

Brandywine Table

Field to Feast with Toad Stop Farm

CONVENTIONAL AND NON-CONVENTIONAL INSPIRATION FOR YOUR THANKSGIVING TABLE

Courtney H. Diener-Stokes

THE FIRST TIME BECKY BRETT SPOTTED A TOAD when tending to the fields at her new farm, she was ecstatic. Just the idea of them wanting to spend time there was the inspiration behind the farm's name: **Toad Stop Farm**. "Having that biodiversity is so important, and it's amazing to have a place where toads and other critters want to hang out," she says.

Brett highly values her relationship with the land. "You're trying to manage nature to some degree, so it's good to be a part of that natural cycle as much as you can," she says. That cycle includes being in sync with the seasons. Fall is a time when she looks forward to a lack of humidity and cooler weather as her body begins shifting to a welcome change of pace. "The days are getting shorter and there's not much time to have to work after going strong all summer."

It was October of last year when Brett set out on her own to farm land in Chester County after working with a local CSA (community supported agriculture) for seven years. She saw an increased demand for CSAs and seized the opportunity to branch out.

Sankanac CSA at Camphill Village Kimberton Hills is just one that had a waiting list. "I refer those families [we can't accommodate] to farms like Becky's, Knee High Farm and Kimberton CSA," says Erin Throop, Sankanac's farm manager.



Erin Throop, farm manager at Sankanac CSA



Becky Brett, owner of Toad Stop Farm

Brett's CSA members receive their shares through the beginning of November, when they're greeted with a hefty array of fall goodies, from butternut squash to radishes and Napa cabbage to arugula.

Her three dogs, Toby, Molly and Lila, are regular fixtures at the farm, along with her husband, Colin, who's usually put to work when he visits after working as a chef at Kimberton Whole Foods.

Thanksgiving for the Brett family usually bypasses the traditional route and often centers on a theme stemming from a recent place of travel among extended family. "We've done Greek and Italian," Becky says.

For Throop of Sankanac, she'll be having more traditional Thanksgiving fare with family at the Village. Her husband, Dylan, has a tradition of making cranberry relish, and their son usually pitches in to help grind it up.

Now Throop's sights are focused on season-end projects, such as planting garlic and mulching strawberries, along with putting a majority of the land to rest by planting cover crops. "It gives a nice closure when we can thank the soil for everything it's given us and then begin planning the next season," Throop says.

Read on to get inspired by some traditional and unexpected twists on recipes as you contemplate your menu for Thanksgiving.



Becky's husband, Colin, and their three rescues

Scalloped Sweet Potatoes

While Becky Brett grows most of the food that's featured in their dishes at home, she credits her husband, Colin, as the culinary mastermind in their kitchen. Colin has a love of sweet potatoes that compelled him to use them in a traditional scalloped potato recipe. The Gruyère cream sauce tones down the natural sweetness of the potatoes. Pairs perfectly with turkey at your holiday table.

Serves 6 to 8



- 5 lbs. garnet sweet potatoes, sliced 1/8-inch rounds (leave skins on)
- 3 1/2 C. heavy cream
- 1/4 C. maple syrup
- 1 1/2 tsp. Himalayan pink salt
- 1 tsp. thyme
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 2 C. Gruyère cheese, grated

In a large stockpot, cover sweet potatoes and bring to a boil. Cook until barely tender when pierced with a fork.

Drain potatoes in a strainer, handling gently.

Preheat the oven to 375°. In a saucepan, heat cream, syrup, salt, thyme, cinnamon and nutmeg until it just begins to boil. Add cheese and turn down heat, cooking until melted.

Cover the bottom of a greased 9"x13" pan with the potato slices and pour cream mixture evenly over potatoes. Cover and bake for 30 minutes. Bake for another 10 to 15 minutes uncovered, until the top begins to brown.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to three days.

What's in a Fall Share?

Despite owning and operating her own small-scale farm for just over a year, Becky Brett has been farming since 2015. It's important for Brett to grow high quality produce that's not only good for the community, but also for wild-life, pollinators and the environment.

Brett's CSA members receive a weekly share of six to 10 fresh vegetables for 23 weeks. In the fall season, members can expect such bounty from the farm as broccoli, cabbage, carrots, beets, kale, Swiss chard, bok choy, tatsoi (similar to bok choy), kohlrabi, winter squash, radishes, spinach, head lettuce, salad mix, turnips, garlic, onions and culinary herbs. In addition to offering CSA shares, Toad Stop wholesales to Kimberton Whole Foods, Red Dog Market and Vesta Kitchen.

To learn more visit ToadStopFarm.com.

An Intentional Community in Kimberton

Camphill Village Kimberton Hills is a dynamic farming, gardening and handcrafting intentional community that includes over 40 adults with developmental disabilities. Over 100 Kimberton Hills residents, living and working side by side, create a caring community for people of all ages and varied abilities.

The nonprofit organization is located in Kimberton, Chester County, on a 432-acre estate. Sankanac CSA is among the vocational opportunities for Camphill residents.

To learn more about Sankanac CSA visit CamphillKimberton.org/Sankanac-CSA.

Swiss Chard Dip

This is Becky's take on her mom's signature spinach dip that she's made as an appetizer for a Thanksgiving meal. Based on what she has on hand, Becky likes to switch up the spinach for Swiss chard. If you prefer the traditional route to this crowd-favorite dip, spinach is particularly sweet this



time of year after being exposed to its first light frost. You can choose dairy alternatives to make this vegan. After cooking, garnish with a sprinkle of chopped flat-leaf parsley to add color. Can be served warm or cold. Pairs well with sliced raw vegetables or crackers.

Serves 4 to 6

- 8-oz. container plain yogurt from Seven Stars Farm
- 8-oz. container sour cream
- 8-oz. block of cream cheese, softened
- 1½ C. shredded cheddar cheese, divided
- 1 large bunch of Swiss chard (or fresh spinach), rinsed, stems removed, chopped or torn into small pieces.

Preheat oven to 350°. Spray a 1-quart dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside.

In a large bowl, add yogurt, sour cream, cream cheese and ½ cup cheddar cheese. Stir to combine.

Add chopped greens and stir to thoroughly combine.

Spread the mixture evenly in a prepared 1-quart baking dish and sprinkle one cup of cheddar cheese on top.

Bake for 20 minutes or until the dip is bubbly and the cheese is melted. Broil for an additional two to three minutes until the cheese begins to brown.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to two days.

No-Cook Cranberry Relish

Erin Throop and her husband, Dylan Babitch, residents of Camphill Village Kimberton Hills, usually make a cranberry relish to take to their family gathering on Thanksgiving. The relish, that's chunky in texture and is the perfect combination of tart and sweet, pairs perfectly with turkey. Leaving the peel on the orange adds lots of flavor to this colorful relish that will liven up any plate's presentation. Erin credits the recipe and tradition of making the relish to Dylan, who uses a meat grinder to chop everything up, but you can use a food processor instead.

Serves 6 to 8



- 12-oz. bag of fresh cranberries
- 1 orange, quartered, seeds removed (keep peel on)
- 2 apples, cored and quartered (Honeycrisp recommended, keep peel on)
- 2 to 3 T. honey

Place cranberries, orange quarters and apple quarters in a food processor and pulse just enough so ingredients are broken down, but remain chunky.

Place relish in a large bowl and add two tablespoons of honey. Stir to combine. Add an additional tablespoon to taste, if you prefer a sweeter relish.

Place in a sealed container and chill for at least one hour before serving.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to five days.

Lacinato Kale Salad with Watermelon Radish and Citrus Dressing

Heirloom watermelon radishes add a colorful pop of pink to this hearty kale salad that pairs well with Thanksgiving fare. The four primary ingredients for this salad can be found at your local farmers market this time of year or will likely be in your CSA share this month. Throop likes to let the salad sit for one hour after dressing it, to enable the kale to soften. After softening, the salad will appear smaller, so if you're intending to serve a large group, be sure to increase the recipe accordingly. Pairs well with a carb-heavy Thanksgiving feast.

Serves 4 to 6



Dressing Ingredients:

- ¼ C. extra virgin olive oil
- Juice of a whole lemon
- 1 T. honey
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. garlic powder

Salad ingredients:

- 1 large bunch of lacinato kale, rinsed, torn or chopped into small pieces (remove the thick stem by pulling off the leaves)
- 2 large beets, peeled and shredded

Watermelon Radish Facts

Watermelon radishes get their name from their bright pink interior and pale green skins that resemble a garden-variety watermelon, but these radishes don't taste anything like the juicy melons. With a mild flavor that's slightly sweet and peppery, this heirloom Chinese daikon radish is a root vegetable in the same family as arugula, broccoli and turnips.

In contrast to a standard radish, a watermelon radish's size is closer to a beet's. These specialty radishes can be eaten raw, cooked or pickled. When eaten raw, as in the lacinato kale salad featured in this column, they have a crisp texture.



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- 2 large carrots, shredded
- 2 medium watermelon radishes, peeled and cut into matchsticks
- ¼ C. pumpkin seeds, toasted

Making the dressing:

In a small Mason jar, add olive oil, lemon juice, honey, salt and garlic powder. Seal with a lid and shake well to combine.

Making the salad:

Place kale in a large salad bowl and add beets, carrots and radish. Dress with the citrus dressing and toss well to combine and fully coat the greens. Place in the refrigerator for at least one hour before serving.

When ready to serve, re-toss the salad and sprinkle toasted pumpkin seeds on top.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to two 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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