

Brandywine Table

Mission-Centered Farming

SUSTAINABLE FARMING COMMUNITY SERVES AS ROLE MODEL FOR LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Courtney H. Diener-Stokes

EVERY MORNING BRYAN AND BRITTANY DONOVAN, owners of Horse Shoe Ranch, set out at dawn to tend to their flock of 3,600 hens with a greater purpose than providing pasture-raised eggs and chicken to residents of Chester County and beyond.

As the newest land and residential tenants of **Lundale Farm**, they've become a part of something larger than the poultry business they founded six years ago. Lundale, a nonprofit located in South Coventry Township, serves as a sustainable farming community with a mission of enhancing the ecology, health and diversity of the land. It also serves as a model for local food production and forest stewardship.

Like all six tenants at Lundale, Horse Shoe Ranch was chosen for their ability and desire to align with the Farm's underlying purpose — the vision of the late PA State Representative Samuel Morris and his wife, Eleanor, who entrusted the Farm to their children with the condition that the preserved land would be rented out to organic farmers. Horse Shoe Farm joins Kneehigh Farm (specializing in chemical-free fresh vegetables), Pasture Song Farm (forage raised pork), Trees for Grazers (native trees for cattle and sheep grazing), French Creek Organic Cider, (heritage hard cider) and Olszanowski Farm (livestock feed) as part of the community.

The Donovans see their current setup — the use of 100 acres and a built-in social support network — as the fulfillment of a dream. They take great pride in being part of the farming community at



Bryan and Brittany Donovan, owners of Horse Shoe Ranch, with their daughter, Birdie.

Lundale and value having other farmers around who've become their friends.

Becki Patterson, Lundale's Executive Director since June, says she is excited by the high energy and enthusiasm the Donovans bring to the Farm, including their long-term plans to double their flock by 2024. In addition to operating their businesses, all the Lundale tenants have a willingness to help out in other areas of the Farm's overall mission, says Patterson.

Beyond the original vision for their preserved land, Lundale Farm continues to broaden their mission under Patterson's helm, along with a Board of Directors headed by Board President Vince Pompo. Recently, they established a new educational program for third- and fourth-grade students to give them an understanding of where their food comes from and what it takes to be a farmer today. Patterson says they look forward to offering more public events.

Today, you can help support the greater mission of the Farm by buying the tenant's products. John Alff, owner of **Vesta Kitchen Catering** in Phoenixville, sources much of his food at Lundale for that very reason. The regenerative farming methods used there ensure he's able to have a positive impact on our local food system and community.

With the warmer season approaching, Alff is excited to switch up his menus for Vesta and at home for his wife and three children. Here are some recipes from Alff and the Donovans to inspire you to make the most of what March has to offer in anticipation of the official first day of spring on the 20th.



Becki Patterson, Executive Director of Lundale Farm



Lundale Farm

Pulled Pork Breakfast Nachos

This creative take on nachos from Chef John Alff features Kneehigh Farm garlic and lettuce, Pasture Song Farm pork and Horse Shoe Ranch eggs sunny-side up, so it's just as suitable for breakfast as it is for brunch or lunch. Pair with a mimosa for a lazy weekend day at home.

Serves 2



For the Pulled Pork:

- 2-lb. pork shoulder
- 1-2 T. salt
- 2 T. grapeseed oil
- 1 yellow onion, quartered
- 1 orange, halved
- ½ C. orange juice
- 4 bay leaves
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 6 cloves garlic

For the Black Beans:

- 1 C. dried black beans, soaked overnight
- 8 sprigs cilantro
- 8 cloves garlic
- ½ jalapeño, seeds and stem removed
- 1 T. dried epazote (can substitute oregano)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3 C. water

For the Toppings:

- ½ standard-size bag of tortilla chips
- ¼ C. cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 eggs (sunny-side up with a runny yolk recommended)
- ½ C. salsa
- 2 C. Little Gem Lettuce or mini romaine, chopped
- 2 tsp. cilantro, chopped
- 2 scallions, sliced thin
- ½ C. guacamole

How to get involved

Stay Connected

Formerly a dairy farm, Lundale Farm is under easement through French and Pickering Creek Conservation Trust, a nonprofit founded by the Morrises in 1967 that helped cement their status as agricultural land pioneers. You can become a subscriber of Lundale Farm to support their mission and stay up to date on their latest events and educational opportunities by visiting LundaleFarm.org.

How to Support the Farmers

Most of Lundale Farm's tenants sell their offerings at Red Dog Market in South Coventry Township, less than a quarter mile from the Farm. Red Dog is owned by Aaron and Emma de Long, who have a shared passion for providing nourishing food to the community. Emma is also the owner of Kneehigh Farm and a tenant at Lundale. For more, visit RedDogMarketPA.com and to shop, visit 1503 Ridge Rd., Pottstown.

Step 1: Roast the pork:

Preheat oven to 350°. Season the pork shoulder on all sides with salt. Heat the grapeseed oil in a small Dutch oven or other pot on the stovetop over medium heat. When the oil is hot, sear the pork on all sides. Add remaining pork ingredients.

Next, add enough water to cover everything. Bring to a simmer and put an oven-safe lid on the pot. Place in the oven and cook for about two hours. While the pork is cooking in the oven, start the beans.

Step 2: Make the black beans:

Drain and rinse the black beans, discarding any debris. Place the remaining ingredients for the beans in a pot and add water.

Bring to a simmer over medium/low heat. Check beans every 15-20 minutes, adding more hot water if necessary. Beans are finished when they are tender but still hold their shape. Salt to taste after cooking, if desired.

Step 3: Prepare the cooked pork:

After the pork is fully cooked (when it can be easily shredded with a fork), shred, strain and reserve the liquid. Discard other ingredients. Add just enough liquid to moisten the shredded pork, mix and set aside.

Step 4: Make the eggs and assemble the nachos:

Spread out tortilla chips on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Sprinkle cheese over the chips and place in the oven.

While the cheese is melting, cook the eggs.

After the cheese has melted (about 5 minutes), remove from the oven and grab a corner of the parchment to transfer nachos to a serving tray or plate. Spread the shredded pork over the nachos, followed by the other toppings (beans, salsa, lettuce, eggs, cilantro, scallions and guacamole).

Devour immediately. It's not ideal to store any leftovers due to the high potential for sogginess.

Rustic Seasonal Vegetable Quiche With Cornmeal Crust

Brittany Donovan enjoys putting their Horse Shoe Ranch pastured eggs to good use in a quiche that features whatever seasonal vegetables she has on hand. She suggests cooking up some local, pasture-raised bacon or sausage to accompany the quiche while you wait for it to cook.

Serves 6 to 8



For the Cornmeal Crust:
 1 C. all-purpose flour
 1/3 C. cornmeal
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/4 C. cold pork fat
 1/4 C. cold unsalted butter, cut in small pieces
 1/4 C. ice cold water

For the Quiche Filling:

6 eggs, room temperature
 1 1/2 cups half-and-half or heavy cream
 2 C. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
 1 tsp. salt
 1/4 tsp. pepper
 1/4 tsp. fresh thyme
 1 1/2 C. seasonal vegetables, chopped



Step 1: Make the crust:

In a medium bowl, mix the flour, cornmeal and salt together. Cut in the pork fat and butter. Slowly add ice cold water and stir to fully combine until a ball is formed.

Divide the ball into two equal pieces and wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Chill one piece in the refrigerator for at least one hour and place the other piece in the freezer for later use.

Step 2: Make the quiche filling:

Preheat oven to 425°. In a small bowl, beat eggs until foamy. Beat in the cream until combined. Add half of the cheese, along with the salt, pepper and thyme. Stir to combine.

Step 3: Assemble the quiche:

Roll out one piece of cornmeal crust on a lightly floured board and press into a 9-inch pie dish. Pour egg mixture into pie crust. Add vegetables and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.

Bake for 10 minutes at 425°, and then reduce heat to 325°. Bake approximately 30–40 minutes longer, until the top begins to brown and a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let stand for 10 minutes before cutting.

Cover pie dish tightly to store any leftovers in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

BBQ Chicken Burgers

Horse Shoe Ranch chicken sets the stage for these burgers by John that

have a little smokiness thanks to Kneehigh Farm's poblano peppers. The size of this recipe makes it ideal for freezing leftover cooked patties for an easy meal during the week. Pair with a side salad made using Kneehigh Farm greens.

Makes 12–14 patties, depending on thickness



1 yellow onion, peeled and chopped
 4 poblano peppers, roasted, peeled and seeds removed
 10 garlic cloves, peeled
 1 T. paprika
 5 eggs
 1 1/2 C. breadcrumbs
 1/2 C. cilantro leaves, washed and chopped
 1 T. ground coriander
 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
 5 lbs. ground chicken
 2 T. salt
 Vesta Kitchen 'Smooth Operator' BBQ Sauce (or your favorite)

Put onion, poblanos, garlic, paprika, eggs, breadcrumbs, cilantro, coriander and cayenne in a food processor and buzz until fully incorporated.

Line a baking sheet with parchment and grease with oil or non-stick spray. Preheat oven to 425°.

Place ground chicken in a large mixing bowl. Add salt and the contents from the food processor, and mix thoroughly by hand. Roll about 12–14 balls and flatten them to form into burger patties.

Place patties on a baking tray and bake until the burgers are fully cooked (about 18–20 minutes). Use a meat thermometer to confirm the burgers reach an internal temperature of 165°.

Burgers are ready to enjoy on a bun or placed on top of a salad. Add barbecue sauce and any other toppings you prefer.

Freeze leftover cooked burgers in a sealed freezer bag.

Golden Beet & Carrot Soup

The coriander, curry powder and ginger pair perfectly with Kneehigh Farm's beets and carrots to create a warming and pleasurable soup. John suggests serving the soup with bread by Green Lion Breads in Phoenixville that uses locally grown heritage and ancient grains.

Makes 3 quarts



5 lbs. golden beets, greens and roots cut off, scrubbed and washed
 Salt and pepper
 Olive oil
 1/4 C. sherry or cider vinegar
 8 sprigs fresh thyme
 5 lbs. carrots, peeled and chopped
 2 yellow onions, chopped
 10–12 cloves garlic, chopped
 1 piece fresh ginger (about 1/4–1/3 lb.), peeled and chopped small
 1 T. ground coriander
 2 T. curry powder
 4 bay leaves
 1 quart vegetable stock (32 oz. container)
 2 T. Vesta Kitchen 'Crazy Train' Hot Sauce (or your favorite)

Preheat oven to 375°. Line a baking tray with aluminum foil.

Toss beets with a generous sprinkle of salt and pepper, and generously coat with olive oil. Place coated beets in the middle of the foil and fold the sides of the foil up to make a little beet boat. Pour the vinegar in the foil boat over the beets and place 4 thyme sprigs on top of the beets.

Place another piece of foil on top of the boat and cover snugly. Roast for 2.5–3 hours, until the beets are soft and fork-tender.

After fully cooked, remove the top piece of foil. Once the beets have cooled enough to handle, peel them by rubbing off the skin with a paper towel (the skin should slide right off). Chop beets and set aside.

Turn the oven up to 425°. Mix the carrots with a generous sprinkle of salt and a coating of olive oil before spreading evenly on a baking tray. Roast 20–25 minutes, until carrots are soft and slightly browned.

Saute onion with olive oil and a generous sprinkle of salt in a large pot until the onion is soft and begins to brown. Mix in garlic, ginger, coriander, curry powder, 4 thyme sprigs and the bay leaves. Cook while stirring for 5 more minutes.

Add the chopped beets and roasted carrots to the pot. Pour in the vegetable stock. Bring to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Remove from heat. Discard bay leaf and thyme.

Working in batches, buzz the soup in a blender or use an immersion blender. Add more vegetable stock or water if the consistency is too thick. Once all of the soup is buzzed, mix in the hot sauce and salt to taste.

Serve immediately or refrigerate in a sealed container for up to 1 week. Freeze in mason jars for up to 3 months.

Roasted Chicken Legs with Broccoli Rabe

Horse Shoe Ranch pasture-raised chicken is the focal point of this Donovan family favorite dish that was inspired by Dishing Up the Dirt. Brittany switches up seasonal vegetables to offer variety since the dish has become a weekly staple. Pair with mashed potatoes or a cheesy polenta, along with a simple green salad.

Serves 2–4



1 bunch of broccoli rabe, rinse and cut off bottoms of stalks (or another seasonal vegetable)
 4 whole chicken legs (or thighs)
 4–6 cloves of garlic, peeled and left whole
 2 sprigs fresh thyme (or sage or rosemary)
 4 T. butter, cut into four equal pieces
 Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 425°. Cover the bottom of a casserole dish or cast-iron skillet evenly with the broccoli rabe. Arrange the chicken on top of the broccoli rabe.

Place the garlic cloves and sprigs of thyme evenly around the chicken. Add the pieces of butter to the dish. Sprinkle the entire dish generously with salt and pepper.

Roast for approximately 45 minutes, until the internal temperature reaches 165° and the skin is golden brown. If necessary, cover the dish with parchment paper or foil to keep the skin from getting too brown.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to 3 days. ♦

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 and Farmhouse Manna: Nourishing Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands & Soul. 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.



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