating Veterans from each branch of the Armed Forces who are returning home after fulfilling their invaluable service to our country.

Thanks to the efforts of parade-producer Todd Marcocci, president of [Under the Sun Productions, Inc.](#), attendees will also be moved by a special salute to our armed forces, including the Silver Dolphins, Chester County Marine Corps League Color Guard and the Valley Forge Military Academy Music Band, just to name a few.

Get the Best Spot on the Route

The parade starts at New and Market Streets, circling through historic downtown West Chester, and travels north on New Street, east on Gay Street, south on Matlack Street, west on Market Street through to New Street (without stopping at the old Courthouse). With last year's crowd estimated at 30,000, the longer route provides even more opportunity for front-row viewing.

We suggest you arrive early to find your perfect spot! ♦

For more on the weekend's events, go to the Chamber's website: [Greater WestChester.com](#).



West Chester for the Holidays



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Holiday Fun in West Chester

Ongoing
Chester County Historical Society Exhibit.
Ongoing. "On The Edge of Battle: Chester County and The Civil War," see article in this issue. *Through Jan. 19,* "Cut It Out! 200 Years of Paper Dolls," a wide selection from the collection, of over 8,000 paper dolls. 225 N. High St. Wed-Sat, 9:30 to 4:30. 610-692-4800; ChesterCoHistorical.org.

Through December 2
"Trial By Jury" and Carol Sing, presented by the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Chester County during West Chester's Old-Fashioned Christmas. Courtroom 1, Chester Co. Justice Center, 201 W. Market St. Fri, 6 pm; Sat, 2 and 8 pm; Sun, 2 pm. \$5-\$12. 610-269-5499; GSSChesCo.org.



Through January 28
Gifted Exhibit at The Art Trust Gallery. Support the arts this season as you practice the art of thoughtful giving. The exhibit features a wide variety of original artwork by regional artists, offered at neighborly prices. **Special exhibits:** *Dec. 11,* Sneak Peek Tea, 1:30 to 3:30; *Dec. 12,* Artists' Reception, 5 to 8:30. 16 W. Market St. Mon-Fri, 9 to 4:30. 484-467-1664; TheArtTrust.com.



December 1
24th Annual West Chester Charity Ball. Dinner, dancing and auction. Benefits The Friends Assoc. for Care and Protection of

Children, Emergency Family Shelter and the Homeless Prevention Program. West Chester Golf and Country Club, 111 West Ashbridge St. Cocktail chic or black tie. 6:30 to 11:30. \$175. 610-431-3598; FriendsAssoc.org.

December 1
More Old-Fashioned Christmas Events:
Chester County Historical Society Breakfast With Santa. Buffet breakfast with Santa. 225 N. High St. 8:30 and 10 am. Must pre-register, \$12. **Gingerbread House Making.** All materials supplied at West Chester Municipal Bldg., 401 E. Gay St., 2 to 4, \$12. 610-696-4046; GreaterWestChester.com.

December 1-2, 8-9, 15-16
West Chester Railroad Santa Express. Old St. Nick will be on board with a treat for the children and entertainment. Trains depart Market Street Station, 230 E. Market St., at 11 am, 1 & 3 pm. \$6-\$20. 610-430-2233; WestChesterRR.net.



December 2
Winter Festival at Oakbourne. Sing carols, make arts and crafts, have some hot chocolate and cookies, and see Santa in the mansion, which will be beautifully decorated for the holiday season. 1014 S. Concord Rd. 3 to 5. 610-692-1930; WesttownPA.org.

December 2
35th Annual Brian's Run. A 5-mile race through West Chester and North Hills. Benefits Homes For Our Troops, a nonprofit organization that makes homes handicap accessible for wounded veterans. Henderson High School, 400 Montgomery Ave., 1 pm. BriansRun.org.

December 2, 9
West Chester Railroad Christmas Tree Train. Passengers ride to Wiggins Tree Farm where they can pick and cut their tree and take it back to the station on the flatbed. Trains depart Market Street Station, 230 E. Market St., 8 am. \$8-\$14. 610-430-2233; WestChesterRR.net.

December 6-9
The Forty-Niners Presents "My Big Fat North Pole Wedding." The entire family will thoroughly enjoy this original holiday show as Santa and Mrs. Claus prepare for their son Kris' wedding. Stetson Middle School, 1060 Wilmington Pk. Thurs-Sat, 7:30; Sat-Sun, 2 pm. 49ersChorus.org.

December 8
Holiday Home Tour. West Chester Public Library presents a walking tour of 10 beautifully decorated homes, from 1870 to 2000, in the northwest and northeast sections of West Chester. 10 to 3. Tickets at the Library, 415 N. Church St. or online. \$25; \$35 day of tour at library only. 610-696-1721; WCPublicLibrary.org.

December 8-9
WCU Live! Christmas Wonderland 2012: A Musical Holiday Spectacular. A high-energy, family-oriented song and dance tribute to the holidays with dazzling costumes, familiar songs and special effects sure to kindle the holiday spirit. Madeleine Wing Adler Theatre, 817 S. High St. Sat, 7:30; Sat-Sun, 2. \$15-\$20. 610-436-2266; WCUPa.edu.Live.

December 10, 15-16
Chester County Choral Society Concerts. *Dec. 10,* holiday favorites in the ballroom at Longwood Gardens, 1001 Longwood Rd., Kennett Square. 7 & 8 pm. The choristers then present "Sing Forth This Day" on *Dec. 15,* Church of the Holy Trinity, 212 S. High St., West Chester. 7:30 and *Dec. 16,* Church of the Good Samaritan, 212 W. Lancaster Ave., Paoli. 3 pm. ChesterCountyChoralSociety.org.

December 15
Santa Arrives by Helicopter at the American Helicopter Museum. Bring your camera to see Santa arrive by helicopter. 1220 American Blvd. Santa arrives at 11 and 1:30. Helicopter Rides from 11 and 3. \$8-\$10 includes holiday activities and snacks. 610-436-9600; HelicopterMuseum.org. ♦





On the Edge of Battle

THERE'S A STORY OF A TEENAGER WHO LIKED TO PLAY THE DRUMS, AN OPINIONATED EDITOR, A DECORATED YOUNG GENERAL, A SOCIAL ACTIVIST AND A SOLDIER'S WIFE WHO WAS EVICTED FROM HER HOME. NO, IT'S NOT A REALITY TV SHOW—IT'S THE STORY OF CHESTER COUNTY AND THE CIVIL WAR.

Pamela Powell, Chester County Historical Society



ILLUSTRATION BY GAADTCOM/DESIGN

"On the Edge of Battle—Chester County and the Civil War" is an exciting new exhibit now open at the Chester County Historical Society. Come and experience the tumultuous years when our nation was shattered by conflict by learning the stories of ordinary Chester County people living in an extraordinary time.

Part of what makes this exhibit special and a personal journey through history is the use of a variety of "character cards"—for a young drummer, newspaper editor, general, social activist, soldier's wife and more—that guide you through the displays. These three-by-six-inch paper cards relate a part of the character's story, then urge you to find out more as you explore the exhibit.

Receive a character card with your ticket and discover the passions, motivations and adventures of your character. A touch-screen in the exhibit will reveal your character's full story.

Here are some of the Chester County residents you will meet.

Meet **Galusha Pennypacker**, a young soldier from Phoenixville who molded himself into a respected leader. View his uniform, sword and personal letters written to his aunt and grandmother, which reveal his thoughts about his true ambitions.



Galusha Pennypacker from Phoenixville

Meet **Charlie King**, a boy who drummed incessantly on any available

surface and dreamed of marching with the troops. Against their better judgment, his parents granted his wish to become a drummer boy. Visit a well-equipped Civil War campsite and see what Charlie's living conditions were like with the troops. You can even try on a Civil War-period uniform while you're there.

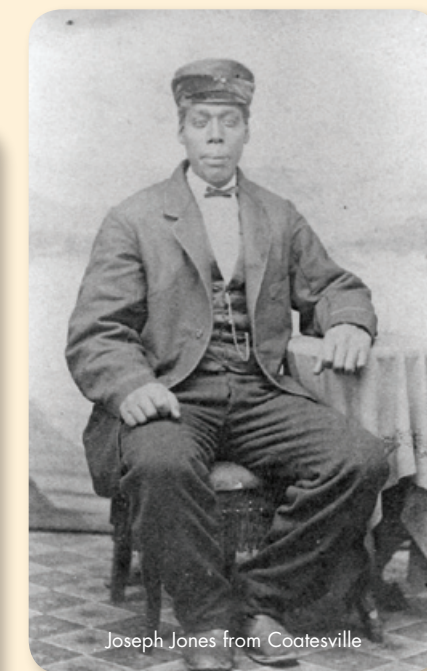
Meet **Marion Penrose**, a socialite who organized the Coatesville Ladies Aid Society to donate tons of preserved foods, clothing, bandages and medical supplies for the troops. Not only did she deliver the materials directly to the front to make sure supplies reached the servicemen of Coatesville, Marion stayed on to work as a nurse. You can try your hand at rolling bandages and picking lint to make swabs.



Meet **John Hodgson** of West Chester, editor of the Copperhead newspaper *The Jeffersonian*. During this era, newspapers had not yet adopted unbiased reporting and each newspaper promoted a particular political point of view. Hodgson freely published his Southern Democrat opinions to a large number of Southern sympathizing subscribers in Chester County. In 1861, an

angry mob broke into the newspaper's office and destroyed his press. Would John dare to resume publishing his paper? Visitors can compare reporting by the *Jeffersonian* with other local newspapers.

Meet **Joseph Jones**, a young African American from Coatesville who jumped at the chance to enlist, joining the Massachusetts 54th Regiment before the U.S. Colored Troops unit was created. Joseph served proudly through some of the bloodiest battles of the war. Search the soldiers' database and discover 925 African Americans of Chester County who served. Check the database for your ancestors.



Joseph Jones from Coatesville

Meet **David Evans** of Malvern, a member of the Society of Friends and a conductor on the Underground Railroad, who was passionate about the abolition of slavery. When he became eligible for the draft, David registered as a conscientious objector, consistent with his belief in non-violence. Discover who in Chester County were conscientious objectors and which Friends felt compelled to fight.

Meet **Kate Taylor** from Charlestown Township, a young wife and mother whose husband enlisted. Living arrangements made for her turned out

poorly when her husband left for war. What did she do?



Meet **Uriah Hunt Painter**, a war correspondent for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, who broke the story of the Union's shocking defeat at the Battle of Bull Run, a full 24 hours before other newspapers. The plucky reporter hopped a freight train in Virginia and headed straight to the *Inquirer's* Philadelphia office. Find out how Painter used the telegraph to pass important information to the War Department. While there, you can try tapping out a message in Morse code.

Meet **Isabella Brown** who delivered her fifth child while her husband was at war. The salary her husband received in the United States Colored Troops was not enough to support the young family. Isabella applied to the Board of Relief for support. Was the 75 cents she received each week enough?

Featured in the exhibit are Civil War artifacts on loan from the Chester County community, gathered through a Civil War Documentation Day held last year. The materials in the community case will be refreshed every three



months with a variety of personal artifacts, such as postal covers, personal letters and documents, and photographs. Probably the most unique of the 200 artifacts brought to the documentation day was an artificial arm. Thomas Crout, the amputee who was issued the arm, found it a bother to wear and relegated it to an attic trunk, which is why this artifact exists in good condition today.

Learn more about Chester County's role in this important chapter of our history. ♦

"On the Edge of Battle" is on view at the Chester County Historical Society through August 2013, 225 N. High St., West Chester. For information: 610-692-4800; ChesterCoHistorical.org.



Knotty Lady, at left, and E Pluribus Unum, above, by Ron Bevilacqua



IN THE GRAIN

Ed Malet

Choose gifts made from wood to put under the tree this year.

As Christmas approaches, I've been thinking about what I'd really like to see under the tree this year. I know it should be wood because wood is warm, natural and renewable. And wooden gifts are hand-made. Beyond that, I've no idea what will be my favorite present. So I visited several Brandywine Valley crafters for inspiration.

An Adz and Some Wood

Scott Gold is a retired teacher in Oxford, whose high school students built him a shop and hauled it to his back yard.

There he carves bowls from salvaged logs. On occasion, he trades his work for raw wood, favoring box elder, oak and "wormy maple." His main tool is an adz (a sharp, curved axe-like tool), which he wields with delightful intensity. When he's done carving, he'll sand, using a grit that is often over 1000, more than four times as fine as used in common shop projects. Then he'll treat the wood with mineral oil or beeswax, repeating the sanding and waxing several times.

Bowls aren't his only products. He says he's "always trying to come up with new ideas." Cutting boards, ladles,

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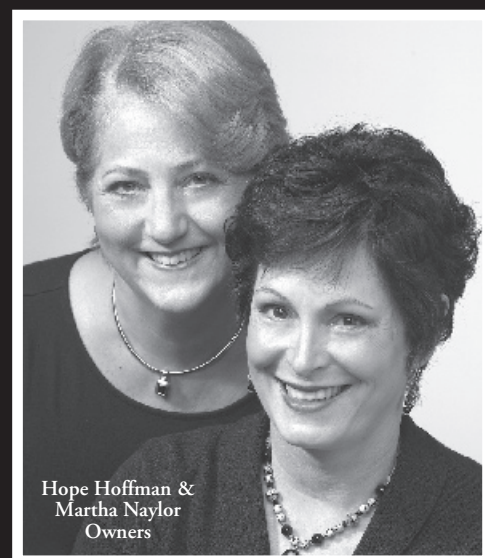
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Scott Gold carves bowls and more from salvaged logs.

fruit-ripening dishes. It's a "nice hobby," Scott says. Customers are "not hurting," at least in his price range. Attendance at craft shows and income, he reckons, will be higher this year than last.

Reclaiming Old Barns

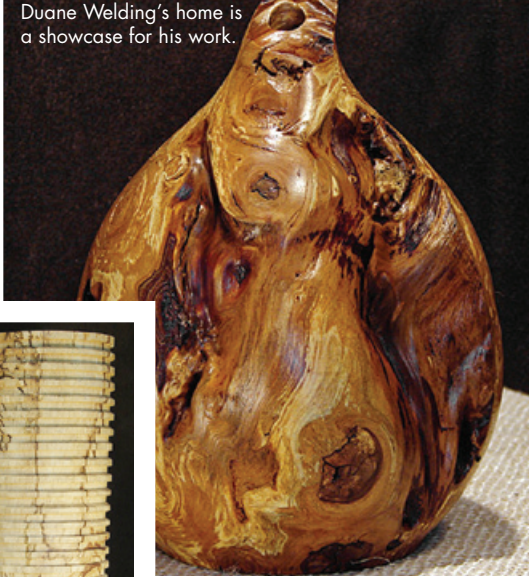
Until he was 14, Dan Dennis lived in Japan, the son of a missionary. Now, he's a full-time woodworker.

Dan's shop is out back behind his small house in Manheim. It's tiny and filled with lumber, except for several square feet of working space. The wood he uses is salvaged from old barns, all more than a century—some two centuries—old. He also has a barn nearby filled with reclaimed lumber. He likes "the old patina."

Dan crafts the wood into fine furniture, completing about 25 pieces per year. He's working on a chest of drawers. Selecting, cutting, sanding, finishing with the piece with tung oil, he works with tools that are simple: a table saw, belt sander, a screw and drill gun, various hand tools. No routers.

He's going for "a sleeker look; not country." The pieces sort of sing. Like Clapton's guitar.

Dan Dennis uses wood from old barns.



Duane Wendling's home is a showcase for his work.



From Traditional to Modern

Duane Wendling grew up in a family of artists and artisans—

his father was Pennsylvania Dutch and a furniture restorer, his wife paints. Duane lives in a house he built with his brother, well off the road outside Kutztown.

Duane's home is essentially a showcase of his work. A magnificent three-drawer chest is made of inlaid, alternating woods—maple, mahogany and oak. Another features a utilitarian chest of drawers made of painted pine.

Lately, however, he's focused on modern themes. Three abstract sculptures—my friend called them the "Three Wisemen"—dominate one room. Against the wall are two understated, raised-grain clocks. In another room are vases, some turned and some hand-carved. And scattered throughout are exquisite small boxes. The selection of woods is eclectic—cherry, walnut, hickory, tiger maple, and others—but nevertheless inspired.

Letting the Wood Speak

Ron Bevilaqua is a former bricklayer and teacher. He lives in Bucks County on the same grounds where his parents live. His wife tends the property. Several buildings are on the property, including his studio, as is a sculpture garden. He also has a home in the Adirondacks, where he often searches for wood.

Or the wood searches for him. He says he sees faces in the wood—a stork, an eagle, a rhinoceros. Sometimes he sees a shape or the essence of one. Then he refines

it slightly, treats it, and lets it speak. (See opening photos.)

A Restless Mind

It's called "carving," but Joyce McCullough rarely uses a knife. Instead, she uses a small lathe, a rotating and cutting tool. She demonstrates and, though I suspect unseen patience and care, makes it look easy. Her hands move quickly as she etches the "feathers" of a goldfinch.

Joyce's favorite subjects are animals. She's carved several cougars. Dogs and dog busts are popular. She also carves

birds—an osprey, toucan and hummingbird are among her past works—but she dislikes the painstaking demands of being "anatomically correct."

In Joyce, I sense a restless mind, one that moves easily from subject to subject. She shows me her vases, her goblets, a cucina doll (a Hopi Indian doll said to possess magical properties). She mixes her media readily, incorporating shells, metal and acrylic. A vase with miniature paintings of African wildlife scenes is divine.



Joyce McCullough's work features animals.



Ralph Zetti prefers exotic woods for pepper grinders.

New to the Business

Ralph Zetti spent 25 years in the Army. Now he "turns" wood, meaning he uses a lathe. He has a trunk filled with pepper grinders, salt shakers, lamp pulls, pens, all made of exotic woods—brown ebony, cocobolo (a heavy wood from Central America), katalax (another dense wood from Central America), and others. He buys it in blocks, largely from Penn State Industries, a supplier of exotic woods based in Huntingdon Valley, and seals what's not used.

Ralph's shop is small but neat with an extensive collection of tools. He focuses on a smooth finish, using wax and 4000-grit sandpaper. I touch the sandpapers. They're soft, seemingly non-abrasive, yet the result is wood with a polished luster.

Ralph's "studio" is "nothing fancy." But he's new to the business and concerned about the economics. Inventory costs are huge, and his labor works out to less than \$8 per hour. Sales are slow. "I'll give it a year," he says.

The Way It Used to Be Done

Windsor chairs. They are masterpieces of design: light, comfortable, elegant, yet sturdy and strong.



Until 12 years ago, Jim Stevens was not a carpenter. Rather, Jim was a Honda salesman. Yet he "started out watching Norm Abrams," on PBS and, as Jim approached retirement, he took a week-long course. Today he's a Master Chairmaker.

From the outset, it's apparent that Windsor chairs are as much mathematics and geometry as skill with tools and materials. These chairs are made in essentially the same way as they were in the late 17th century—hand-carved, steam-bent, no nails or screws, a mix of woods, with milk paint (though none on the bottom because it's expensive), and finished with wax.

"I guarantee it for 200 years," says Jim with a twinkle in his eye. "See my great, great grandkids" if there's a problem.

Seven crafters, each unique, all quite different in their use of wood. All their works are beautiful, distinctive, hand made. The grain of the wood draws me in and I dream. I wish I could decide. But, I suppose I don't have to. I suppose I'll leave the final selection to you. Put something handmade under the tree this year. ♦



Jim Stevens, a Master Chairmaker, creates Windsor chairs.



The Crafters

- Ron Bevilaqua, Quakertown. 215-536-0592; BucksCountySculptor.com.
Dan Dennis, Manheim. 717-626-2458; LancoBarnArt.com.
Scott Gold, Oxford. Golden Touch Gifts.
Joyce McCullough, Warminster. 215-672-1499; JoysCarvedArt.com.
Jim Stevens, Newark, DE. 302-239-4713; BrandywineWindsors.com.
Duane Wendling, Kutztown. DuaneWendling.com.
Ralph Zetti, Lancaster. 717-572-0191; Home.comcast.net/~suntoel/site/.

Finding Wooden Crafts

You'll find wonderfu wood works in the shops and galleries below, plus at local craft shows, including Philadelphia's Christmas Village (Love Park in Dec.), Holiday Open House at Mud & Maker (Pottsville in Dec.), Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show (Nov.), Pennsylvania Guild (Wilmington in July, Blue Bell in Oct., Lancaster in Nov.).

- The 5 Senses 133 W. Market St., West Chester 610-719-0170; The5Senses.com
Diving Cat Studio & Gallery 246 Bridge St., Phoenixville 610-933-3901; DivingCatStudio.com
Work's Wood & Artisans Gallery 20 Ellis Lane, West Chester 610-696-7379
Earth & State, 23 W. State St., Media 610-566-9270; EarthandState.com
Creations Fine American Crafts 443 Hockessin Corner Hockessin, DE 302-235-2322
10,000 Villages Exton, King of Prussia, Media, Wilmington. TenThousandVillages.com.

Holiday Window Shopping

Most trees are bare, but for a few leafy hangers-on, dancing as the sharp wind blows through the stately evergreens. Frost on the grass illuminates the morning. Clouds are heavy and grey—maybe hinting at snow—but then are gone, yielding a clear, pure and quiet vision of heaven. We're waiting for winter, yet still have much to do before the holidays arrive.

Inside, the dining room's aromas of meats, gravies, soup and vegetables transform into a mix of gingerbread, mince pie, homemade cookies and rich coffee. The room is filled with candlelight and the glittering decorations on this year's Christmas tree, now surrounded by bright, wrapped presents. The music is light jazz alternating with holiday carols. The children's eyes are wide, but focused on the wrong things: the big boxes, not the precious, small ones.

Let the following pages be your guide to shopping locally and well this year. We show you the best shops, stores and galleries in our area: handcrafted gifts of all varieties, flowers, jewelry, ways to make your home more comfortable We take you inside the workshops of several wood crafters, where everything from free-form sculpture to traditional Windsor chairs are made. And for a ride in MINI. Fit that under your tree!

From all of us at County Lines, our wish is simply the happiest of holidays, full of joy, good cheer, great gifts and the best company. We thank our advertisers as well, and wish them a profitable holiday season. And we wish everyone good luck in 2013.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Winterthur Museum
800.448.3883 ~ Winterthur.org

• PENNSYLVANIA •

AVONDALE

The holidays are a time for family and friends to get together, and what better place than **The Farmhouse Restaurant**. This renovated 17th-century farmhouse, 514 McCue Rd., is nestled in country gardens with crackling fireplaces, soft candlelit rooms and local art sets the stage for some of the best food in *County Lines* country. For that special dinner, they have a wine cellar with chef's table and on Thursday and Sunday Night, a Prix Fixe Menu, 3-courses for \$30. For a larger gathering, **The Greathouse** is the perfect place. Cathedral ceilings, overhead beams, warm plank floors with colorful oriental rugs, large windows allowing the sunlight to drench this magnificent room. Double French doors open onto a terrace overlooking the Loch Nairn Golf Course. This beautiful room is very functional and lends itself to all types of get-togethers. 610-268-0824; LNgolf.com.

BLUE BALL

For all your windows, walls and finishing touches, stop by **Heritage Design Interiors**, 1064 Main St. (Rt. 23, next to the bank), where you will find everything from custom draperies, valances, blinds shades/shutters and bed ensembles to floral designs—including wonderful holiday florals, art, mirrors, lamps and accessories. They offer color and design consultations for new construction and renovations and decorating tips and ideas to enhance your home or workplace. Gift certificates available. Check them out on Facebook for specials and events. 717-354-2233; HeritageDesignInteriors.com.

BRYN MAWR

Sandy DeMaio Antique & Fine Jewelry, 860 Lancaster Ave., is home to an impressive selection of antique and fine jewelry and collectibles,

including vintage pieces by Tiffany & Co., Cartier and Bulgari, among others. Specialties include diamond jewelry, engagement and wedding rings, engraved antique bangle bracelets, men's cuff links and much more. Repair and restoration services available. Special requests welcome. Tues-Sat, 10:30 to 5. 610-525-1717; SDMAntiqueJewelry.com.

You'd be amazed what a talented and creative window designer can do to change the ambiance of a room—or an entire home. We've had personal experience with **Shady Lady, Inc.**, at 872 Penn St., whose proprietor specializes in custom window treatments, including interior wooden shutters and fabric treatments, and we can tell you first-hand that this great company's work is absolutely first rate. Hours by appointment, so call 610-527-4268 or 800-791-2424 to arrange yours now.

A big hit on the Main Line ever since it opened, **Yangming**, 1051 Conestoga Rd., was named "The Best Chinese Restaurant in America" by *Chinese Restaurant News*, nationally reported on by the *CBS Sunday Morning News* and named one of the "top 10 great places to dine on fine Chinese food in the U.S." by *USA Today*. You must stop by and see the beautiful half-million-dollar renovation. Consider, too, using their European Chef de Cuisine's artistry for holiday parties, special events and receptions in their Continental Room. First class for first-class affairs, they prepare both Continental and Oriental cuisines. The mood is always festive, but especially so at this time of year. 610-527-3200; YangmingRestaurant.com.

CHADDS FORD

Find the perfect gift at the **Brandywine River Museum Shop**. From art reproductions and books to "critter" ornaments and distinctive hand-crafted jewelry, there's something for everyone on your list. Or, give the gift of membership, which includes free admission to the Museum, shopping and dining discounts, and more, all year long. Don't miss the annual "Critter Sale," Dec. 1 and 2. Located on Rt. 1. Phone 610-388-2700; www.BrandywineMuseum.org.



Kurtz Collection Rug & Home
302.654.0442 ~ KurtzCollection.com



Walter J. Cook Jeweler
610-644-5347 ~ WalterJCookJeweler.com

CHESTER SPRINGS

Limoncello Ristorante & Caterers, 499 Uwchlan Ave. LimoncelloCS.com. *See their listing under WEST CHESTER.*

DREXEL HILL

Shere-E-Punjab, 5059 State Rd. 484-452-8140; ShereEPunjab.com. *See their listing under MEDIA.*

ELVERSON

The hearth is the heart of the home, and **Chester County Hearth and Home** will make it safe and beautiful. When you visit their showroom, 19 Park Ave., you will find quality hearth products from Regency, Hampton, Enviro, Piazzetta and others, including CSIA certified chimney service, NFI certified gas fireplace service, C-DET certified dryer vent service. 610-913-0730; ChesterChimney.com.

EXTON

Whether you're looking for that perfect gift or preparing to deck your halls for the holidays, be sure to visit **Ball & Ball**, Rt. 30, 463 W. Lincoln Highway, where you'll find a remarkable selection of original and reproduction furniture, lighting fixtures, door locks and fireplace accessories. Also available are many out-of-the-ordinary gift items. Open Mon-Fri, 8 to 4:30; Saturday hours, Oct. through Mar., 9 to 1. 610-363-7330; BallAndBall.com.

Here is where one-stop shopping for everyone on your list means a visit to **Eagleview Town Center**, located on Rt. 100, north of Rt. 113. The **Town Center** includes the Brickside Grille, Nudy's Cafe, Gemini Hair Design Studio and Spa, Wellington Square Book Shop and Other Colors Art Gallery. Also part of the Town Center: The Lionville YMCA at Eagleview and the LiveWork Shops on Wharton, including Invitations By Design, Town Center Pharmacy, Simply Yoga Studios, Main Line Lighting, Passion for Fitness and many more. InEagleview.com.

Waterloo Gardens, 200 N. Whitford Rd., is a one-stop shop for all of your holiday decorating and gift giving needs. Explore their magical winter wonderland of ornaments, trees, lights, decorations, collectibles, fresh wreaths and greens, gifts, poinsettias, Pandora jewelry, and so much more. Or visit their website, and shop online. 610-363-0800; WaterlooGardens.com.

GAP

Exploring antique shops for gifts during the holiday season can be quite memorable especially if they're located in a historical building. This is the ambience of the **White Horse Mill Antiques**. Located in

an 18th-century grist mill surrounded by farms of Lancaster County truly evokes bygone days. This quality multi-dealer shop features a handpicked selection of 18th- 20th-century antiques, fine art, folk art and accessories. Come see their selection of period furniture, textiles, smalls, jewelry, ceramics, glassware and holiday decorations. Enjoy antiquing the way it should be. Open Mon, Thurs-Sat, 10 to 5; Sun, noon to 5; closed Tues and Wed. 107 Cambridge Rd. 717-768-0960; WhiteHorseMill.com.

GLEN MILLS

Shere-E-Punjab, 301 Byers Dr. 484-841-6345; ShereEPunjab.com. *See their listing under MEDIA.*

Buy Local, Buy Fresh at **Cricket's Garden Market**, Milkhouse Antiques, 1641 Horseshoe Pk., where the majority of their plants come from local Chester County growers including themselves. They offer a wide variety of trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, herbs, veggie plants and local produce, and for the holidays, live trees and wreaths, roping and greens. Since they surround an Antique Collective, you'll find heirloom and vintage garden treasures tucked here and there. 610-942-3181; CricketsGardenMarket.com.

KENNETT SQUARE

Looking for distinctive gifts this holiday season? Be sure to go to **The Carriage House**, Willowdale Town Center, Rts. 926 & 82, where gift giving just got easier! There's always something new and interesting to capture your attention and make your shopping experience a happy one. Choose from their unique selection of handcrafted ornaments, Santas and snowmen as well as Byers' Carolers. Distinctive floral designs, wreaths and prints, all add further charm to this shop and distinctive jewelry, seasonal scents, music, cards and gourmet treats complete the holiday. Open Mon-Sat, 10 to 5:30; Sun, 12 to 4. 610-444-6770; WillowdaleTownCenter.com/CarriageHouse.



Wellington Square Book Shop,
Eagleview Town Center
InEagleview.com



Big Diamond Importers & Fine Jewelry
610-692-7707 ~ BigsDiamonds.com

Drawing fans in Kennett is **Lily's Asian Cuisine, Sushi & Grill**, 104 W. State St. This pan-Asian eatery is open for lunch and dinner seven days a week. In addition to fresh raw fish, their menu also includes other Japanese dishes like teriyaki and teppanyaki. Thai food lovers will find different curries on the menu and chicken or seafood pad Thai. They also offer Chinese food like Kung Pao chicken and orange chicken. And the best part — all you can eat sushi on Tuesdays! BYOB. 610-925-3700.

Since 1973, **Thomas Macaluso Rare and Fine Books**, 130 S. Union St., has displayed 20,000 rare and scarce books in their five charming showrooms. First editions of lasting interest for readers and collectors. Books that they (and you) will want to keep, on all subjects, from the Civil War to Mark Twain to architecture, hunting, exploration, medicine, local history, poetry, children's classics, signed N. C. Wyeths, religion, art—the list goes on and on. And in all price ranges—from \$20 to \$4000. Plus 4000 old lithographed and engraved maps and prints. Holiday discounts apply. Browsers welcomed. 610-444-1063.

Foxfire at The Stone Barn, *see UNIONVILLE.*

Waterbury Kitchen & Bath, 818 E. Baltimore Pk., is where you'll find the ultimate gift. Perhaps an AGA Cooker in Claret Red, a soaking tub for two in hammered copper, or a John Boos professional island in stainless steel for the gourmet. For Him, a "Michael Berman" lavatory faucet in polished nickel; for Her, the "Estelle" faucet by Herbeau in Antique Brass. Or let Waterbury design and build the ultimate kitchen or bath for both of you. Come visit their showroom where you can explore two thousand square feet of kitchen and bathroom products offered only by Waterbury. 610-444-9190; WaterburyDesign.com.

MALVERN

This is the ideal time to plan for what you'd like to see going on in your landscape this spring, and the talented designers and craftsmen at **Flowing Springs Landscape Design**, 426 Old Conestoga Rd., can make it happen. They offer expert consultation on creative design and custom building. In addition to water gardens and ponds, they'll create waterfalls, patios, landscape lighting, walks and stone walls, and design and build a custom swimming pool. They offer professional tree and shrub care, as well as quality nursery items and have been serving the Main Line and surrounding area for 30 years. Ask about their holiday decorating services. 610-408-0739; FlowingSpringsDesign.com.

Riding lessons make a great gift! **Thorncroft Equestrian Center** of **Malvern** welcomes seasoned riders and beginners to exercise their skills at walk, trot, canter and over fences. They offer services for children

and adult riders, with and without special needs, in private or group lessons. Come experience the joy of horses and riding in the comfort of their indoor arenas. 190 Line Rd. 610-644-1963; Thorncroft.org.

MEDIA

You will enjoy the exotic flavors and subtle tastes of India at **Shere-E-Punjab**, where the cuisine boasts fragrant and warm spices blended fresh daily in a centuries-old craft indispensable to Indian cuisine. They offer lunch specials for businesses and offices and a variety of vegan/vegetarian dishes are available. Serving lunch Mon-Sun, 11:30 to 3 and dinner, Sun-Thurs, 4 to 9:30; Fri-Sat, 4 to 10:30. Catering available. 208 W. State St. 610-891-0400; ShereEPunjab.com. Also in Glen Mills and Drexel Hill. 301 Byers Dr. Glen Mills. 484-841-6345; 5059 State Rd. Drexel Hill. 484-452-8140. ShereEPunjab.com.

Wolff's Apple House is a your one-stop shop for Christmas. Shop for Christmas trees, poinsettias, greens and Christmas decorations with a cup of hot mulled cider in hand. Then head inside the market where you can browse their huge selection of fresh produce, homemade foods and handcrafted gifts from local artists. Located at 81 S. Pennell Rd., Wolff's is "always in season." 610-566-1680; WolffsAppleHouse.com.

NEWTOWN SQUARE

Gallery owner Paula Farley Jackson has created another "beautiful" offering for the holidays at her home décor and gift shop, **Beauty Art, Antiques & Gifts**. Specializing in original art, antiques and artful gifts and décor, you'll also find jewelry, art glass, bar and serving ware, ceramics, rugs, pillows, throws and more. "We search the country and beyond for lovely, unusual and unique items to give and to keep," says Jackson. "If you are looking for something distinctive, come to us." Visit Tues-Sat, 3857 Providence Rd. 610-353-4569. BeautyArtGallery.net.



Ball & Ball
610-363-7330 ~ BallAndBall.com



Waterloo Gardens
610.363.0800 ~ WaterlooGardens.com

Exceptional gift baskets and luscious fine chocolates are two great reasons to stop in to **Christopher Chocolates**, at 3519 West Chester Pk. (Rt. 3). They have a great selection of gourmet foods, candies and fine chocolates to create a customized gift basket to delight all on your gift list. Then your gift is finished off with a handmade bow and coordinated embellishments. Goodies from today and retro from yesteryear for the child at heart (no matter the age). Pick up a brochure for your gift-giving needs. They ship and deliver. Celebrating more than 25 years of making life sweeter! Phone 610-359-1669, or check their website, Christopher-Chocolates.com or Twitter.com/ChrisChocolates for the latest deals and coupons.

At **Mostardi Nursery**, 4033 West Chester Pk. (Rt. 3), west of Newtown Square, holiday shoppers will find a fresh approach to gift giving. They have added a new dimension to their long-standing excellent selection of quality live wreaths, plants and greens of the season. Their Christmas Shop has a wonderful assortment of very tasteful garden accents, plus ornaments and accessories that will be received with great pleasure by even the most challenging on your gift list. Gifts that celebrate the home and garden throughout the year, from one of our region's premier nurseries. 610-356-8035 or visit Mostardi.com.

NOTTINGHAM

Come enjoy the tastiest educational trip you'll ever experience with **Herr's Free Snack Factory Tour**, 285 Old Baltimore Pk. See potato chips, pretzels, cheese curls and popcorn being made before your very eyes; sample tasty chips, fresh and warm from the cookers. Share family fun during guided tours, stop and shop at the gift shop and watch their grand video. Small and large groups easily accommodated. Handicap accessible. (They even schedule birthday parties!) More than a day trip, a tour of Herr's is educational fun you'll remember. 610-932-6516; 800-637-6225; Herrs.com.

PAOLI

For fine jewelry, artisan gifts and collectibles, visit **Walter J. Cook Jeweler** in Paoli. New this holiday season, the Tibet Collection from Italian jewelry designer, Mattioli, and the newest collection from Lika Behar. Michael Cook and his knowledgeable staff will help you select the perfect gift for a person near and dear to your heart. Serving the Main Line area since 1946, Walter J. Cook Jeweler is located in the Chestnut Village Shoppes, 36 Chestnut Rd. 610-644-5347; WalterJ-CookJeweler.com.

Have you been thinking about getting that extra-special someone on your list an extra-special gift this year? Maybe that person is you? If so, go see Jack Del's team at the Main Line and Chester County's premier Automotive Destination, **Del Chevrolet and Del Toyota**, 1644 Lancaster Ave. They are having a fantastic sale all month. Schedule a test drive and talk to their expert staff. You will definitely be glad you did! Visit them at DelAutoGroup.com.

Enjoy the beauty and warmth of a new kitchen designed by **Sugarbridge Kitchen and Bath Design**, Paoli Design Center, 1604 E. Lancaster Ave. Using custom cabinetry by Wood-Mode, their kitchens are distinguishable by their unique designs, as well as the finest materials and attention to detail. 484-318-8367; Sugarbridge.com.

OXFORD

Holiday shoppers are invited to enjoy an "old-fashioned Christmas" at **The Oxford Marketplace** on Limestone Rd., (Rt. 10). Here, it's Christmas year-round in the charming **FOREver CHRISTmas** shop that features over 300 Byers' Choice Carolers, one-of-a-kind ornaments, and gifts, and for a special treat, visit decorated trees under the "Starry Night" ceilings. **Antiques & Uniques** is a shop featuring collectibles and one-of-a-kind arts and crafts from local artisans, and from the "Hannum Collection" from the Brooklawn Estate (sales benefit the Cheshire Land Preservation Fund). The newest addition is **The Fox Den**, with fox, horse, hunt, hound and rider items for your equestrian and foxhunting friends. **The Oxford Rug Company** specializes in antique and new hand-knotted oriental carpets from around the world, including sales, cleaning and quality restorations. For more information, contact Bill Lewis at 610-405-6328 or 610-998-9080, or email: theoxfordmarketplace@verizon.net.

POTTSTOWN

Finally, furniture that fits your home and décor. **Alegacy Furniture**, 1486 S. Hanover St. (Rt 100), specializes in creating American-made, hardwood furniture just for you. Their large showroom displays a broad range of furniture styles in accessorized room settings. Browse at your leisure and evaluate your furniture needs and dreams for any room in your home. They can modify their furniture or build from your own ideas! All made to order, your furniture will be custom crafted with your choice of renewable American hardwood, finish color and hardware. "Furniture with a future!" 610-970-4340; AlegacyFurniture.com.



Oxford Marketplace
610.998.9080



Alegacy Furniture
610.970.4340 ~ AlegacyFurniture.com

UNIONVILLE

Treat family and friends to casually elegant dining at **Foxfire at the Stone Barn**, featuring Chef Ray Maxwell's acclaimed Farm-to-Table cuisine. Thursday-Saturday lunch and dinner and Sunday Brunch. Enjoy brunch with Santa on Dec. 2, 9, 16 and 23, from 10 to 3. They will welcome your holiday parties for 2 to 200 guests. BYOB. Gift certificates to Foxfire make your holiday shopping a breeze. 100 Stone Barn Dr., Kennett Square. Phone 610-347-2414; TheStoneBarn.com.

WEST CHESTER

If you're looking for that truly distinctive gift, **Bella and Betty**, 117 West Gay St., proudly offers unique items from artisans, while boasting a wide selection of iconic and emerging brand names. They have great gift ideas including hand-made soaps, leather goods from Morocco and Tunisia, jewelry, candles, Teddy bears and more and offer free gift wrapping. Join them during West Chester's Old-Fashioned Christmas parade. 610-719-3259; BellaandBetty.com.

To add sparkle to the holidays, visit **Big Diamond Importers & Fine Jewelry**, 15 W. Gay St., specializing in ideal cut diamonds, engagement rings and wedding bands at wholesale prices. Come see their new designers collection for 2013—Gabriel & Company, Frederic Duclo, Natalie K, Jorge Revilla-Spain, LK Design and much more. You will also receive 30% off on all in-store jewelry for mentioning this article. They are also a full-service jeweler, including in-house repair and custom design. 610-692-7707; BigsDiamonds.com.

Family-owned and operated **Chapman Windows & Doors**, has been providing customers with top quality materials, competitive prices and superior service since 1994. From simple window repair to fully replacing windows, doors, siding, roofing and more, they stand behind everything they sell as well as their installation. Visit their 6,000-square-foot showroom, 882 S. Matlack St., Unit G., or call for an in-home presentation. 610-431-8898; ChapmanWindowsDoors.com.

Feliz Navidad! Spice up the season with a holiday visit to **La Tolteca**, one of West Chester's favorite Mexican restaurants. They have been serving authentic Mexican food at six locations in Delaware for a dozen years and have been voted Best Mexican Restaurant for the last 10 years, so you know they're good at what they're doing. And they are locally owned! The atmosphere is bright, the service is friendly — and don't

forget dessert, it's really good! 907 S. High St. Open Mon-Thurs, 11 to 10; Fri-Sat, 11 to 10:30; Sun, 11 to 9. 610-429-8101; LaTolteca.net.

Located in one of West Chester's most famous historic structures, **The Lincoln Room**, 28 W. Market St., provides a charming place to enjoy a luncheon and tea menu. They also offer a wide range of Special Events, including the very popular Fondue Fridays. Open Mondays in December. Closed Sunday, but available for private rentals. 610-696-2102; LincolnRoomWestChester.com.

Limoncello Ristorante & Caterers, 9 N. Walnut St., serves Southern Italian cuisine and features a full-service bar and charming atmosphere. They offer an award-winning lunch buffet Mon-Fri, 11:30 to 2; BYO, Sun, Mon, Tues. Their award-winning team can also bring their legendary Italian cuisine and exceptional service to your home or preferred venue, guiding you through every step of the event and providing their own professional servers and bartenders to make your event memorable. Look for them at their new location in Chester Springs. 610-436-6230; LimoncelloWC.com.

When Joanne and John Caulfield took over Coyote Crossing in 2009, they wanted to create a destination for everyone to enjoy. At **Más Mexicali Cantina**, whether you are at the first floor Cantina, the second floor Velvet Lounge, or "Más on the Roof," you'll find award-winning authentic Mexicali cuisine with a rock-n-roll flare. Quickly becoming one of West Chester's top destinations for dining and late night action. You can always expect more at Más. 102 E. Market St. 610-918-6280; MasMexicali.com.

Not only is **Matlack Florist** the place to go for all your fresh floral needs, the giftshop is overflowing with Christmas décor, silk arrangements and wreaths, jewelry, accessories and giftware for holiday entertaining. Visit them at 210 N. Chester Rd (Rt. 352). 610-431-3077; MatlackFlorist.com.

Thinking of sprucing up those floors for the holidays? **McCue Hardwood Flooring** has been serving Chester County with professional hardwood floor installation, repair and wood floor refinishing services for over 17 years. Their wide selection includes red oak, white oak, Brazilian cherry, cherry, mahogany, walnut and tigerwood. And, you can expect the highest level of personal attention from owner, Ed McCue, for measurements, estimates and a knowledgeable discussion of product options. 610-429-9859; McCueHardwoodFlooring.com.



Beauty — Art • Antiques • Gifts
610.353.4569 ~ BeautyArtGallery.net



Yangming

610.527.3200 ~ YangmingRestaurant.com

Just think how beautiful your decorations and holiday meals will look on new granite countertops. **Planet Granite**, 800 E. Virginia Ave., is a family-owned and operated company specializing in fabrication and installation of granite, marble, Travertine and many other products. They have recently been selected for the 2012 Best of West Chester Award in the Granite Products category by the U.S. Commerce Association (USCA), a program that recognizes outstanding local businesses throughout the country. 610-344-9100; PlanetGraniteInc.com.

Señora's Authentic Mexican Cuisine, 505 E. Gay St., is the perfect retreat when you need to refuel during this busy season. This award-winning restaurant provides a warm, friendly atmosphere for the entire family, and you'll love their authentic, fresh and delicious offerings. This popular BYO is open Mon-Thurs, 11 to 9; Fri-Sat, 11 to 10; closed Sun. 610-344-4950.

Custom shutters add beauty and elegance to your home. **Shutter Tech, Inc.** has been specializing in custom interior shutters for over 36 years, built locally in their West Chester factory. This means they are able to give you direct factory prices. Give them a call or visit their showroom, Mon-Fri, 8:30 to 4, to see the many looks that you can give your home by purchasing shutters. And don't forget that shutters increase the value of your home, because they are custom built to fit every window. Park Valley Corporate Center, 1155 Phoenixville Pk. Suite 105. Call for a free estimate, 800-272-9934; ShutterTech.com.

Dr. John R. Sorge, Jr, D.D.S., P.C. Family Dentistry has been chosen among "America's Top Dentists" every year since 2003. If you are looking for a dentist that offers excellent, personalized care in a compassionate, painless manner, contact them at 610-696-0199, visit their office in the Westtown Business Center, 1552 McDaniel Dr., or visit their website. SorgeFamilyDentistry.com.

Since 2006, **Ultimate Patios** has been providing quality outdoor furniture in the tri-state area. They stock a large selection of outdoor room furniture and accessories, where you can buy items in stock or custom-order furniture to your specifications. They have birdhouses, outdoor clocks, wind chimes, outdoor heaters, torches and more. For

the holidays, they offer pre-lit artificial Christmas trees in all sizes and types, garland, wreaths, lights, ornaments, candles, candle rings, floral picks, ribbon and table top display items. Stop by and see your friends at Ultimate Patios for your Ultimate Christmas decorating needs. 1301 West Chester Pk. 610-430-2171; UltimatePatios.com.

• DELAWARE •

WILMINGTON

Come visit **Kurtz Collection**, 1010 N. Union St., to find the most unique gifts for the holiday season including ornaments, artisan jewelry, pottery and one-of-a-kind home accessories. Their hip and chic staff has a keen eye for this seasons' hottest trends. Come in and put them to the test! Whether looking for a special gift or something to freshen your own home, there's something for everyone. 302-654-0442; Kurtz-Collection.com.

Looking for a unique holiday gift? Shop at the **Winterthur Museum Stores** for outstanding gifts, books and home décor inspired by their museum, garden and library. Look for monthly Museum Stores special offers and events at Winterthur.org. Or, give the gift of membership which includes free admission to Yuletide at Winterthur—a guided tour of Henry Francis du Pont's dazzling home decorated in holiday style. Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, 5105 Kennett Pk., (Rt. 52), Winterthur, DE. 800-448-3883; Winterthur.org. ♦

We hope you will patronize these fine local shops, restaurants and services. Happy holidays.



Distinctive Plants • Home & Garden Accents

MOSTARDI

N U R S E R Y

We'll help you gather all the special things you need this holiday season....

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Lily's:
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BYOB, all you can eat sushi every Tuesday.
Private party room available.

104 W State St, Kennett Square, PA 19348
610-925-3700

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lilysushiandgrill.com lilyspa

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COUNTY LINES

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"The Day" in a MINI

Jo Anne Durako

I had no idea I would fall in love with the infectious spirit of the MINI.

Can a car make a person happy? Depends on the car. And on the person.

As a self-professed "non-car" person, I've never believed "I am what I drive." After all, my car is over ten years old. But I thought it would be a trip to drive a MINI through the rolling hills of Chester County during the first Saturday in October (a.k.a. Chester County Day, or "The Day").

I had no idea I'd fall in love with the infectious spirit of the MINI.

This affair of the head and the heart started as an offer I couldn't refuse. As a special perk at this year's Chester County Day, Otto's BMW offered cars for touring on The Day. Otto's planned to have some lucky tour-goers test their sleek German driving machines. But, having driven BMWs over the past 30 years, I thought it would be more of an adventure to drive a different kind of machine—a MINI.

I'd seen those happy-looking cars appearing on roads since the MINI returned to the U.S. in 2002—the configuration of the grill and headlights forms a smiling face. A few years back, a friend who came to dinner took me on a quick spin through my neighborhood before dessert—a taste of the MINI experience, but not the same as being behind the wheel.

Behind the Wheel

With the details arranged through Chester County Hospital's Director of Events, Tom Gavin, I arrived at the hip black and silver dealership for Otto's MINI in Exton. After a few minutes of paperwork, I was sitting at the wheel of a new 2012 Countryman, cosmic blue and loaded with options (retailing in the low \$30k range). The color is important information for a car with so much cheeky personality, some displayed in the MINI website's sense of whimsy for paint color names: chili red, highclass grey, hot chocolate.

Chad Carey, Sales Manager, gave me the crash course—meaning the quick version, no foreshadowing of my drive. He

synchronized my iPhone to the MINI's high tech communications system, a feat I haven't accomplished in ten years of driving my car. Good start.

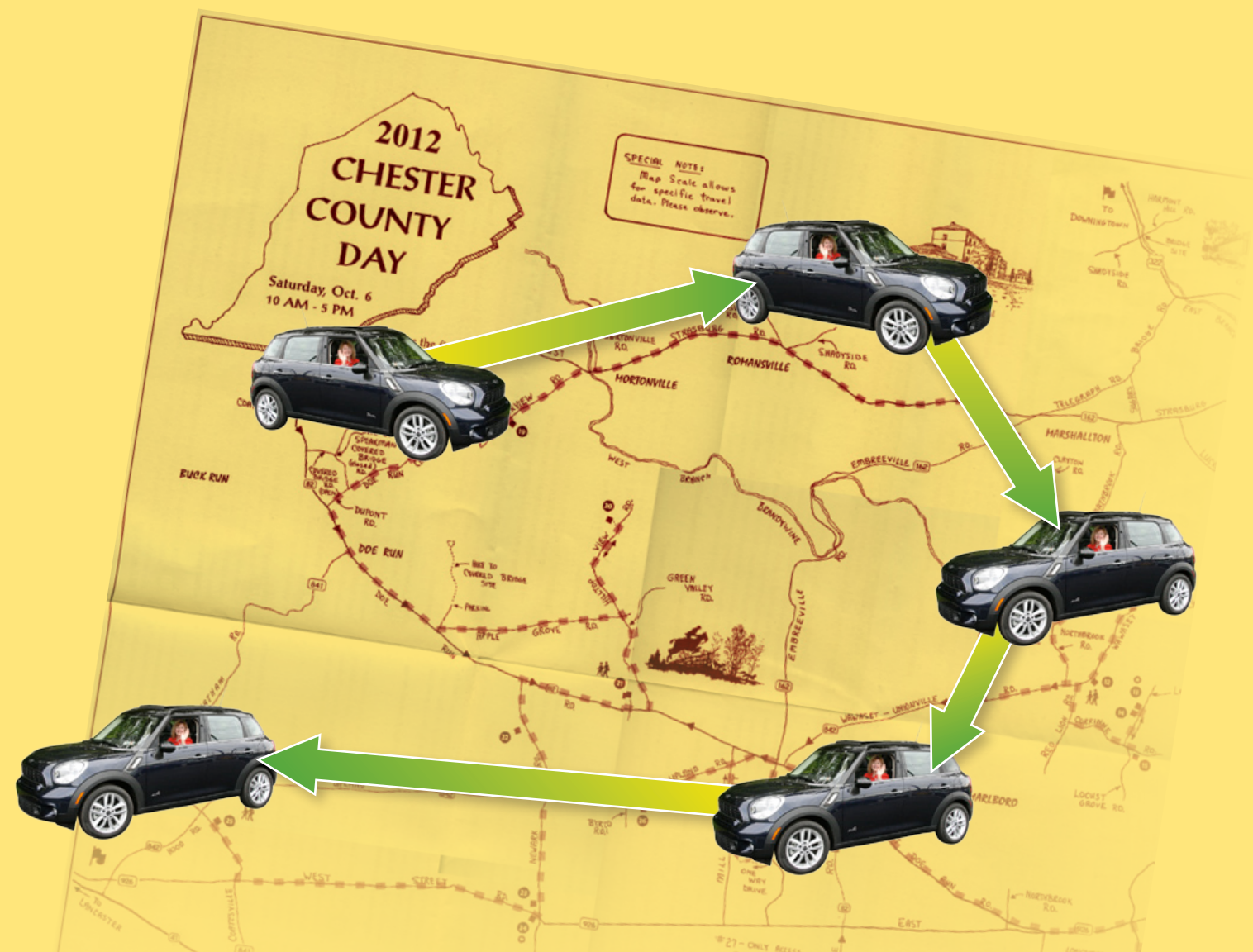
The mix of luxury and retro styling made me smile as I settled into the surprisingly spacious interior. Later, four adults jumped in to try out the car when I brought it back to my office; I've read that 21 is the record for occupancy. Comfy, ergonomic seats contrasted with the large round retro speedometer set in the center of the dash—homage to the instrument panel from the racing MINIs that won the Monte Carlo road rallies in the mid-1960s. The push button start was new to me, as were one-touch turn signals, and the boot-to-bonnet terminology (for trunk to hood).

I listened politely to the safety pitch (six airbags, winner of safety awards, Consumer Digest and J.D. Powers awards, too), general operating instructions, and the like. Then I found out about my priorities—the sunroof, Sirius radio, and personalized ambient colors for night driving—blue and purple were my favorite choices. Now I was ready!

Test Drive

Armed with my map for the tour and a trusty friend as navigator, we set off to visit as many of the 30-some private homes and historic buildings as we could manage on our test drive. I'd circled 15 stops, including the five homes *County Lines* profiled in our September issue—wanting to compare the story and photos with reality.

We sped off from my home in Haverford, heading to Chester County on Goshen Road, part of my typical morning commute. Well behaved on the streets of the Main Line, the MINI handled the country roads with surprising pep, just as well as my BMW. It took hills well and handled like a sports car on curves, a tribute to the "bulldog stance," resulting from wide-spaced wheels and low center of gravity. Great start.



MINI Moments

Our first stop tested off-road driving, as we parked on a horse field on the property. Despite the small size and low-to-the-ground body, we cruised easily over the uneven, grass field.

Then we had our first MINI-moment: tour-goers parked next to us asked how we liked our MINI. I'm told by MINI owners that folks are always chatting them up about their car. People asked how long I'd had it (less than 24 hours), where I bought it (on loan from Otto's), how did it handle (like a MINI driving machine). Note: MINIs have a rigid, tight feel, similar to a BMW, which bought MINI in 1996.

There were other MINI-moments during the tour. Drivers smiled as they let me merge into traffic, with shorter wait time. Even pedestrians yielded and let the cute car go ahead. Other MINI drivers waved—something that took me a few waves (a special three-finger variety) to notice.

When the folks at Otto's told me MINI owners name their cars and service reports are given in the car's name (as in "Penny needed a oil change, but she'll be ready at 4"), I thought it was a bit of hype. But after a day of smiling

as I drove, having others smile and wave, and thoroughly enjoying the spirited car while driving over 100 miles on unfamiliar back roads, I began working on a name for the Countryman.

There is so much personality packed into what is clearly more than just a car. Add the opportunity to customize your MINI with 10 million choices, according to the website. And then there's the almost religious fervor of MINI owners, legions of loyal fans who've created local MINI groups. Talk with the prime MINIsiter at PhillyMINI.org, established in 2003. It's no wonder the MINI was named the European Car of the Century in 1999 and the North American Car of the Year in 2003. And got me to 12 of the 15 houses on the tour.

For me, it was clearly THE car of Chester County Day.

Now I wonder how much longer my old car will last ... ♦

Thanks to Otto's MINI, 305 W. Lincoln Highway, Exton. Otto'sMINI.com. Post you MINI-moments on our Facebook page



Dining Out

THE FARMHOUSE BISTRO
39 Conestoga Rd., Malvern
610-647-8060 • TheFarmhouseBistro.com



PHOTO: ANDREA SHIVES



PHOTO: BETSY BARRON



CLAIR PRUETT PHOTOGRAPHY

Lise Monty

It was a splendid evening, beginning with the table where we were seated — right next to the homey, wood-burning fireplace where the flames were just bright enough and warm enough. It helped that our attentive server knew when to stoke the fire to keep our life-is-good glow alive and well.

The stage was set, and based on what we knew about the chef, we were primed for an excellent dinner. And we got it. The superb country-French cuisine kept us happy—from savory pâté to the delectable apple tart tatin.

Chef Joseph Maguire's culinary chops include Striped Bass and Borgia Café in Philly, and most recently, a ten-year stint with the Culinary Concepts catering firm. His extensive world travels have obviously influenced his skills and repertoire.

We dined in the smallest of three dining rooms carved out of the Chester-County-classic 226-year-old farmhouse, each with a fireplace. The minimalist décor, including contemporary furniture, blends well with its historic assets, notably gleaming hardwood floors, thick walls and period windows and doors. Pretty hand-blown glass pumpkins created by artisans at Wheaton Arts in Millville, New Jersey, graced the mantels and other surfaces. Holiday ornaments from Wheaton are on order, we were told.

Throughout the restaurant, framed black-and-white photos decorate the walls. They're portraits of actors and actresses from productions over the years by the popular People's Light & Theatre, a professional nonprofit operation in its 38th season. The theater company's large facility adjoins The Farmhouse Bistro, which it has owned and managed since 2011. Collaborations have been expanded and maximized far beyond the standard dinner-and-a-show idea.

From Kennett to Paris

The *Grilled Portobello* (\$8) appetizer showcased Kennett Square's signature industry with panache. The large cap cuddled melting fresh mozzarella topped with roasted red peppers and sitting on local field greens, all of it drizzled with aged balsamic, and all of it a treat.

The ample slice of *Country Pâté* (\$12) blended ground organic chicken and pork studded with golden raisins and pistachios that added texture and a bit of sweetness as well as visual appeal. It was pure goodness, hearty yet not heavy. In supporting roles: tasty red onion marmalade, Major Grey's chutney, whole grain French mustard, and a bunch of red grapes.

Other appetizers include Belgian steam mussels "brewed" with Chimay blue ale, bacon-wrapped shrimp Lejeune, grilled baby octopus

and chicken quesadilla. Other charcuterie offerings: truffled chicken liver pâté, a platter with both pâtés, and a cheese board with domestic and imported artisanal cheeses.

The salad offerings enticed, especially the signature salad with its burgundy poached pears and gorgonzola with a caramelized shallot/balsamic vinaigrette, and the autumn salad featuring local honey-crisp apples and shaved fennel, dressed with a cider vinaigrette.

The Main Event

The promise of a seafood celebration sold us on one of the evening's specials: *Sauteed Shrimp and Scallops with Lobster Ravioli* (\$21). It was a total feast. Red-striped ravioli filled with a lobster blend were topped with tender shrimp and plump scallops. Tossed into the mix were yellow and red cherry tomato halves and slim asparagus spears, all of it bathed in a sassy pesto-based sauce. Slender strips of lemon zest added a bright note. It was a generous serving with lots to savor.

For all who crave that full-flavored, fall-off-the-bone beef that skillful braising produces and that never loses its appeal, Chef Maguire's *Slow-roasted Cabernet-braised Boneless Short Ribs* (\$24) is simply wonderful. It was a generous serving of the classy comfort food, rich and aromatic, with a killer wine sauce plus a heap of mashed potatoes and roasted/grilled carrots and parsnips. The latter, with their creamy-white sweetness, made me wonder once again why they're not more popular here, though they're standard fare in Europe.

Other entrée choices: pan-roasted sea bass, pan-roasted center-cut filet, chicken Marsala, wild mushroom penne, pan-seared veal chop, shrimp scampi, grilled Atlantic salmon, and pan-seared sea scallops.

We enjoyed a light Argentinian Malbec—*Callia Alta Malbec* (\$7.50/glass), selected from a diverse list of more than 20 by-the-glass offerings. Deep red and medium-bodied, with light fruity flavors, the Malbec paired well with our entrees. There's a full bar, including extensive martini menu.

Le Dessert

A perfect bistro dessert, the *Farmhouse Apple Tart Tatin* (\$8) was pleasantly homey with warm apple slices, just sweet enough, spread out over rich pastry with a big scoop of rich vanilla ice cream on one side and a big scoop of whipped cream on the other. And a fancy garnish, too: a caramelized sugar lattice that added crunch. We were wise to share, since it was more than enough for two. The evening's "cheesecake du jour" was peanut butter cup. It tempted, but the tatin

won out. Other desserts: flourless chocolate torte, brioche bread pudding, Farmhouse chocolate mousse, and raspberry sorbet.

Holiday Happenings & More

People's Light and Theatre and The Farmhouse Bistro are perfect partners, maximizing their respective assets, and never more than during the holidays, when the popular tradition of delightful "panto" productions, in their 8th year, light up the stage. The Sunday Brunch/Panto combos is just one example. Check the website for details.

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Food News

A few of our favorite things to share
this month about local food and drink

A Honey of an Orange. “Well, so that is that/Now we must dismantle the tree/Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes,” begins Section III of W.H. Auden’s bittersweet 1942 *Christmas Oratorio*. We’ve all been there and go there again very year, past the wonderful celebration day when: “Everything became a You and nothing was an It.”

I say let’s see dark cold December as the month when days begin to lengthen, light starts returning, and we can begin our enjoyment of treasures like the winter-seasonal **honeybell** (a.k.a. the **Minneola tangelo**), the best citrus ever. So great eaten out of hand, in sprightly winter salads, flavoring an extraordinary crème brûlée or beef curry, or in a (re)invigorating post gift-opening Christmas morning screwdriver.

Cook Your Own Goose. Assuming you’ll be cooking your own Christmas meal and would like to forego preparing another turkey so soon after Thanksgiving—yet stay traditional—why not try roasting a goose or two this year? A delicious and rich item beloved in both Europe and China, **roast goose** is a delight for dark meat-lovers (I am one; the goose is all dark meat). It’s absolutely superb accompanied by potatoes roasted in the fat rendered by the goose in cooking. I recommend ordering your goose early from **Rittenhouse Farms** at Lancaster Farm Market and trying the great Nora Ephron and Nigella Lawson recipes posted online under **Dining and Recipes** at *CountyLinesMagazine.com*.



Props for Fruitcake. Many blame Johnny Carson for putting the final nail in the fruitcake’s reputational coffin. (“The worst gift is fruitcake. There is only one fruitcake in the entire world, and people keep sending it to each other,” he reportedly said.) But I prefer keeping my memories of Johnny positive and remembering the fruitcake’s virtuous origin as a way of preserving New World surplus fruit crops using our equally bounteous rum and sugar stores. My favorite fruitcake, the traditional English Plum Pudding, comes from Piccadilly’s Fortnum & Mason (*FortnumAndMason.com*), which also sells Prince Charles’ organic brandy butter to accompany it. But it’s easy enough to make your own, as James Beard demonstrates in classic fashion (*recipe online*).

Dinner Out. After all this imaginative cooking and exhausting dining, I would think a meal out is in order. **Buckley’s**, a traditional oasis of good eating and drinking in Centreville, DE, located between Wintethur and Longwood Gardens, is newly re-opened. Welcoming and thriving, they’re open through lunch service on Christmas Eve, 5812 Kennett Pike, Centreville. *BuckleysTavern.com*. West Chester favorite **Limonecello’s** new Chester Springs outpost, 499 Uwchlan Ave., will be serving excellent dinner until 10 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve. Both restaurants are closed Christmas Day. Check Facebook for updates.



Quince. Continuing the Christmas-at-home DIY theme, I’d also suggest seasonal doses of clarifying and fortifying quince. Aficionados know that this ancient food is exquisite in appearance as fruit and flower and extraordinary when properly ripened and prepared (it requires cool weather to flower). Often known by its Spanish name, *membrillo*, holiday bakers will enjoy serving this delicious, London-fashionable quiche (*recipe online*), incorporating quince paste and Stilton, the ultimate Christmas cheese, either as a first course or canapés. The lazier among us will settle for this Quince Vodka (*recipe online*) pre-meal *aperitif* or post-dinner *digestif*.



About Curtis Roberts. *I’m a lawyer who also does other things, including appreciate regional food. My family returned to the area to reclaim my wife’s deep Chester County roots, educate our daughter in the right Philadelphia way, and enjoy the food. For more of my gastro-adventures, check my blog, ACravan, ACravan.Blogspot.com, which is so varied, there may just be something you’ll find interesting.*



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Cupcakes

Laura Muzzi Brennan

Celebrate National Cupcake Day, December 15, the right way.

Cupcakes have garnered all sorts of press over the last few years. Writers at *The Huffington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Slate*, among others, analyzed the popularity of the cupcake, parsing its cultural underpinnings, its economic implications and its place in culinary history.

I learned a lot from these articles: the cupcake debuted in 19th century America; "Sex and the City" spurred its rebirth and a host of new terms—like cupcakery and cupcake-centric—now appear in the popular lexicon.

But no matter how intellectually sated I felt after reading, one pang remained, and it could be satisfied only by a butter-and-sugar reality. Fortunately, the Brandywine Valley offered promises of fulfillment in the form of **Cakes and Candies by Maryellen**, **Cupcakes Gourmet**, and **Dia Doce** (see sidebar).

At West Chester's **Cakes and Candies by Maryellen**, Maryellen Bowers offers 16-18 varieties of cupcakes every week. During the winter holidays, Bowers creates cupcakes with warm-your-heart flavors like peppermint, cappuccino, hot chocolate and gingerbread. Throughout the year, popular varieties include lemon raspberry; chocolate blackout; pumpkin roll, and chocolate peanut butter cup.

One that seems to enjoy unrivaled adoration: red velvet-white chocolate cheesecake. Red velvet also claims "most popular" status at **Cupcakes Gourmet**, with locations in Malvern, Ardmore and Wayne. But, says founder and executive pastry chef Maki

Evans, classic vanilla and triple chocolate are on its heels. Triple chocolate?! Yes, you read that right: it's a Belgian dark chocolate cake, topped with a dollop of milk chocolate icing and dipped in Belgian dark chocolate ganache.

Both Bowers and Evans put forth a few theories about why cupcakes, while never out of style, have become darlings of the dessert table. Besides being beautifully decorated ("cute" says Evans), cupcakes satisfy our desire for variety and convenience.

Instead of committing to one slice of one kind of cake, you can try a few different cupcakes for the same number of bites. Also, eating a cupcake requires no more than peeling a liner: for a quick indulgence, cupcakes, unlike butter, can't be beat.

So, with the nod to the popular cookbook, what's new cupcake? Bowers points to her cake pops, a cross between a cupcake and a lollipop, as well as petite cupcakes. Evans notices more bakers marrying sweet and savory ingredients. Her maple-bacon cupcake—a vanilla buttermilk cupcake topped with maple glaze and bacon bits—tastes like a dessert version of pancakes and bacon. And for those who want to make cupcakes part of their ladies' night out or team building activities, Evans recently opened a private party lounge at her Malvern location.

Cupcakes deserve all the attention they get. After all, as Maki Evans says, "There's no sweeter way to bring smile to someone's face."



Cakes and Candies by Maryellen



Red Velvet Cupcakes from Cupcakes Gourmet



Dia Doce cupcakes

Classic Vanilla Cupcake with Vanilla Frosting

Everyone needs a classic vanilla cupcake in her baking repertoire. Recipe Courtesy Thais da Silva, Dia Doce.

For cupcakes:

- 1 C. butter, softened
- 2 C. sugar
- 3 eggs
- Seeds from one whole vanilla bean, scraped
- 3½ C. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 C. organic vanilla whole milk yogurt

For vanilla frosting:

- 1 C. butter
- Seeds from one whole vanilla bean, scraped
- 6 C. confectioners' sugar
- 5 Tb. milk

To make the cupcakes: Preheat oven to 350. Place liners in cupcake tins.

In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Add seeds from vanilla bean and mix well.

In another bowl, combine dry ingredients. Add dry ingredients to creamed mixture alternately with yogurt. The batter will be thick.

Fill cupcake liners ¾-full with batter and bake 26 minutes or until tops spring back when touched. Cool the cupcakes completely.

To make frosting: Using an electric mixer, whip butter for 3 minutes or until it is white and creamy. Add the confectioners' sugar, 1 cup at a time, until thoroughly combined. Add the milk, vanilla seeds and whip.

Makes 30 cupcakes.

Cinnamon Cupcakes with Streusel Cereal Topping

Perfect with a cup of tea or coffee to warm you on a chilly day. Courtesy of Thais da Silva of Dia Doce.

For the cupcakes:

- 1 C. butter, softened
- 1½ C. light brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2½ C. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 C. milk

For the streusel cereal topping:

- ⅓ C. dark brown sugar
- ⅓ C. granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- ½ C. butter, melted
- 1¾ C. flour
- ¼ C. rice cereal

To make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350° and place liners in cupcake tins.

In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and sugar. Beat in eggs, one at a time.

In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. To the butter-sugar mixture, add the dry ingredients alternately with the milk.

To make streusel cereal topping: Whisk sugars, cinnamon and salt into melted butter until smooth. Then, add flour with a spatula or wooden spoon. (It will look and feel like a solid dough.) Leave it pressed together in the bottom of the bowl and set aside. When ready to use, break apart with fingertips and stir in cereal. You will have approximately 3 C. topping.

Fill cupcake liners ¾-full with batter and cover with streusel topping. Bake 21 minutes or until tops spring back when touched. Cool the cupcakes completely.

Makes 24 cupcakes.

Chocolate Caramel Cupcakes

Thais da Silva of Dia Doce drizzles these cupcakes with melted chocolate for an extra layer of flavor.

For the cupcakes:

- 1 C. sugar
- ⅓ C. organic fair trade cocoa
- 1½ C. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 C. water
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- ½ C. butter, softened

For the caramel sauce:

- 1 C. sugar
- 6 Tb. butter
- ½ C. heavy whipping cream
- Optional: melted chocolate

To make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Place liners in cupcake tin.

Sift all dry ingredients into a mixing bowl; add all remaining ingredients; mix just until combined.

Behind the Scenes/Ovens with Dia Doce's Thais da Silva

Thais da Silva came to national attention when she won Food Network's "Cupcake Wars" in March 2012. Lucky for Brandywine Valley cupcake lovers, the owner and chief baker of Dia Doce still graces us with her presence and the decadent confections she sells from her signature lime green cupcake truck with marshmallow-white flourishes, of course.

When I finally caught up with Thais—she's on the move from 5 in the morning until 9 or 10 at night—we talked all matters cupcake.

Tell me about winning Food Network's "Cupcake Wars."

For the first round, I made gluten-free, vegan cupcake inspired by the thin mint Girl Scout cookie. At that point in the competition, the judges are not as concerned about how the cupcake looks; they judge by taste. In the next rounds, they care about appearance and taste, and they liked my pumpkin smores, cinnamon crumb and lemon-berry-basil cupcakes.

Lemon-berry-basil? How did you come up with that?

It's based on a cocktail I used to love when I was a fashion designer in New York City. Now it's Dia Doce's signature flavor. We grow the basil right outside the bakery. We use whatever local berries are in season. Basically, we use as many local and organic ingredients as we can. Some—like the basil, mint and cilantro—we grow ourselves.

Do customers give you ideas for cupcake flavors?

All the time! One guy suggested pumpkin-orange which we started baking just a month ago. Someone else thought a mojito cupcake with lime and mint would be great so we made that. Oh, and for any beer or wine festival we attend, we always make a whiskey-sour cupcake.

So cupcakes can be paired with alcoholic beverages?

Sure! When we did an event for Pennswood Winery, we created a blue cheese and fig cupcake to complement merlot and a pear and cinnamon cupcake to go with white zinfandel. But even when they have savory ingredients, cupcakes are always sweet.

What do you see in the future for Dia Doce?

Right now, our bakery is in Chester Springs, and we sell our cupcakes out of our truck at farmers markets and private events. Our goal is to have a destination bakery in Chester County, one where people can hang out, listen to good music and eat cupcakes, of course.

The Perfect Cupcake Inside and Out

Our cupcake experts offered their tips for making cupcakes that look and taste good from that first mouthful of frosting to that last crumb of cake.

Make sure all ingredients are at room temperature unless otherwise noted in the recipe. Some recipes call for boiling water or warm milk; other than that, room temperature is the way to go.

Try different flours to see what you like best. All-purpose flour contains a good deal of gluten, so don't over-mix it or you could end up with rubbery cupcakes. Cake flour contains less gluten than all-purpose, making for a crumblier cupcake. For gluten-free baking mixes, try the shelves of your local grocery store or make your own. Many mixes use rice and tapioca flours along with cornstarch and xanthan gum.

Decorate the cupcake to indicate its flavor. For example, top a lemon cupcake with a small strip of candied lemon peel.

Check out your local arts and crafts store for cake decorating supplies like fondant, pastry bags and tips. That said, you don't need fancy equipment to make fancy cupcakes. For a do-it-yourself pastry bag, cut a tiny piece off the corner of a plastic Ziploc bag and pipe the icing through the opening.

Decorate with flair. Roll iced cupcakes in crushed peppermint, chopped up candy bars, sprinkles and colored sugar. Even humble graham cracker crumbs can turn a vanilla frosted cupcake into a beachscape!

Fill cupcake liners ¾-full with batter and bake 21 minutes or until tops spring back when touched. Cool the cupcakes completely.

To make caramel sauce: Using a heavy bottomed pan, melt sugar on low, stirring constantly until golden in color. Add butter and melt. Remove from heat and add heavy cream stirring vigorously. Mixture will foam. Let cool. You will have approximately 1 C. sauce.

Create a cavity and fill the cupcakes with caramel and if desired, drizzle with melted chocolate.

Makes 12 cupcakes.



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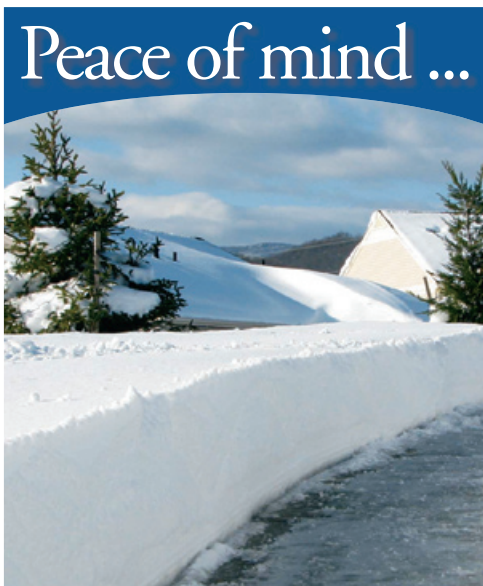
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Maple-Bacon Cupcakes

Bacon meets the classic cupcake in this recipe from Maki Evans, Cupcakes Gourmet.

For the vanilla buttermilk cupcakes:

- 6 Tb. unsalted butter
 - 2 Tb. vegetable oil
 - 1½ C. superfine sugar
 - 2 large eggs
 - 1 egg yolk
 - 2 tsp. Madagascar Bourbon vanilla extract
 - 2¼ C. cake flour
 - 2 tsp. baking powder
 - ½ tsp. salt
 - ⅔ C. buttermilk
- For maple glaze with bacon:*
- 1¼ C. confectioners' sugar, sifted
 - 1 tsp. Madagascar Bourbon vanilla extract
 - ¼ C. pure maple syrup
 - 1 tsp. Maple Extract
 - 1 C. cooked bacon

To make the cupcakes: Preheat oven to 350° and place cupcake liners into or butter cupcake tins. (Use ⅓ C. capacity tins.)

In a bowl, with a mixer on medium speed, beat butter, vegetable oil and the sugar until well blended. Add eggs, egg yolk and vanilla and beat on high speed until well blended.

In another bowl, sift flour, baking powder and salt.

With mixer on low speed, beat about a third of the flour mixture into butter mixture, then about a third of the buttermilk. Repeat process with remaining flour mixture and buttermilk, alternating in thirds. When all the flour is incorporated, beat mixture on medium speed just until well blended.

Fill cupcake liners ¾ full with batter (about ¼ C. in each). Bake until tops spring back when lightly touched in the center, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool on racks 5 minutes; remove from pans. Cool completely.

To make maple glaze: In a bowl, combine confectioners' sugar, vanilla and maple extract. Gradually whisk in enough maple syrup to a consistency where glaze can coat the back of a spoon. Dip the cupcakes in the glaze to coat and generously sprinkle with toasted bacon bits. Set-up on a plate for a few minutes until the glaze has set.

Makes 12–16 cupcakes.

Red Velvet Cupcakes with Cream Cheese Frosting

Recipe courtesy of Maki Evans, Cupcakes Gourmet.

For the cupcakes:

- 6 Tb. unsalted butter
- 3 Tb. vegetable oil
- 1½ C. superfine sugar
- 3 Tb. Belgian cocoa powder
- 4 Tb. red food coloring
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. Madagascar bourbon vanilla extract, divided
- 1 C. buttermilk
- 2 C. cake flour, sifted
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda

For the cream cheese frosting:

- 8 oz. unsalted butter, softened
- 8 oz. cream cheese, cool
- 4 C. confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 2 tsp. Madagascar Bourbon vanilla extract
- 1 Tb. heavy cream
- Pinch of salt

To make the cupcakes: Preheat oven to 350° and place liners into or butter cupcake tins. (Use ⅓ C. capacity tins.)

In a bowl, with a mixer on medium speed, beat butter, oil and sugar until well blended.

In a separate bowl, make a paste of cocoa and red food coloring. Add to creamed mixture.

In another bowl, mix salt, 1 teaspoon vanilla and buttermilk together. Add eggs and remaining teaspoon vanilla and beat on high speed until well blended.

Sift flour, baking powder and salt into another bowl. With mixer on low speed, alternate adding flour mixture and buttermilk mixture into butter mixture, alternating by thirds. When all the flour is incorporated, beat mixture on medium speed until just well blended.

Fill cupcake tins about ¾ full with batter (about ¼ C. in each). Bake until tops spring back when lightly touched in the center, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool on racks 5 minutes; remove from pans. Cool completely.

To make the frosting: In a large bowl, beat together the butter and cream cheese with an electric mixer. With the mixer on low speed, add the confectioners' sugar a cup at a time until incorporated. Beat in the vanilla extract, heavy cream and salt for 5 minutes or until smooth and creamy.

Makes 12–16 cupcakes.

Coconut Cupcakes with Chocolate Drizzle

I love Mounds candy bars, so I translated the flavor into a cupcake.

- ¾ C. unsalted butter
- 1¼ C. sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 C. canned coconut milk
- 2½ C. cake flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ C. sweetened shredded coconut

For the topping:

- 1 C. your favorite vanilla or chocolate frosting
- 1 C. sweetened shredded coconut
- 1 C. bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate chips

To make the cupcakes: Preheat oven to 350°. Place cupcake liners in tins.

With an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar together in a large bowl. Mix in eggs, vanilla and coconut milk. (Make sure you shake the can of coconut milk well.)

In a separate bowl, combine flour, salt and baking powder. Add flour mix-

ture to butter mixture and blend until ingredients are just combined. Fold in shredded coconut.

Ladle batter into cupcake liners, filling each ⅔. Bake 15 to 20 minutes. Cupcakes are ready when a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool cupcakes in the pan for a few minutes. Then remove to a rack and allow to cool completely.

Spread frosting on each cupcake and top with shredded coconut. Melt chocolate chips in a small pan over low head. Using a spoon, drizzle melted chocolate on top of cupcakes.

Makes 24 cupcakes.

Mint Chocolate Cupcakes

Once Thais da Silva mentioned cupcakes inspired by the Girl Scout cookie, Thin Mints, I couldn't stop thinking about it. This recipe is my nod to that beloved cookie.

- 2 C. sugar
- 2 C. cake flour
- ¾ C. cocoa powder
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- 1½ tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 large eggs

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- ½ vegetable or olive oil
- ½ tsp. peppermint extract
- 1½ C. milk, room temperature
- 1 C. Andes Crème de Menthe baking chips (plus more for decorating cupcakes)
- 1 C. of your favorite chocolate icing

Preheat oven to 350°. Place cupcake liners in tins.

In a large bowl, mix sugar, flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda and salt until well combined. Add remaining ingredients, except Andes chips, and mix with an electric mixer until just combined.

Ladle batter into each cupcake paper ½ to ⅔ full. Spoon Andes chips into each cupcake. (You don't need to stir them in.) Bake for 15-20 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center of a cupcake comes out clean. Cool cupcakes in the pan for a few minutes. Then remove to a rack and allow to cool completely.

Spread each cupcake with frosting, and if desired, top with Andes chips.

Makes 24 cupcakes. ♦

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Events & Holiday Parties

Index to Advertisers

County Lines is available at the following advertisers. See our Advertiser Directory on CountyLinesMagazine.com.

ANTIQUES & REPRODUCTIONS

Ball & Ball34, 53
Beauty — Art, Antiques & Gifts21, 55
Sandy DeMaio70
Oxford Marketplace32, 54
White Horse Mill Antiques64

ART / CRAFTS / GALLERIES

FRAMING & SUPPLIES

Beauty — Art, Antiques & Gifts21, 55
Brandywine River Museum17
Duane Wendling67

ART SHOWS / TOURS

Art Trust at Meridian42

AUTOMOBILE DEALERS

Del Chevrolet19

BAKERIES

Cakes & Candies by Maryellen39

BANKS

Malvern Federal Savings Bank31

Penn Liberty Bank64

BOOKS, USED & RARE

Thomas Macaluso Books70

BUILDING CONTRACTORS

The Hankin Group5

CANDY

Cakes & Candies by Maryellen39

Christopher Fine Foods67

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

West Chester BID39

CHIMNEYS

Chester Co. Hearth & Home33

CONCERTS

Vox Ama Deus9

DENTISTS

John R. Sorge, Jr., D.D.S., P.C.6

DOORS, WINDOWS

Chapman Windows & Doors23

DRAPERIES / WINDOW TREATMENTS

Heritage Design Interiors33

Shady Lady Inc.69

Shutter Tech, Inc.35

EQUESTRIAN RIDING CAMP

Thorncroft Equestrian67

EVENTS

A Brandywine Christmas17

Yuletide at Winterthur14, 51

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Key Financial2

FIREPLACES

Chester Co. Hearth & Home33

FLOORING, HARDWOOD

McCue Hardwood Flooring42

FLORISTS

Matlack Florist39

FOOD, SPECIALTY

Herr Foods24

Wolff's Apple House62

FURNITURE — HOME FURNISHINGS

Alegacy Furniture20, 55

Ball & Ball34, 53

Bella and Betty42

The Carriage House70

Kurtz Collection Rug & Home28, 51

Perennial Interiors46

FURNITURE — OUTDOOR

Ultimate Patios42

GARDEN CENTERS, NURSERIES

Cricket's Garden Market70

Mostardi Nursery57

Waterloo Gardens34, 54

Wolff's Apple House62

GIFTS & SPECIALTY SHOPS

Beauty — Art, Antiques & Gifts21, 55

Bella and Betty42

Brandywine River Museum17

The Carriage House70

Christopher Fine Foods67

Herr Foods24

Mostardi Nursery57

Oxford Marketplace32, 54

Waterloo Gardens34, 54

Duane Wendling67

GRANITE

Planet Granite42

HOME HEALTH CARE

Bayada Home Health Care26

HOMES

Eagleview Town Center5, 52

HOSPITALS/HEALTH ORG.

Chester County Hospital10

INTERIOR DECORATING/DESIGN

Heritage Design Interiors33

Perennial Interiors46

INVESTMENTS

Key Financial2

JEWELERS & JEWELRY

Big Diamond Importers, Fine Jewelry22, 53

Walter J. Cook, Jeweler12, 52

Sandy DeMaio70

KITCHENS & BATH (Incl. Countertops)

Planet Granite42

Sugarbridge Kitchen & Bath Designcover

Waterbury Kitchen & Bath71

LANDSCAPE & GARDEN DESIGN

(Incl. Masonry & Hardscape Design)

Flowing Springs Landscape Design22

LODGING

(Including B&B's)

The Inn & Spa at Intercourse64

MARBLE

Planet Granite42

MUSEUMS

Brandywine River Museum17

Winterthur Museum14, 51

MUSIC

Vox Ama Deus9

ORIENTAL RUGS

Oxford Marketplace32, 54

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Timilyn Vaughan Photography42

PHYSICIANS OFFICE

Gateway Medical4

RADIO STATIONS

Brandywine Radio67

REALTORS/REAL ESTATE

Brandywine Fine Prop./Sotheby's

B. Jones, K. Nader7

James A. Cochran, Inc.64

Pru. Fox Roach / C. Dick70

RESTAURANTS

The Farmhouse Restaurant62

Foxfire at The Stone Barn69

La Tolteca Mexican Rest.69

Lily: Asian Cuisine, Sushi & Grill57

Limoncetto Ristorante18

The Lincoln Room42

Más Mexicali Cantina42

Señora's Authentic Mexican Cuisine42

Shere-E-Punjab61

The Stone Barn69

Yangming3, 56

RETIREMENT / SENIOR LIVING / ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITIES

Hershey's Mill26

Kendal-Crosslands68

Ware Presbyterian Village28

RIDING LESSONS

Thorncroft Equestrian67

RUGS & FLOORING

Kurtz Collection Rug & Home28, 51

SCHOOLS

The Concept School24

Malvern Preparatory School22

SPAS

The Inn & Spa at Intercourse64

TEA ROOM

The Lincoln Room42

SHOPPING

Eagleview Town Center5, 52

West Chester39, 40

WELCOME SERVICES

Welcome Neighbor57

WINDOWS / SHUTTERS

Chapman Windows & Doors23

Shady Lady Inc.69

Shutter Tech, Inc.35

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