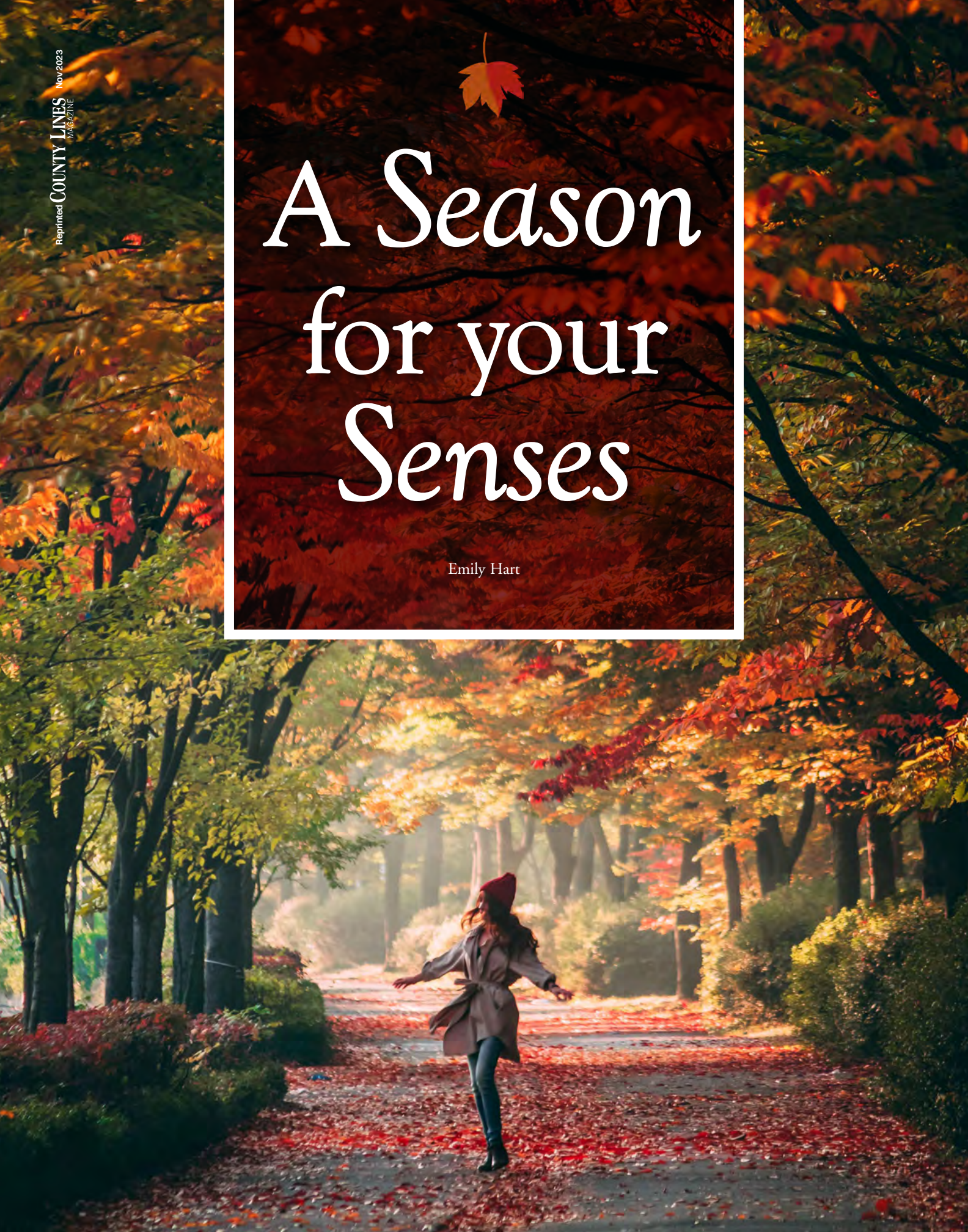


A Season for your Senses

Emily Hart



Guenevere Calabrese-Finley during construction

IF A TASTE OF DAHLIA-COLORED HONEY WINE, A bite of butter pecan ice cream melting into chocolate mousse cake, and a view of heirloom apple orchards from beneath the boughs of a gigantic maple tree decked in fall foliage call to you, keep reading. And have your car key handy. Southern Chester County holds some delightful surprises for you this month.

ALL ABUZZ

One toe over the threshold of the meadery and the fragrance lured me in — like sweet honey and a sunny field of fresh hay and wildflowers. When I first met a co-owner of Philadelphia Mead Company, honey, water and red ruby plums were fermenting inside.

Weeks later on my return to the Parkesburg production site, the *melomel* — mead with fruit — was finished, aged and bottled. Bearing a distinctive label with a golden bee, bottles and cases of

traditional mead (honey wine), melomel and *bochet* mead with caramelized honey were packed and ready to ship.

We cracked open a bottle of melomel and poured a taste of transparent liquid the color of a rosy coral-pink dahlia. Mmmmm. A bottle will grace my Thanksgiving table.

Brothers Steve and Rich Kassabian, owners of the meadery, are Renaissance and business men by nature. They're well-versed in the production and history of mead as humans' oldest fermented beverage, as well as its many cultural and literary aspects. Pottery pieces indicate that mead was known thousands of years ago. Recipes for honey wine show up around the world as early as the 1300s. Fans of *Beowulf*, *The Odyssey* and *Lord of the Rings* will impart details about the mead loved by literary characters.

Available through their website, at festivals and by pickup in Parkesburg, the meads produced there — some with local honey and

Old Stone Cider red flesh apple



some from a larger distributor in a neighboring county — are lovely and tasty for holiday feasts and winter sipping by the hearth, as well as for culinary adventures in the glass and in entrees from the oven.

MAKE IT A PAIR

Looking for a sweet accompaniment to the mead? Dazzle your tastebuds with **Neuchatel Chocolate's** honey-filled chocolate with an embossed bee, found in their Oxford shop. Take a deep purple box of those or the delectable truffles to your next dinner party.

For a pairing that belongs together forever, head to the new **Butter Pecan Café** in Coatesville where, the owner says, her food is made with love. Two friends and I shared “Buddy Burgess” cake with a scoop of the café’s homemade butter pecan ice cream. There was silence for a moment after our forks were lifted. The creamy, buttery, salty, nutty flavors began to seep into the exquisite combination of rich chocolate frosting, cake, mousse and chips. Bits of crunchy pecan paired perfectly with the cake’s velvety texture. Two words then burst forth to describe the spectacular work of art for chocolate lovers: “triumph” and “MORE!”

THE ART OF CREATIVITY

In **Calabrese Performing and Creative Arts Center** at the new Shoppes at Kennett Pointe, Guenevere Calabrese-Finley realizes her creative dreams this fall to help others realize theirs. Beyond providing music studios, a vast room for movement and theater rehearsals, plus a special room with space and art supplies — including a hot glue gun bar — for engaging hands and minds of all ages, the center for creative wellness has another special purpose. “It’s a place for people to lean into their feelings, to express those and their authentic selves in their work,” says Guenevere. “It’s where they can feed their souls.”

The Center’s decor reflects the Calabrese family’s endeavor. Wooden floors are like Guenevere’s father’s guitar. White walls with black trim represent the keys



Old Stone howlers and growlers

“ Hank’s is still a place where you can linger over all-day breakfast, lunchtime tasty Greek salads and gyros or a homestyle BLT at a booth under a Wyeth print.



Hank's Place

of her mother’s piano. Splashes of vibrant color reflect her sister’s work in theater and Guenevere’s passion for all the arts she’s bringing to the center.

Walk into the oasis after maneuvering a crazy world. Float out. “Sometimes,” she says, “all you need is an invitation to create, sing, paint or dance and be yourself.”

HOWLERS AND GROWLERS

Another friend clued me in on her secret getaway — **Old Stone Cider** in Lewisville, near the Maryland border.

In the middle of a beautiful farm with orchards and evergreens, sit with your pup under a spectacular maple that’s turning yellow to enjoy a nip in the air. In November,

view the last apples in the orchard before final harvest and spot your Christmas tree to cut in a few weeks. Grab a bite from a food truck. While kids draw with chalk on the walkway or make their way through a slushie, sip cider — hard cider that is — crafted from heirloom apples grown there. Head into the rebuilt red Pennsylvania bank barn bordered by seasonal flowers tended by co-owner Evan’s mother and covered in fast-flying skippers and fritillary butterflies. Pick a table constructed from the old barn’s wood to relax with what’s on tap.

All on the premises, apples with white, pink or red flesh, with names like Hidden Rose and Winter Red Flesh, move from orchard to press, then to tanks for ferment-

ation and carbonation. Stored in kegs, the perfect cider ends up in your glass or a growler or howler (half a growler) jug to take home.

WORTH ANOTHER TRIP

There’s no better time than now to return to a new old favorite. The same flowers and good cooking we loved at **Hank’s Place** in Chadds Ford are now in Kennett Square. At its Birch and Broad Streets location since last year, Hank’s is still a place where you can linger over all-day breakfast, lunchtime tasty Greek salads and gyros or a homestyle BLT at a booth under a Wyeth print.

Looking for great gifts as we head into shopping season or to find an old new



Japanese lunchbox cake Oso Sweet



Paleteria y Neveria Manantial

favorite? Pop into pop-up shops at Artful Gardens and Design and Old Stone Cider.

Close to Willowdale, [Artful Gardens and Design](#) sells purses of repurposed leather from Spain, table runners from Provence, RainCapers — waterproof capes with fine art designs of Van Gogh, Monet and others — and more.

Old Stone Cider in Lewisville also offers special gifts by beekeepers and blacksmiths in addition to their apples and cider.

FOR MORE FUN

[OsoSweet Bakery Café](#) at the Chadds Ford Village & Barn Shops has desserts just right for autumn. Eat in or take away small, beautiful Japanese lunchbox cakes as wonderful to look at as they are to eat. The rich chocolate middle is covered in browned butter maple frosting and delicate icing flowers. Or dig into a parfait of chocolate cake and caramel, perfect with coffee.

Want a Mexican ice cream escape all year round? Head to [Paleteria y Neveria Manantial](#) in Avondale. One scoop of Oreo flavor at a summer festival in Kennett and I was hooked. So later I went exploring — geographically and culinarily — ending up at their shop. It was nearly impossible to choose from all the colorful, mouth-watering options, but my customized selection was a winner. The three-scoop waffle bowl held Oreo (one of their most popular flavors) that originally drew me in, pistachio and avocado topped with chocolate sauce, strawberries, a mound of whipped cream with sprinkles, and pink and yellow sugar cookies.

If there's room for nutrition after dessert, pick up the best burrito in town or a fabulous fully loaded taco salad — cilantro rice, corn, black beans, guacamole and sour cream and additional options including shrimp — from [Michoacana Grill](#) in Kennett Square. On a sunny day, eat outdoors under a red umbrella.

Not enough time for another mouthful of goodness, view of beauty or adventure to fill your sense of curiosity? Tomorrow's another opportunity. ♦

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