



# EAT HERE

## AT FABLE'S TABLE

*The meeting of farm, education and brunch in Delaware County.*

BY ADRIENNE MARTINI □ PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER MAY

Sabrina Antrosio, age 5, kept the tiny blue robin's egg cupped in one hand during most of her Sunday morning tour of Delaware County's Stone and Thistle Farm. When it wasn't clutched in her small hands, it was tucked under her chin—"to keep it warmer," she says—or cradled by an adult when Sabrina reached under the laying hens to gather different eggs.

Stone and Thistle's weekly brunch is about much more than the food. While the meal of ham and asparagus strata, sour cream rhubarb coffee cake and sausage after the tour was certainly lovely, the morning is about curious goats who nibble on your shirt and rabbits who nuzzle against your fingers. It's about tangible demonstrations of where our food comes from. And, yes, it's also about tiny blue robin's eggs.

When farm owners Denise and Tom Warren relocated here from Brooklyn with their children, their goals were simple. "We started the farm really as a way to feed our family," Denise says. "The intention was to sell whatever we had left over. We had no intention of becoming full-time farmers. It's evolved because so many other people were interested in our type of food, the grass-fed, the organic."

Fifteen years later, Stone and Thistle is a working farm with grass-fed dairy goats, sheep, chickens and beef cows. They have a line of organic goat's milk yogurts, make their own goat's milk fudge, and will soon add chèvre to the mix. Tom, with some help from daughter Katey, is a fixture at the Pakatakan, Callicoon and Oneonta farmers' markets.

The newest addition to the farm is Fable, a farm-to-table restaurant that is only open on Saturday nights from May to October. This low-slung country modernist building features a prix fixe menu of seasonal foods, most of which are raised on the farm. While eating, diners can watch cows graze on the rolling hills just outside the wall of glass doors.

The dinners are worth every penny, but the price, which ranges between \$48-\$60, can be somewhat of a barrier, especially when the economy is floundering. And, no, flounder will never be on Fable's menu because it's not a locally produced option.

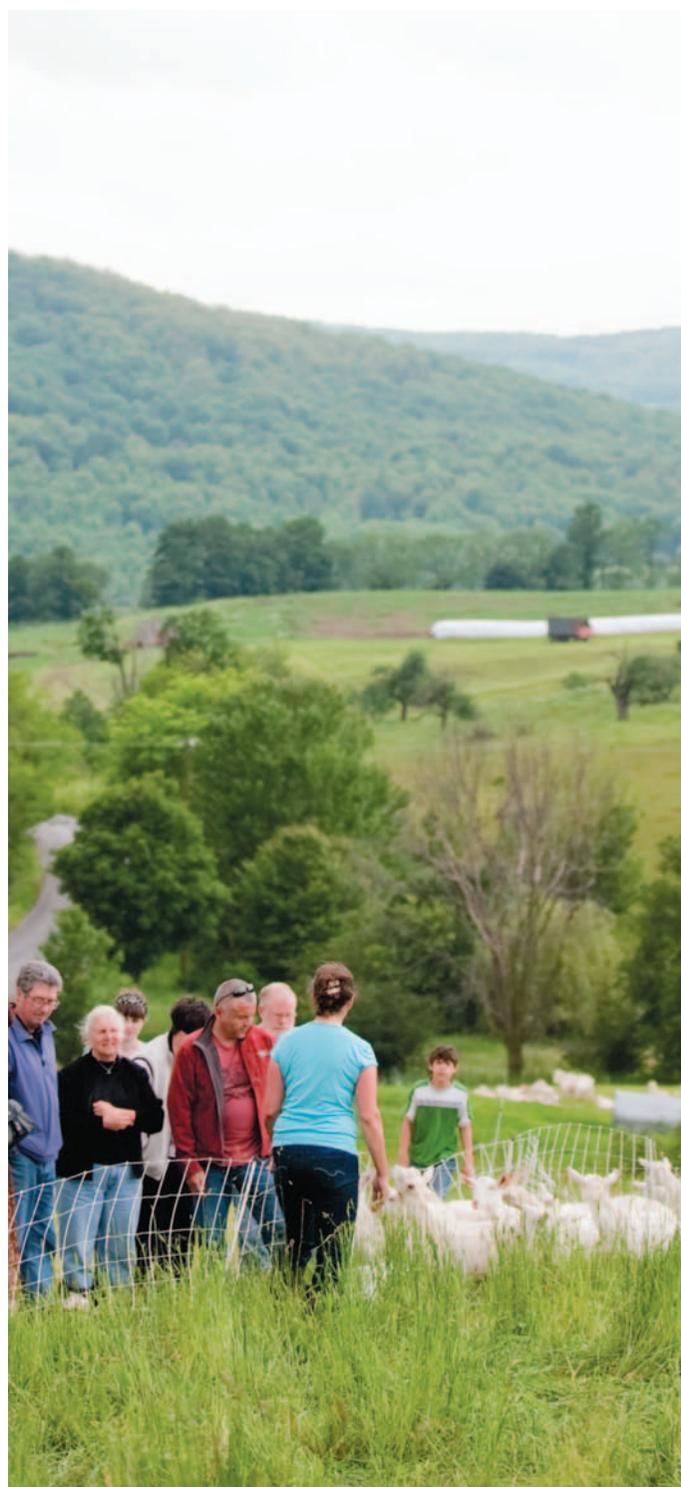
"I think to a lot of people our food is not accessible because it is expensive—and that bothers me. I don't want to always be catering to second-home owners and to weekenders. I don't want to have elite food or elite programs," Denise says.

In order to introduce their food to a new audience, last summer Denise invited children to the farm to be "Farmers for a Day." Girls and boys got to move animals to new pastures, pick produce from the garden and milk goats. Unfortunately, the New York State grant money for the program dried up last winter.

Enter the brunch, which is new this spring. For \$15 per person, a family can spend a morning touring the Farm and eating as much as they wish at a buffet, washed down with cold goat's milk and locally pressed grape juice.

"The brunch is a way of sharing what we do, good healthy food at a reasonable cost for families. That's really important to me," Denise says.

*Facing page: A young chick at Stone & Thistle farm. Right: Diners enjoy a pre-brunch tour of the farm. Following pages: The glory of brunch. Denise Warren of Stone & Thistle brings farm to kitchen to fork. Feini (Sylvia) Qu, a 2009 graduate of Duke University, is a summer volunteer at Stone and Thistle Farm under the international WWOOF [Willing Workers on Organic Farms] program.*



## MUFFIN FRITTATAS

6 eggs  
1/2 cup goat milk  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 cup shredded sharp cheese  
3/4 cup chopped zucchini or summer squash  
1/4 cup red bell pepper or other sweet red pepper  
2 tablespoons chopped red onion

Heat oven to 350°F. Beat eggs, milk, salt and pepper in medium bowl until blended. Add cheese, zucchini, bell pepper and onion; mix well. Spoon evenly into 12 greased muffin cups, about 1/4 cup each.

Bake in 350°F oven until just set, 20 to 22 minutes. Cool on rack 5 minutes. Remove from cups; serve warm.



The most obvious reason for these meals is to increase the exposure of Stone and Thistle while selling more of their products. It's about the economic concept of "value added," which every producer struggles with, no matter if they run a farm or a factory.

"There are two ideas of value added," Warren explains. "The first would be a farmer who milks his cows or goats and sells the milk. Value added would be making yogurt or making cheese. Then you take it all the way to the concept of the restaurant, which is you grow the food, you serve the food. But I think you have to have certain people skills to do that. You have to know you like it."

You can tell Denise likes it. When she gives the tour, you can hear the warmth in her voice as she talks about the goats. She herds a rugby-scrum of a dozen children trying to put eggs in cartons with as much ease as she shows when she puts the farm's border collies through their paces rounding up sheep.

She laughs as she shares her favorite questions from the children who come through. (Last summer's stand-out was, "do you milk the pigs, too?" Her response, delivered after taking a good, long look at the 200+ pound boars, "No but if you can run fast, you're welcome to give it a try.")

Tom Warren is usually on hand to talk about the logistics of pastures and animal husbandry. The Warren kids who are still on the farm pitch in, too. Katey gets the food ready while her younger brother, Shane, keeps the tour group organized. One day, Denise hopes her oldest boy, Riley, who is currently in the military, will settle on the farm.

"For our whole family it's about sharing the message of where our food comes from," Denise says. "It's our way of petitioning for keeping agriculture alive, especially with kids. If I ask a group of high school students how many of them want to grow up to be farmers, I'm not going to get one hand up. But the day I get a hand up, is the day that we've accomplished something. I like that idea."

This is the heart of the Farm's message. For all of Denise's talk about adding value to her products, her goals are about much more than money. She's trying to win over a new generation of farmers, one kid at a time, if that is how it must be.

When you watch Sabrina with her egg, it's clear that this brunch goes beyond the simple virtues of wholesome, organic eats. ✂





**FABLE  
AT STONE & THISTLE FARM**

1211 Kelso Road,  
East Meredith, NY 13757  
607-278-5800

Reservations recommended  
[Stoneandthistlefarm.com](http://Stoneandthistlefarm.com)

*Saturday night dinner: tour of the Farm  
6:30 p.m.; farm table seating 7 p.m.  
Sunday brunch: tour of the Farm 11 a.m.;  
buffet 12 noon. Casual seating at farm  
table, outside patio or picnic area.*