



by Nicole Conneally

Bread. Who doesn't love it? It's one of life's true pleasures, and it's broken to share at family tables all over the world. Everyone knows the best bread is a homemade labor of love, but largely due to the heavy "labor" part of that equation, it's often something most of us leave to the bakers. Fortunately for those of us who live locally or care to venture out to our little Northwest corner of Rhode Island, Mapleville Farm, located on 544 Old Victory Highway in Mapleville, is kneading up some of the tastiest, freshest loaves the most bread-craving mind could imagine...and they are doing it with so much love and passion you can taste it!

The Ryan family opened their bakery in April of 2011. You've probably seen their signs out on route 102 where Broncos Highway wanders through Burrillville.



Mary and Tom Ryan bought the farmstead in 1984 where they raised their four kids on home-grown produce, a home-schooled education, and boundless opportunity to seek out their own true passions. Now grown up and cultivating their

Mapleville Farm: Bringing the Village Bakery back to Burrillville

individual passions, Mike, Ben, Casey, and Emma Ryan, along with longtime family friend and bakery Intern, Gretchen Ryan O'Connor, blend their individual talents to support one another in this family-owned and run business. And, as anyone who has ever tasted any of their products knows, the result of this combined effort is nothing short of delicious!

Truly a cooperative, family-driven effort, Mike Ryan is quick to point out the role his parents have played, not just as "technical support" in a business that doesn't seem to ever sleep, but as loving and supportive caregivers who truly allowed and encouraged each of the four siblings to move forward with confidence to achieve their dreams. Success was never defined or measured in the ability to achieve a lifestyle based in monetary value, but rather to explore, develop, and follow their true inner-passion. Mary and Ben Ryan recall countless family vacations where Ben would find a bakery or restaurant wherever they happened to be staying and ask the owner if he could observe. Ben is the family food lover and creator, the resident master of bread making. He has been playing with food since he was a baby. While describing how her second-born son's habit to volunteer at various food establishments while the rest of the family went about vacationing "totally drove her crazy," Mary has the proudest smile spread across her face.

All four siblings in the Ryan clan have amazing and

interesting talents that would give any parents a reason to perpetually smile. Each of them joins the tireless efforts to make sure the business is running effectively: Emma's signature contribution to the bakery is things related to chocolate and her loving care of the animals on the farm. Casey Ryan is the agricul-



turalist. She loves animals and she has a reputation for growing wonderful strawberries. She has worked all over the state, selling her own produce at various farmers markets and assisting different markets in organizing their initiatives in order to be successful. Mike, eldest of the Clan and main spokesperson of the business, is described as the green thumb, which is important because many ingredients found in the bakery items are grown on site. He is currently working on alternative growing methods such as hydroponics and aquaponics. Gretchen, Intern-extraordinaire, shares Ben's passion for cooking. She and Ben begin the workweek at 11 p.m. on Thursdays and work through until Sunday at 7 p.m., stealing naps whenever possible and kneading an impressive estimate of about 300 pounds of dough a day... by HAND!

That's right! All bread purchased from Mapleville Farm was hand-kneaded with human hands. That kind of devotion to a quality product is rare, and it shows in the taste of the products. Cookies such as peanut butter, chocolate chip, and Italian cookie favorites are made by hand in the same bakery mostly using family recipes handed down over generations. Pies are made fresh to order, and you will never be the same after you have eaten a PBJ sandwich made with Mapleville Farm homemade peach or grape jelly or strawberry jam. Other favorites include spinach pies and bakery pizza. Of course, all products are made with ingredients harvested from the farm or from other local producers. Produce usually includes Italian specialties such as tomatoes, basil, hot peppers, zucchini, etc. when in season. Eggs are available when they have not all been used in the production of the baked goods from free-range chickens hatched on the Farm.

For the Ryan family, Mapleville Farm is one example of what they are hoping to contribute to their local community. They hope to offer a break from the "convenience culture" that we so often don't even realize we are a part of. Their product offers something fresh and local and hearkens back to a time when villages and communities were able to sustain themselves through the hard work and resources of the community members. Ben likens the bakery to the old village bakeries that could be found on every street corner in simpler times.



Mapleville Farm is largely an effort to bring back that commitment to quality and community. Stop by and be a part of it.

Mapleville Farm is open Friday through Sunday from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. The store is located on the family farm itself, so don't be afraid to park in the parking lot and enter through the side entrance, which is clearly marked and easy to find once you begin walking down the driveway towards the house. The family will attend a total of 7 farmers markets throughout the state throughout the season, including Petersen Farm on route 44 in Chepachet from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Sundays. Check their website at www.maplevillefarm.com for additional information and Farmer's Market locations.



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