

Brandywine Table

Spread the Joy

LOCALLY SOURCED AND CRAFTED PRESERVES MAKE THIS YEAR'S HOLIDAYS EXTRA DELICIOUS.

Alyssa Thayer



Sheila at her first market in 2014

HOLIDAYS ARE THE PERFECT COMBINATION OF novel and known. We delight in the familiarity of the classics while coveting the chance to break out something a little extra.

For Sheila Rhodes, owner of **Small Batch Kitchen** in Lansdale, the family favorite was always a good ol' block of cream cheese with spicy pepper jelly spooned overtop. So, when she started her business in 2014, she knew a pepper spread had to be one of her products.

The Small Batch Kitchen story started the way many farmers market food businesses start — as a passion project. Sheila and her husband moved to a one-acre plot in Harleysville with a mission of growing on the land. As their yields grew, Sheila began to experiment with different methods of preservation.

She used recipes to guide her through each process, but when it came time for fruit preserves, she found them lacking. “The first batch I made was so sugary sweet that I couldn’t even taste the fruit,” she remembers. Realizing most recipes she tried were that way, she took matters into her own hands by teaching herself the science and safety of food preservation and inventing new vibrant recipes.

It wasn’t long before she had developed a full line of products, all of which she was making by hand and giving out to friends and family. After tasting these creations, everyone encouraged her to take the next step and sell her goods at the local farmers market. And so it began.

By the end of that first year, she’d cultivated quite a following and landed multiple wholesale accounts. Then she began to think about the business differently. “It happened much faster than I expected, but because our products are lower in sugar and taste like fruit it was something that people really gravitate towards.”

In 2017 she left her corporate

job to focus exclusively on Small Batch Kitchen, and in 2019 she moved to a storefront in Lansdale with a larger processing facility and cafe.

Even now, with products in 200 stores nationwide, everything remains true to their “Small Batch” name and locally minded mission. “We source all our produce from local farms and orchards,” she says, adding, “Summers are very busy. We still do everything ourselves and by hand.”

Small Batch Kitchen’s line of 25 unique, delectable products range from low-sugar fruit spreads to savory condiments. When asked how they come up with all the flavors, Sheila says, “That’s the fun part.” She and her production manager, Rochelle, cook, experiment and draw inspiration from the local bounty.

Sheila notes the products are perfectly suited for holiday enjoyment and as gifts. “We have a lot of diabetic customers, which can be very difficult during the holidays,” she says. The Cranberry Cabernet is their most popular item around this time and is delicious on cheese plates, in a leftover turkey sandwich or inside a baked brie.

You can find the products online, at their Lansdale location, or at local retailers such as Kimberton Whole Foods and Longwood Gardens. Now, let’s get cooking!



Small Batch Kitchen creates a full line of bold and fruit-forward flavors.



This goat cheese and hot pepper spread on a cracker is a jazzed-up version of the simple cream cheese and pepper jelly treat Shiela's family enjoyed.

Recipes

During the holidays we like to gussy up our dishes to make them look and taste their best. Preserves and savory spreads are uniquely suited for the job of elevating everyday ingredients into swoon-worthy holiday bites. Take a look at these recipes, which fall into the coveted “simple yet elegant” category.

Puff Pastry Rolls

These can be sweet and savory or strictly savory, depending on your tastes. Create them as a satisfying starter, or as one component of a festive finger food spread.



Makes about 6-8 rolls, depending on thickness

- 1 roll frozen puff pastry, thawed
- ½ jar (8 oz.) low-sugar jam (smoked onion, jalapeño or apple pie spread would be great)
- 1 C. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 C. chopped bacon

Preheat oven per puff pastry package directions. Unroll thawed puff pastry sheet, and lightly roll to stretch. Spread jam across rolled-out puff pastry sheet.

Mix all other toppings together and sprinkle over pastry sheet. Roll up like a jelly roll. Slice depending on your preference of thickness. 6–8 will make them thick enough to bake without burning the jam. Also, using a low-sugar jam will help reduce burning.

Place on a cookie sheet, and bake per package directions. ****Note:** The key to achieving flaky perfection is preventing the dough from getting warm during prep. Some directions even recommend thawing in the fridge rather than at room temperature.

Jammy Phyllo Brie Bites

Cheese and jam are one of those matches made in heaven. Add the crunch of the phyllo dough shell and a little heat to make it all ooze together, and you’ve hit *hors d’oeuvre* gold! Just make sure to double or triple the recipe if you are hosting ... they tend to go quick!

Jam Jargon

Who knew shopping for the perfect PB&J ingredients could leave us with so many questions? Jam or jelly? Preserve or conserve? With a myriad of different choices, we thought a preserve primer might be the perfect accompaniment to this piece.

Jelly – The most smooth and clear of the bunch, it’s made using only the juice of the fruit and then thickened (generally with pectin) to achieve its jiggly consistency.

Jam – This is made using the full fruit, but it’s used in a finely chopped or pureed form. Unlike jelly, the finished product will often include the seeds and skin and have a chunky, spoonable texture.

Fruit Butters – During the fall we often see apple and pear butters hit the shelf. These are generally made by cooking down the pulp of the fruit into a rich, thick texture. Some have added sugar, but many obtain their sweetness from the concentration of natural sugars that occurs as it cooks down.

Preserves – Large chunks or full fruit are cooked and suspended in some type of syrup. This tends to be slightly looser in texture.

Marmalades – It’s a type of preserve that happens to contain citrus ingredients. The high pectin content of citrus peels can give them a jelly-like consistency.

Fruit Spreads – To commercially label a product as a jam or jelly, it must have a certain sugar content. Fruit spreads, like the ones Small Batch Kitchen creates, are a lot like jam in composition, but don’t contain enough sugar content to be called a jam.

Compotes – Made using heat, fruit and sweetener, but they’re generally made to be enjoyed right away and not preserved in any way.

Chutneys – These are a combination of sweet and savory, which usually include fruit, vinegar and spices.

Makes 15 bites

- 1 pkg. premade frozen phyllo tarts
- 6 oz. brie cheese
- 8-oz. jar jam of choice (hot pepper or smoked onion spread recommended)

Preheat oven per package directions, generally around 350°.

Cut brie into ½-inch squares. You can leave the rind on or off, depending on your tastes.

Place phyllo tart shells into a mini muffin tin.

Note: The shells usually hold their shape on a cookie sheet as well.



Inside each tart shell, place a brie square and a teaspoon of jam in the center.

Bake per package directions. Timing will depend on thickness, often around 7 minutes. Watch carefully to ensure shells don't burn. Take them out of the oven when shells are golden brown and brie is soft.

Allow to cool just slightly and serve warm.

Easy Cheese & Charcuterie Plate

Nothing says festive like a plate of curated meats, cheeses and accompaniments. Here is a general guide to how Sheila puts together her cheese plates. To make it that much easier, Small Batch Kitchen provides specific cheese pairing recommendations on the back of each jar.



3 different types of cheese (soft, hard and other)

Examples: chevre, cheddar, blue, brie, Manchego, smoked Gouda

2-3 different types of meat

Sheila recommends at least one on the mild side (more crowd-pleasing) and one a little sharper/spicier.

2-3 different types of crackers or bread

Sheila likes to choose one heartier whole wheat cracker and some lighter crisps to balance out the texture and look of the board.

2-3 spread flavors

Smoked onion, blueberry basil and hot pepper spread are Sheila's favorites

Dried or fresh fruit, nuts or seeds, olives or cornichons, mustards and honey are great additions if you have them

Arrange on a platter and enjoy. Have fun experimenting with different cheese and topping pairings to see how the flavors change.

Jelly Donut Muffins

If the holidays are about treating ourselves and finding ways to make us feel like kids again ... look no further. This is the recipe we've all been looking for — fun to make and delicious to enjoy, these muffins are the perfect holiday morning addition.

Makes 10 muffins

For the Muffins:

- 2 C. all-purpose flour
- 2/3 C. granulated sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3/4 C. milk
- 1/3 C. vegetable oil
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 5 to 6 tsp. jam (sour cherry spread or apple pie spread)

For the Topping:

- 1/4 C. granulated sugar
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 3 T. unsalted butter, melted



Preheat oven to 350° .

Grease 10 standard-size muffin cavities.

Stir together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Make a well in the center of the mixture.

In a separate bowl, mix together the milk, oil, egg and vanilla. Add into the flour mixture, stir until just combined.

Fill each muffin cup about 2/3 full with batter, leaving about 3 tablespoons of batter in the bowl. Make a little indent in the batter of each of the muffin wells. Place about 1/2 teaspoon of jam in each indent. Top with just enough of the reserved batter to cover the jam.

Bake for 18–20 minutes, or until the edges are browned and the muffins are set. Set aside to cool slightly while you make the topping.

To make the topping, combine sugar and cinnamon in a shallow bowl. Brush the melted butter over the tops of each muffin. Dip each muffin, top side down, into the cinnamon-sugar mixture to coat.

Last Bit Vinaigrette Dressing

This recipe is perfect if you have a little jam left in your jar. I like to add the oil and vinegar to the jam jar, shake it up, and use the jar to store the dressing!

Serves 4–6

About 1 tsp. of jam (blueberry basil, balsamic strawberry or peach ginger)

1/4 C. olive oil

2 T. white wine vinegar or cider vinegar

Salt and pepper to taste

Add all ingredients to the jam jar, close the lid tightly and shake.

Taste and adjust salt/pepper and acidity as needed.



Other ways to use your preserves

- Layer into yogurt parfaits
- Dollop onto pancakes or waffles. Add a bit of whipped cream to get extra fancy.
- Spoon over oatmeal. We love brandied pear spread for this purpose.
- Spread onto pizza/flatbread. Make or buy a favorite crust, slather in a favorite spread, and sprinkle with cheese (smoked onion and goat cheese is a favorite).
- Add to your grilled cheese. Elevate a simple sandwich into something special.
- Spoon over grilled chicken or fish. Peach ginger spread over salmon is delicious.

Alyssa Thayer found her love of food at an early age, frolicking around her mother's organic farm and eating her weight in berries and snap peas each summer. She is a self-proclaimed urban farm girl, whose mission is to bring inspired ideas to life, passionate people together, and good food to every table.



For more great recipes visit CountyLinesMagazine.com



PIZZA & PASTA CO.
GIFT CERTIFICATES • CATERING • PARTY PLATTERS

Come in and Enjoy Our Handmade Pastas, Seafood, Pizzas, and Signature Italian Dishes! BYOB. Delivery Available.

Book your Holiday Party Now!





235 Lancaster Ave. Frazer, PA
610.240.9566 • ToninosPizzaAndPasta.com






610.594.9900
www.ronsoriginal.com
74 E Uwchlan Ave | Exton, PA