



Golden November in Southern Chester County

TOUR, TASTE AND SHOP

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A TRAY OF FRESH, GOLDEN BROWN, almond chocolate chip biscotti floats through the door into Farmer and Co. I've already ordered a mocha, but my mouth waters. The barista says cookies are made in-house and biscotti is baked by OsoSweet — owned and operated by the deliveryman's daughter, Chef Tess. I add to my order. In a moment I'm savoring treats in a charming upstairs library with large windows overlooking a lovely, sprawling tree.

November is golden in Chester County — autumn leaves, warm baked goods, chrysanthemums and more. There's no better month for exploring the southern tip's great new offerings, taking a day trip or spending an afternoon at a favorite haunt.



1. Hilltop Flower Company



2. Bierhaul



3. Toot Sweets

WHAT'S NEW

Cross the threshold of a stone storefront on East State Street in Kennett Square. One look at the interior — plum ceiling, sage walls, and French blue and rust-hued cabinets — and the exquisite blooms. There's no doubt that new [Hilltop Flower Company](#) was started by a former Longwood Gardens horticulturalist and a graphic designer.

Business partners Dannie Wright and Amanda Burka have created something truly special here. While there's a retail footprint for lovely home goods, garden supplies, floral gifts and more, the shop is centered around space to design whimsical and romantic bouquets, arrangements and wedding decorations.

Many of the seasonal and dried flowers including heirloom varieties come from Wright's flower farm in Oxford: pink baby-blue-eyes, yellow pompom craspedia (billy buttons) and orange gomphrena (globe amaranths) to name but a few of the more unusual choices.

Worked up an appetite? Watch your crepes being made at Kennett's casual [Crazy Deli Crepe Café](#), open since September. Apple cinnamon with caramel sauce is perfect for fall. Cookies and cream with Nutella is always in season.

Or are you ready for a frothy mug? Head to new [Bierhaul](#) in Glen Mills for a curated beer list — lagers, porters, ales — and food, including grilled cheese with lobster, fries with malt aioli and ... soft pretzels! Would it be a German beer hall without them? Hang out in the *garten*, where kids enjoy the play area while you sink your teeth into bier-braised bratwurst.

This year candy shop [Toot Sweets](#) celebrated a grand reopening in Oxford. Its familiar, bright lemon and lime exterior is still so beckoning that Willy Wonka couldn't resist this new location (with more space). Bulk candies and novelties for kids of all ages abound — taffy, Skittles, gumballs and more by the pound. Any day is a festival with cotton candy: classic pink, blue raspberry or green pickle. For more fun, try Oreo cowtails — chocolate-covered caramels with creamy vanilla centers. If you dare, try a novelty soda: sweet corn, buffalo wing or "toxic waste."

LET'S MAKE IT A DAY

Just one of the great things about trips to southern Chester County is the scenery. Drive past rolling hills with orchards and farmland between stops in small towns and villages — Unionville, Kennett



4. Farmer and Co.

Square, Oxford, Marshallton and others. They're close enough that you can interchange any of the suggested shops or sights to tailor a trip to your tastes.

UNIONVILLE

Rev yourself up at [Farmer and Co.](#) The café with market offers goods from local artists, artisans and growers. Enjoy a salmon sandwich and latte at a large table in the cozy board room or at an outdoor picnic table. After falling in love with the supersized yellow, green and red coffee cups, take home Pat Mooberry's pottery. Buy Hilltop Flower Company's fresh bouquets — sunset orange roses and blue forget-me-nots or vivid red-orange ranunculus in spring. Find artisan pasta in the front room, where refrigerator cases hold locally grown sunflower sprouts, or seasonal produce from the old house's back garden. Like the low, comfortable chairs in the library? Head next door to Kinloch.

Set your perfect holiday table at a work of art from [Kinloch Woodworking, Ltd.](#) The gleam of polished wood, the mesmerizing



5. Kinloch Woodworking, Ltd.

grain and silky feel of a table's, bench's or cabinet's surface invites you to linger.

Spend a few minutes at the walking path across the street from the café, Kinloch and charming [Catherine's Restaurant](#). Enjoy pretty fall foliage and bird calls.

KENNETT SQUARE

Minutes away, make Kennett Square another stop or its own destination. In addition to Hilltop Flower Company and Crazy Deli Crepes, see sites of interest in the borough center and on the outskirts.

An unexpected little gem is a seasonal pop-up holiday shop at [Grateful Gardens and the Arts](#) (pop-up at 293 W. Street Rd.). Overlooking land where fox hunts were once a regular event and a neighbor still takes a biweekly spin on her horse-drawn cart, the farmhouse's enclosed front porch becomes a cute shop with local and international crafts. Select Nepalese mittens, leather purses from Spain and Pendleton blankets. Leave with soft, local mohair socks



6. Grateful Gardens and the Arts

for family, Chilly Dog's knitted sweaters for pups, soft sheep booties for your best baby and a Glory Fibers hand-painted pillow or silk jacket for yourself or someone extra special.

Find tasty sustenance at nearby [Sovana Bistro](#), which is back in business and better than ever. The wood-roasted local mushrooms are a "must" on a trip to Kennett, as is the artisanal cheese plate spotlighting samples from around the globe, including from local Doe Run Farm.

OXFORD & POINTS SOUTH

Spend an invigorating or relaxing day around Oxford, starting with a self-guided tour. Camera buffs, pack your lenses for the historic walking tour to capture the 1868 Dickey Building's quaint clock, 1902 Oxford Train Station, architectural gingerbread of Victorian homes and engaging murals. Another colorful option in fall: drive the covered bridge tour.

Shop for fine, fair trade holiday chocolates at [Neuchatel Chocolates](#), offering sensational chocolate-covered sweet local blackberries



7. Neuchatel Chocolates

in season, Limoncello truffles and a vast selection of other delectable truffles. Ask if holiday panettone is in yet — golden loaves with chocolate chips go fast.

Wind your way north by Route 1. Veer onto Newark Road to stop at New London's irresistible artisan shop [Rooted](#). Charm, wonderful gifts, home touches and clothing spill from the delightful old brick house onto the wraparound porch. Discover perhaps the most exquisite molded soap on the planet by Miche Scott from Honeybrook, jigsaw puzzles depicting the world migration of butterflies, ginger-colored twisted tapers and pumpkin spice-scented glass candles. Dip into the small freezer for a decadent ice cream sandwich from West Chester's iSwich Gourmet to eat by the lawn's antique clawfoot tub filled with plants. All sorts of delicious ice cream flavors rest between the chewy brownie cookies, but the treasure with white chocolate ganache, mint flecks and dark chocolate chips might be the tastiest pick.

Minutes away in Avondale is [Va La Vineyards](#), with pleasing tastings and pairings. Amber-colored Prima Donna wine is a Thanks-



8. Rooted

giving favorite, but consider also taking home deep red Mahogany and Silk for early Christmas gatherings. Pick up Va La wine glasses, goat cheese in golden honey and wine-related treats.

For a romantic candlelit dinner, end the day at [The Farmhouse](#) restaurant. Every artifact in the old home tells a story. Food and service are superb.

Looking forward to 2023, land surrounding The Farmhouse — formerly Loch Nairn Golf Course — becomes Smedley Preserve.

COME FULL CIRCLE TO CHADDS FORD

Pop into the Chadds Ford Barn Shops where several small businesses reside, including [OsoSweet Bakery Café](#). Two years old now



9. OsoSweet Bakery Café

— a leap of faith taken during the pandemic that has paid off — the business is known best for its scones. Chef Tess — who went to school in Unionville before ending up at the Culinary Institute of America — has regular customers from all corners of the county.

Shortly after the bakery opened, a man came in and asked for one of everything, according to Tess. “When we asked for clarification — ‘One of each kind of scone?’ — he said no, that’d he take one of every baked good. Now he and his daughter come in every Sunday to get baked goods for their family,” she said.

There’s a reason we visit southern Chester County again and again — it shines! ♦