

[Brandywine Table]

Food, Farm And Family

Courtney H. Diener-Stokes

THIS MONTH I AM HONORED TO JOIN THE *County Lines* family as its new food editor, following in the footsteps of Alyssa Thayer, whose work on these pages and in the community I've long admired. We both share a passion for food, supporting local growers and serving the community.

My own relationship with food began at a young age, growing up on a hobby farm in Berks County's Oley Valley, where we had a large vegetable garden along with pigs, chickens and sheep as our family pets. Eventually, I left bucolic Pennsylvania to attend college, travel abroad and work in New York City as a TV producer. It took 15 years for me to realize that my heart yearned to reconnect with the country girl I once was. An 18th-century grist mill restoration project at our family farm became the perfect excuse to return to the countryside on weekends.

Soon after, I met my husband, who grew up on a farm just a mile down the road. The next chapter of my life as a wife and mother brought me back to the Oley Valley for good, and I couldn't have felt more fulfilled. When it came time to find a school for our three children, we sought not only a holistic educational approach, but one that aligned with our food values. The **Kimberton Waldorf School** in Chester County, with its farm-to-table kitchen, was the answer.

Its Food for Thought lunch program uses all local, organic and non-GMO ingredients, many of which are grown in the garden of the school's 430-acre campus. The school's chef, Lianna Criniti, takes great pride in the global diversity of their seasonal menu and strives to accommodate all dietary restrictions.

But children at the school do more than enjoy Criniti's



Courtney and family

wholesome meals — they help plant and harvest ingredients under the guidance of the school's garden teacher, Celia Martin. Last summer, Hilla Haut, who manages the kitchen, spent days preserving cucumbers from the school's garden to make enough pickles for the year to garnish hamburgers made using Seven Stars Farm grass-fed beef.

Food for Thought serves as a model for what every school lunch program has the potential to offer students and parents through their weekly soup subscription, community dinners, pie sales and kitchen volunteer opportunities. Kimberton's approach to both education and food has enriched my family's life in ways I never could have imagined.

Here are recipes to warm you up this February. They'll give you a taste of the school's mindful food offerings and some standout recipes from my cookbooks — more on that in the sidebar.



Kitchen manager, Hilla Haut

Potato Leek Soup with Fresh Dill

This is one of the beloved soups served for lunch by Kimberton Waldorf School's Food for Thought program on Soup Day every Wednesday. Parents who have a soup subscription pick up their portion after school to take home.

Serves 8–10



Olive oil
2 leeks, ends removed, chopped
4 celery stalks, chopped
1 large white onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, peeled and kept whole
1 tsp. paprika
3 T. fresh dill, chopped
3 T. kosher salt
2 tsp. cracked pepper
5 lbs. Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and left whole*
6 C. vegetable stock
2 C. heavy cream**

In a large pot on medium heat, saute the leeks, celery, onion and garlic in a small amount of olive oil for 10 minutes. Once the onions and celery are soft and translucent, add spices and half of the dill. Continue to cook for 5 more minutes.

Add potatoes and stock, making sure to use only enough stock to barely cover the potatoes. Bring to a boil for 5 minutes and then reduce to a simmer until potatoes begin to fall apart.

Using an immersion blender, blitz the soup while slowly adding cream until you've reached your desired consistency.

Fold in remainder of the fresh dill and enjoy.

Notes from Chef Criniti:

*It's very important to leave the potatoes whole during the cooking process because it allows for the natural starches in the potato to break down at a slower rate, making your soup rich and creamy.

**This soup can be made dairy free by simply swapping out the cream for a dairy-free option. I prefer oat milk.

Nourishing Recipes and Rituals

My passion and respect for our local food community led to two key collaborations.

My relationship with Chinyelu Kunz, a former childhood educator and current host of the WeNurture podcast, led to my first co-authorship of the book, "Farmhouse Manna: Nourishing Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands and Soul." This book doubles as a cookbook and home life guide that aims to inspire parents of young children to create their own food rituals.

Later, I partnered with Pat Brett, co-founder of Kimberton Whole Foods, on "Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook: A Family History with Recipes," which showcases the growers and makers behind the ingredients featured in the recipes.

Lemon Buttermilk Pie

Food for Thought chef, Lianna Criniti, is known for the tasty pies she makes for the school's seasonal bake sales. Here's a great one.

Serves 6 to 8



10 eggs
3 C. sugar
3 lemons, zested and juiced
2 tsp. vanilla extract
½ C. flour
3 T. melted butter
2 C. buttermilk
1 unbaked 9-inch pie shell

Preheat oven to 350°. Whisk together all ingredients except the buttermilk. After well mixed, slowly whisk in the buttermilk.



Kimberton Waldorf School's Chef, Lianna Criniti

Pour mixture directly into the cold, unbaked pie shell. Bake for 50–60 minutes. Pie will jiggle when finished.

Allow to cool completely at room temperature, then refrigerate for one hour before serving. If there's any left after serving, store in fridge.

Goes best with fresh whipped cream.

.....

Orange Almond Olive Oil Cake

This grain-free cake featured in the Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook is made with almond flour, whole oranges and olive oil in place of butter for an extra moist taste. You can grind all of the ingredients in a food processor to avoid a messy kitchen.

Serves 6



- 1 large navel or Valencia orange
- ¾ C. raw sugar
- 3 large eggs
- ⅓ C. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. Himalayan pink salt (or Kosher salt)
- 1¼ C. ground almonds or almond flour
- ¼ C. gluten-free flour (such as Bob's Red Mill Gluten-Free 1 to 1 or Pamela's Gluten-Free Artisan Blend)
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. sliced almonds (optional for topping)

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter or brush an 8-inch loaf pan or 8-inch round cake pan with olive oil.

Place the whole orange, with skin on, in a small saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil, and then turn down heat to simmer for 15 minutes. Drain the water, remove the orange and cut into quarters before pulsing in a food processor until the pieces of the orange are no larger than a pea.

Add the sugar, eggs, olive oil, vanilla and salt and pulse until well blended. Add the flours and the baking powder. Process just until mixed.

Pour the batter into the buttered or oiled baking pan and sprinkle the top with the sliced almonds, if desired.

Bake for about 25 minutes or until cake has risen and is beginning to pull away from the sides of the pan. A wooden toothpick or skewer inserted into the center should come out clean.

Cool in pan for at least 15 minutes before removing.

Store at room temperature for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 3 months.

.....

Grilled Cheese with Caramelized Onions & Kale

This recipe, featured in the Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook, is for Brie lovers. The melted cheese, caramelized onions and kale make this grilled cheese a real treat.

Makes 4 sandwiches



- 1 T. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large onion, sliced into rings
- 1 T. tamari
- 1 T. balsamic vinegar
- ½ bunch curly kale, stripped from stems and torn into bite-sized pieces
- 2 T. unsalted butter, divided
- 8 slices rye bread
- 8 oz. Brie cheese

In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and cook until well-browned, stirring occasionally. Add tamari and balsamic vinegar to the onions and cook until evaporated. Add kale and cook until wilted. Remove from heat and set aside.

In another skillet, melt half of the butter on low heat, and place 2 slices of rye bread side by side in the pan. Place 2 ounces of brie cheese and a quarter of onion and kale mixture on each slice and top with another piece of bread.

Grill each sandwich until lightly browned and flip over. Continue grilling until cheese is melted. Repeat steps with remaining butter and bread.

Serve with tart apple slices, such as Granny Smith.

.....

Lemon Roasted Chicken with Fresh Herbs

Pat Brett, co-founder of Kimberton Whole Foods, has a favorite earthenware pot she always uses to make this roasted chicken, featured in the Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook. She usually puts it to use once a week when the weather is cold. After her family gets their fill, she uses what's left over to start a batch of bone broth.

Serves 4–6



- 4 T. extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 medium whole chicken (3 to 4 lbs.)
- 1 large onion or leek, halved and sliced
- 2 large carrots, sliced into chunks
- 1 lemon, quartered
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 1 tsp. dried sage
- 2 tsp. Himalayan pink salt (or Kosher salt)
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

In a glass or ceramic dish, cover bottom with 1 T. olive oil before placing the whole chicken in the dish.

Tuck onions (or leeks) and carrots into the space around the chicken. Squeeze lemon quarters over the chicken and place rinds in the cavity of the chicken. Drizzle or rub remaining olive oil over the chicken and sprinkle thyme, sage, salt and pepper over the skin.

Roast for about 2 hours, until the skin is brown and crispy and the internal temperature is 165°. No basting is necessary during the roasting process.

Serve with roasted carrots and potatoes for a satisfying diner.

.....

Nigerian Jollof Rice

Children in Kimberton Waldorf School's preschool program and K–12th grades enjoy a taste of global cuisine with a menu that includes spices from around the world. This rice dish is featured in Farmhouse Manna: Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands and Soul.

Serves 4–6



- ¼ C. palm or coconut oil
- ½ C. red or yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, cut into small cubes
- 2 plum tomatoes, finely chopped
- 2 tsp. tomato paste
- 1½ C. short-grain brown rice
- ½ tsp. salt
- 3 C. chicken bone broth (or standard chicken or vegetable broth)
- ½ C. frozen peas
- Roasted sunflower seeds, for topping

Using an enameled cast iron pot, melt palm oil (or coconut oil) over medium heat. Add the chopped onions, carrots and tomatoes. Saute until the onions are clear. Add tomato paste and reduce heat. Cook, stirring frequently, for approximately 5 minutes.

Add rice and salt, and stir well to combine with the onion mixture. Add the bone broth, cover and reduce heat to low. Let simmer until the broth has been fully absorbed and the rice is tender. Turn off heat and add the frozen peas and stir to combine.

Cover and let sit for approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Serve topped with sunflower seeds. ♦

PHOTOS COURTESY SENECA SHAHARA BRAND / KIMBERTON WHOLE FOODS COOKBOOK

Courtney Diener-Stokes is an award-winning journalist, author, food writer, photographer and food stylist. Most recently she co-authored the Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook: A Family History with Recipes and Farmhouse Manna: Nourishing Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands & Soul. Previously she was a producer at ABC News and MTV Networks. She lives in the Oley Valley countryside with her husband, three children, two Babydoll Southdown sheep, a flock of bantam chickens and a Bernedoodle named Daisy.



For more great recipes visit
CountyLinesMagazine.com