



Apples and Horses

Family embraces innkeeping in move to Pennsylvania

by Linda C. Feltman, photos courtesy of Apple Pony inn

RACHEL AND TOM FOSTER HAD BEEN searching the Pacific Northwest for a decade for a property to turn into a bed and breakfast, but they were not having much success. Then, COVID-19 hit, and they set their dream aside.

The Fosters, who were raising their family on a 37-acre farm in



Centre County

northern Colorado at the time, visited Tom's family in Pennsylvania in June 2020 when they read about a bed and breakfast for sale near Tom's alma mater, Penn State. As soon as they stepped foot on the property in Boalsburg, Centre County, Rachel says they knew they had finally found their

“unicorn property.”

That December, they closed on the 17-acre site in historic Oak Hall on the slopes of Mount Nittany, located in a rural section of College Township just off I-99, about four miles from Penn State. The Fosters took about a year to build a separate home for their family and a barn for their

The Foster family welcomes guests to their home in Boalsburg. (above right) Fresh apples from the property are used to make the Pennsylvania Dutch apple dumplings featured at breakfast.

horses and chickens.

In September 2022, the Apple Pony Inn was opened part time on weekends. The



Fosters chose the name by mixing two aspects of their lives: a nod to the large heritage apple trees on their property and recognition of Rachel's lifetime involvement in the equine world.

On Sunday mornings, guests get to reap the benefits of those abundant apple trees when Rachel prepares Pennsylvania Dutch apple dumplings for breakfast. She grows many of her own vegetables and fruits and gathers eggs from her hens each morning.

Rachel tells me she spent months trying out different farm-to-table breakfast recipes until she perfected a repertoire she believed to be "guest worthy." Chuckling, Tom relates how he and their daughters miss those early days of taste testing Rachel's various experiments. I, for one, enjoyed her Capt'n Crunch French toast, which was quite tasty and not nearly as sweet as I would have expected.

During our chat, Rachel shares that she will become a full-time innkeeper later this year. After spending 20 years in health care administration, public health, leadership and nursing, including a stint as the rural COVID-19 program

manager with the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, she is looking forward to her new role. Tom, a computer engineer, is able to work virtually from home.

Rachel and Tom's daughters have also adapted to life in Centre County and enjoy being part of their parents' endeavor. Abigail, 10, is the resident floral expert; she makes sure the breakfast tables have a fresh arrangement of newly cut flowers smartly displayed. Allison, 12, enjoys interacting with guests and working with her mom in the kitchen; she envisions becoming

DETAILS

Apple Pony Inn, 151 Buttermilk Drive, Boalsburg 16827 (since the address recently changed, you may have to use the former address with GPS mapping systems: 176 Brush Valley Road, Boalsburg); 814-777-8466; appleponyinn.com; innkeepers@appleponyinn.com

The inn has seven guest rooms themed to reflect Rachel's and her daughters' passion for riding horses. Each room features photographs or paintings of a particular breed, including a few owned by the Fosters over the years. The Clydesdale Suite is fully ADA-compliant. The Shire Suite, also on the ground floor, has a private entrance. The second-floor Shetland Pony Suite features two separate bedrooms with an adjoining private bathroom; the larger bedroom has a king bed, and the smaller bedroom is equipped with a full-size bed. There are four additional guest rooms on the second floor. Amenities

are detailed on the website. Creative farm-to-table breakfasts are served each morning at varied times. Rates for stays range from \$175 to \$250 per night, depending upon room. Seasonal and special event rates may apply. There is a standard two-night minimum for certain weekends. Since the Apple Pony Inn was built with two separate wings connected by a common area, guests can also rent either half or the entire house.

For a one-time fee of \$50, parents of Penn State students may apply to join the Apple Pony Club, which gives them access to program perks, discounts and priority reservations for their students' graduation. (Note that memberships are sold out for 2023 through 2026 graduation years. Families with students graduating in 2027 or later may still apply.)

ing a chef in the future.

In the short time it has been opened, the Apple Pony Inn has quickly become a mainstay of local bed and breakfasts in the Nittany Valley, and the Fos-

ters have already enjoyed many repeat guests who, I suspect, felt as welcomed and nurtured as I did during my stay. 🍷

—Linda Feltman of Lewistown is the longtime B&B columnist.



The inn's wide porch and rockers invite guests to sit and stay awhile.