



OPPOSITE: OWNER STEVEN HOPP AND CHEF PHILIP NEWTON BY THE BRICK OVEN.
THIS PAGE: CUSTOMERS ENJOY THE OLD-FASHIONED FEEL OF THE HARVEST TABLE GENERAL STORE.

>by Ann N. Yungmeyer

*Fantastic Flavor
at Harvest Table*

RESTAURANT RETROSPECT

The Pleasures of Local Produce



TWO BRIGHTLY PAINTED buildings on the tiny town square of Meadowview, Va., signal that new life is taking hold in the rural community north of Abingdon. The renovated buildings house the Meadowview Farmers' Guild—a project that includes a country store and restaurant, called the Harvest Table, featuring food from local farms. Fresh, homegrown and creative best describe the new establishment as well as the restaurant cuisine.

Meadowview Farmers' Guild was the culmination of several community members' efforts to revive the local economy and provide an outlet for local farm produce. The man behind the venture is Steven Hopp, a farmer and professor at nearby Emory & Henry College. Having farmed in the community for many years, Hopp was familiar with the variety of foods being produced in the area. With many farmers replacing tobacco with produce, "I came upon the idea to have a restaurant offering local foods with a seasonal menu," Hopp says.

Late summer and autumn produce inspired the Harvest Table menu for the restaurant's opening in September 2007. Portobello mushroom stuffed with ratatouille and black bean quesadilla with cantaloupe salsa are featured appetizers during the fall season; salad selections include garden tomato with olive oil, herbs and Asiago cheese, and apple salad with roasted pecans and Kentucky bleu cheese. "With late plantings and hoop houses, we should have a supply of salad greens most of the

>photography by Murray Lee

time," says Harvest Table Chef Philip Newton.

Entrées include fresh local beef, available throughout the seasons—such as rib-eye steak with garlic and peppercorn butter—served with dilly beans, roast potatoes, squash casserole or other seasonal complements. Locally raised pork and poultry are available year-round, and Hopp says other items such as lamb, turkey (available in late fall) and rabbit will also be featured entrées. He contemplates a recipe for rabbit—"it's very lean meat," he adds. Blue Ridge trout from North Carolina is on the menu regularly, as is the piquant penne pasta with house-made dried tomato and pecan pesto, destined to be a favorite.

Hopp, Newton and Sous-Chef Richard Houser create menu selections with produce as it becomes available. "It changes often," Newton says. "I'm making frequent trips picking up produce at the farms." He uses a variety of vegetables on the hand-tossed pizza-of-the-day made from organic flours and fired in a brick oven. "We have squashes available for a long span, and tomatoes and other vegetables are preserved by Farmers' Guild participants," he says. Squash even shows up on the dessert menu: Cushaw-butternut squash pie and fresh apple cake with caramel sauce are tantalizing fall desserts that carry into winter.

The Harvest Table serves wine and beer produced in Virginia and North Carolina. Williamsburg Winery, Childress Vineyards in North



ABOVE: THE HARVEST TABLE GENERAL STORE FEATURES LOCAL PRODUCE, FOOD, CRAFTS AND OTHER ITEMS MADE LOCALLY. IT IS ATTACHED TO THE RESTAURANT BUT IS OPEN ALL DAY AS OPPOSED TO JUST THE DINNER HOUR.
 BELOW: THE HARVEST GENERAL STORE (LEFT) AND THE HARVEST TABLE RESTAURANT (RIGHT) IN MEADOWVIEW, VA.

the source of any menu item. The staff take pride in knowing their farmers, cheese makers and other food artisans by name. While a few necessities come from farther away (coffee beans from Central America), Newton says they carefully select suppliers such as Dark Hollow Micro-Roasters from Sugar Grove, Va., where 100 percent organic Arabica coffee beans are roasted to order, guaranteeing freshness, and fair trade arrangements are made with growers.

Along with a casual, friendly atmosphere, there is a spirit of community at the Harvest Table Restaurant and the adjoining General Store. The old-time store carries fresh produce and other foods produced in the community such as barbeque sauce and jams, as well as local handcrafts including jewelry, baskets and soaps. A few household goods and other favorites such as Burt's Bees products, Virginia peanuts and candy are also available. "We have a great sense of teamwork within our core group and everyone involved here," Chef Newton says. Newton's wife Allison, a physical education teacher, volleyball coach and mother of four, is a weekend hostess at

the restaurant.

Founded as a means to help sustain the local economy, Meadowview Farmers' Guild provides a way to preserve the region's agricultural heritage. As the cover of the restaurant menu says, the Harvest Table offers "fresh cooking that serves the neighborhood—on your plate." And

The philosophy at Harvest Table reflects some of the thinking that Hopp brings to light in the recently released book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, which he co-wrote with his wife, author Barbara Kingsolver, and daughter Camille Kingsolver.

Carolina and Villa Appalaccia Winery along the Blue Ridge Parkway are a few of the featured vineyards. The beer list includes micro-brewed beers from Carolina Brewing and seasonal specialty brews from Anheuser Busch, brewed in Williamsburg.

With the stated goal "to serve the best locally produced foods available," the Harvest Table seeks farmers who care about the quality of the food they produce and sustainability of their land. The restaurant serves meats that have been raised responsibly without hormones or antibiotics and avoids serving foods that have been genetically modified, factory packaged or require long distance transport and excessive fuel consumption. The philosophy at Harvest Table reflects some of the thinking that Hopp brings to light in the recently released book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, which he co-wrote with his wife, author Barbara Kingsolver, and daughter Camille Kingsolver.

The Harvest Table restaurant sources from farms in Southwest Virginia and neighboring states, including some farms growing heirloom produce. Appalachian Harvest, a network of certified organic farmers in Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee, is a key source of supply.

Some of Harvest Table's suppliers with intriguing names such as Blue Door Garden, Kenny's Farmhouse Cheese, and Rich Valley Grazers arouse diners' curiosity; in fact, restaurant patrons are encouraged to ask about

the town square has a new gathering place for those in the community, as well as for travelers along the interstate who want a unique dining and shopping experience. **MS**

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EGGPLANT PARMESAN MADE WITH ALL LOCAL INGREDIENTS SERVED WITH WINE THAT WAS ALSO PRODUCED IN VIRGINIA.

