



KARA LACEY

TASTE OF STONEBRIDGE

VERMONT-INSPIRED RECIPES FROM THE
CAMERA CLUB MYSTERY SERIES

KARA LACEY



Kara Lacey is the author of the Camera Club Mystery Series, traditional whodunnit mysteries with a warm, cozy vibe. Kara is a photography enthusiast who enjoys hiking, skiing, watching the sun rise, and curling up with a good book. She lives in a tiny village nestled in the beautiful Green Mountains of Vermont—the inspiration for her mystery series. When she’s not at her laptop creating havoc for her characters, you’ll find her rambling through the forest with her husband and spirited Labrador retriever, camera in hand.

Photography Disclaimer: My hat’s off to food photographers! While I enjoy photography, I lean more toward landscapes and scenery. I don’t pretend to have expertise with styling and photographing food.

I gave it my best!

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Kara Lacey asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

Welcome to Stonebridge, Vermont

Welcome to Stonebridge, Vermont, the fictional setting for the Camera Club Mystery Series. When I set out to write the Camera Club Series, I created a heroine who, like myself, doesn't enjoy cooking. Bobbie Brooks is a middle-aged widow and photographer—Boston born and bred, she considers herself a “city girl.” At the urging of her sister, Alicia, she leaves the city and moves to Vermont, looking for a fresh start after the sudden death of her husband.

When it comes to all things culinary, Bobbie is hopeless. Even brewing a pot of coffee is a challenge for her. While I'm not quite as inept in the kitchen as she is, I'd rather be doing almost anything other than cooking. Yet, as I created my stories, food—and the sharing of meals—took on a surprisingly important role. And really, what's more cozy and homey than sharing food?

Every recipe included in this collection is mentioned within the pages of my first three Camera Club Mystery novels. Readers of *Caught on Camera* will recognize Alicia's grownup Herbed Chèvre Macaroni and Cheese, The Mad Crow Tavern's Cheddar-Ale Soup, and The Rosebud Café's White Chocolate-Wild Berry Scones. In my second book, I introduce chef Gino Morelli of The Mill House Inn, who adds another dimension to Stonebridge's offerings.

In the following pages you'll find recipes, along with unpublished stories and snippets, told from Bobbie's point of view. All recipes are inspired by my characters and setting, and have a decidedly Vermont flair. I hope you enjoy making (and eating) them as much as I did!

Cheers!



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After signing up, you'll receive a welcome email with a link to access exclusive subscriber-only content—unpublished snippets and stories, Vermont-inspired recipes for goodies found in my novels character profiles, setting inspiration, and more...*



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Crowley Farm

“ A long, slow breath escaped as I drove up the winding driveway to my sister’s farmhouse. For many years, Alicia’s home had been my happy place—a place to escape my hectic life in the city. Nestled in the mountains and edged by forest, a broad porch stretched across the front of the sprawling home. It was there that I found my her, looking comfortable in her faded jeans and baggy T-shirt, reading on the porch swing.

Alicia looked up briefly and smiled before setting her book aside. It had been nearly thirty years since she’d surprised my family by announcing her engagement to Nathaniel Crowley. We’d been happy for her, of course. Nate was a good guy, and the only man I knew who was intelligent enough to keep up with my whip-smart sister. What had shocked us, however, were their plans to move to his family’s farm in Vermont. My urbane parents had been convinced it would never work. If we’d had a crystal ball to show us how she’d take over Stonebridge’s only country market, while raising goats—alongside their twin boys—and learning the art of cheese-making, we’d have been flabbergasted.

Joining her on the porch swing, I took in the bucolic scene before me. On this picture-perfect spring day, I couldn’t imagine my sister living anywhere else.



Chèvre, Fig and Bacon Bites

Alicia enjoys sharing dishes that feature her goat's milk cheese, and the annual Harvest Festival is the perfect place to do it. Among the many offerings available at Taste of Stonebridge, Alicia's Goat Cheese and Fig Bites are one of the most popular.

Ingredients

- 30 frozen mini phyllo cups
- 10 tablespoons (about 5 ounces goat)
- 5 tablespoons fig preserves
- 6-8 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled

Directions

Set phyllo cups on a baking sheet.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Fill each phyllo cup with one teaspoon of goat cheese.

Bake in preheated oven until goat cheese is warm, about 10-12 minutes.

Top each phyllo cup with 1/2 teaspoon of fig preserves.

Sprinkle with crispy, crumbled bacon.

Serve warm or at room temperature.



Alicia Crowley's Grown-up Macaroni and Cheese

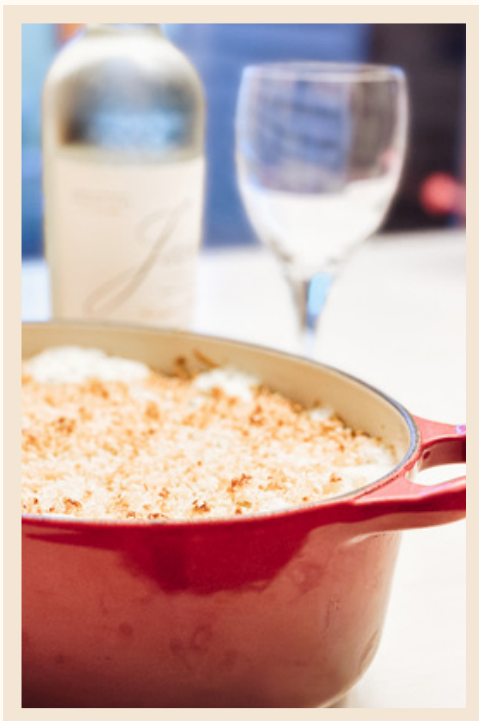
Bobbie may not be much of a cook, but her sister is. And when the investigation heats up, Bobbie is not above using her sister's creations as a bribe for information.

“

I jiggled my key in the lock and froze, struck with a sudden thought. Releasing the doorknob, I twisted to look at my next-door neighbor, giving my idea a moment to percolate. Mr Miller had his usual look of indifference, but from his daily perch, I was certain he observed everything that happened in this little corner of the village. Had Detective Cram questioned him? One would hope so, but when it came to the detective, I wasn't feeling magnanimous. If I wanted the killer caught, it would be up to me.

Filled with anger-fueled determination, I strode to my kitchen. My plan needed a peace offering, a bribe for information. This was one of those countless times I wished I were more like Alicia. I flung my freezer open, sorting through my meager assortment of frozen items until I found it—one of my sister's coveted macaroni and cheese casseroles.

Perfect. Mr. Miller would need superhuman strength to resist this offering. Armed with my cheesy weapon, I slammed my freezer shut and marched back outdoors and across the lawn. It was time to interrogate my next-door neighbor.



Herbed Chèvre Macaroni and Cheese

Ingredients

- 3 cups macaroni (I used shells)
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter (divided)
- 3 tablespoons all purpose flour
- 3 cups of milk
- 2 tablespoons fresh chopped herbs (I used chives, rosemary, and thyme)
- 1/4-1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper (or to taste)
- 6 ounces herbed goat cheese, crumbled (I used Vermont Creamery)
- 12 ounces shredded cheddar cheese (I used Cabot Vermont cheddar)
- 6 ounces shredded parmesan cheese (divided)
- 1/2 cup plain panko bread crumbs

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Butter a 3-quart baking dish.

Cook macaroni according to package directions, drain, and rinse.

In a large saucepan, melt 3 tablespoons butter. Blend in flour and cook over medium-low heat, stirring for 2 minutes. Gradually whisk in milk, stirring until slightly thickened.

Stir in herbs, salt and pepper.

Stir in goat cheese, cheddar cheese, and 4 ounces parmesan cheese. Cook, stirring until cheeses are melted and sauce is thick and creamy.

Add drained macaroni, stirring to coat. Pour into prepared casserole dish.

Melt remaining butter. Stir in panko and reserved parmesan cheese.

Spread breadcrumb mixture evenly over casserole. Bake in preheated oven for 25-30 minutes until browned and bubbling around the edges.

Alicia's Harvest Festival Award-Winning Maple Pie

“

The main tent was overflowing with the festival crowd. A display of fragrant pies sat near the entrance, ready for the pie baking contest. I tried to guess which one Alicia had brought, knowing my more domestically-abled sister was certain to have an entry. They all looked delicious—far beyond my less-than-limited baking prowess.

As though summoning her, Alicia's voice sounded in my ear. “Are you here for the contest?”

“Doubtful.” I glanced at my watch. As much as I enjoyed watching the ladies of Stonebridge struggle to maintain their sense of decorum during the pie judging, I didn't have time to hang around. “Which pie is yours?”

“The maple one.” Alicia gestured toward a deep dish pie topped with chopped walnuts. “It was a banner year for sap, and we have an abundance of maple syrup.”

“If you find yourself wanting to use up more, you know where you can deposit your next pie,” I said, patting my grumbling stomach. I pressed my hand to my waist, reminding myself I'd just eaten lunch. I couldn't help it. I'd had Alicia's maple pie before. Smooth and creamy with just the right amount of sweetness. To call it delicious was such an understatement, it was almost insulting.

The corner of Alicia's lip curled. “Or you could learn to make it yourself,” she said. “It's ridiculously easy to make. I might even feel guilty if I win a prize.”

Vermont Maple Pie

Bobbie and I are both reluctant bakers, but this pie recipe is one we can both manage—subtly sweet, creamy, a little bit gooey, and oh so easy to make. Enjoy!

Ingredients

- 1 – 9 inch unbaked pie shell (I'm all about easy and used a premade crust, but feel free to make your own)
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1/3 cup all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups pure Vermont maple syrup (DO NOT even think of using maple flavored corn syrup!!)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (I know—it sounds weird, but don't skip it. The pie won't taste like pepper. I promise...)
- 1/3 cup finely chopped walnuts

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

In a heavy saucepan, whisk cream and flour together until smooth.

Add maple syrup, butter, and pepper.

Whisk over medium heat for 10 minutes, or until thickened. Do not allow mixture to boil.

Pour filling into prepared pie shell.

Sprinkle with chopped walnuts and bake for 20 – 30 minutes (until bubbling).

The pie will not be “set.”

Cool on a rack, then cover and refrigerate until thoroughly cooled.

Serve with a dollop of whipped cream if desired.



The Mad Crow Tavern

“

“So, was the crow angry or insane?” Emma asked.

“Hmm?” I looked over the top of my menu, my daughter’s question barely registering. Did I want the fish tacos or quinoa salad tonight? Both healthy choices.

“Mom...” Emma huffed. “You know... The Mad Crow Tavern?”

“Oh, right...” I set my menu aside—fish tacos—definitely. “I forget. Something about a dive-bombing crow. Ask Aunt Alicia.” I gave my sister, Alicia, a sideways glance, which she returned with one of her patented eye rolls.

“As if you haven’t heard the story a million times.” Alicia turned toward Emma before continuing. “This building used to be the village roadhouse. In the 1800s, when the railroad came through Stonebridge, it was a bustling place. And, as your mom said, a crow dive bombed the customers.”

“There’s more to the story than that.” Nate, Alicia’s husband, joined in. Stonebridge born and bred, he loved nothing more than the village’s old yarns.

Emma leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table, ready for one of Uncle Nate’s tales.

“Well,” Nate said. “The Innkeeper, Maisie Miller, was a kind soul, and she loved that old crow.”

“Even though it attacked her customers?” Emma asked.

“Maisie knew the crow was only protecting her nest.” Nate nodded, warming to his story. “She would leave little gifts for the crow—pieces of corn, wool and twine... And the crow left gifts for Maisie, too—buttons, necklaces, handkerchiefs—all stolen from the dive-bombed patrons.”

Emma laughed. “So cool.”

“The townsfolk didn’t quite see it that way. They wanted that crow captured. Maisie protested, but what could she do?”

The Mad Crow Tavern, Cont'd

“

“What, indeed?” Alicia deadpanned, giving her husband a teasing smile.

Nate placed his hand on his wife’s and continued. “One day, word spread of a train robbery. The bandit was headed to Stonebridge, and you can imagine the frenzy. Villagers were taking up arms, waiting for the train’s arrival.”

“Seems kind of dumb for the bandit to stay on the train.” Emma said.

“You might think so. But when he took off his mask, and mingled among the other passengers, no one knew who he was.”

Our server appeared, and Nate paused as we placed our orders.

“Cheddar-ale soup,” I said with a smile. So much for fish tacos. The cheddar-ale soup was like comfort in a bowl.

“But what does this have to do with the crow?” Emma asked.

With a wiggle of his brow, Nate continued. “When the passengers disembarked, they headed straight to the old roadhouse for a pint of ale and a bowl of its famous cheddar soup. You can imagine the chaos at the station as armed villagers sought the bandit—to no avail. It’s amazing no one was shot.”

“And?” Emma was rapt. Although I’d heard the story many times, I, too, was mesmerized.

“As the weary passengers entered the roadhouse, the crow dove from the tree.” Nate’s hand swooped across the table. “Everyone ducked, of course, shielding themselves. But the wise crow zeroed in on one person. She pecked at the poor man’s face until he dropped his satchel, its contents spilling on the ground.”

“Ohhh.” Emma clapped. “The unmasked bandit.”

“Exactly,” Nate said. “And the townspeople never complained about the mad crow again.”

The Crow's Cheddar-Ale Soup

The Mad Crow Tavern is known for its Cheddar-Ale Soup. Comfort in a bowl. Enjoy with Vermont Common Crackers and a pint of your favorite ale!

Ingredients

- 18 oz thick sliced bacon (diced)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/3 cups all purpose flour
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 12 oz pale ale (I used Long Trail Ale)
- 2 cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cups half-and-half (or whole milk)
- 1 lb Cheddar Cheese (I used Grafton Cheddar, 8oz maple smoked, 8oz 1-year aged), shredded

Directions

In a large soup pot, cook bacon until crisp. Remove bacon bits with slotted spoon. Drain, leaving 2T bacon grease in pan. Add butter and melt. Add onions, celery, and carrot, cooking over medium heat until tender (about 10 minutes). Add garlic, stirring for 1 minute, until fragrant.

Stir in flour, combining with vegetables (do not brown).

Whisk in ale, chicken broth, half-and-half, and Worcestershire sauce. Let simmer 10-12 minutes.

At this point, if you prefer a smooth soup, place in blender until smooth, and return to pan (or use an immersion blender).

Add shredded cheese, stirring as it melts. Stir while soup warms (do not let it boil). Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serve, topped with crumbled bacon.

Open a bottle of ale and enjoy!



The Mad Crow Tavern's Broccoli-Cheddar Quiche

Perfect for brunch or a light dinner with a side salad, the Crow uses a blend Vermont cheddar cheeses for a more complex taste. Although cheddar is the preferred cheese for this recipe, feel free use any blend of cheeses that suits your taste.



The Crow's Broccoli-Cheddar Quiche

Ingredients

- 1 9-inch prepared pie crust
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2 cups onion, diced
- 6 large eggs
- 3/4 cup cream (I used whole milk)
- 1 tablespoon dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- freshly ground pepper to taste
- 3 cups chopped broccoli, steamed until tender-crisp
- 1 1/2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded (I used a blend of regular and aged cheddar)

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Place crust in 9-inch pie plate. Crimp edges. Place a sheet of parchment paper over crust and fill with pie weights or dried beans.

Bake until edges are golden, about 15-20 minutes. Remove pie weights and parchment paper.

While crust is baking, melt butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat.

Add onions, sprinkling with salt and pepper. Cook until tender, 8-10 minutes.

Whisk eggs and cream in a medium bowl. Add dijon, oregano, salt, and pepper. Stir in shredded cheese.

Spread broccoli and onions into prepared pie shell.

Pour egg mixture over the vegetables.

Place pie pan on a cookie sheet.

Bake for 40-45 minutes. The center of the quiche should be set.

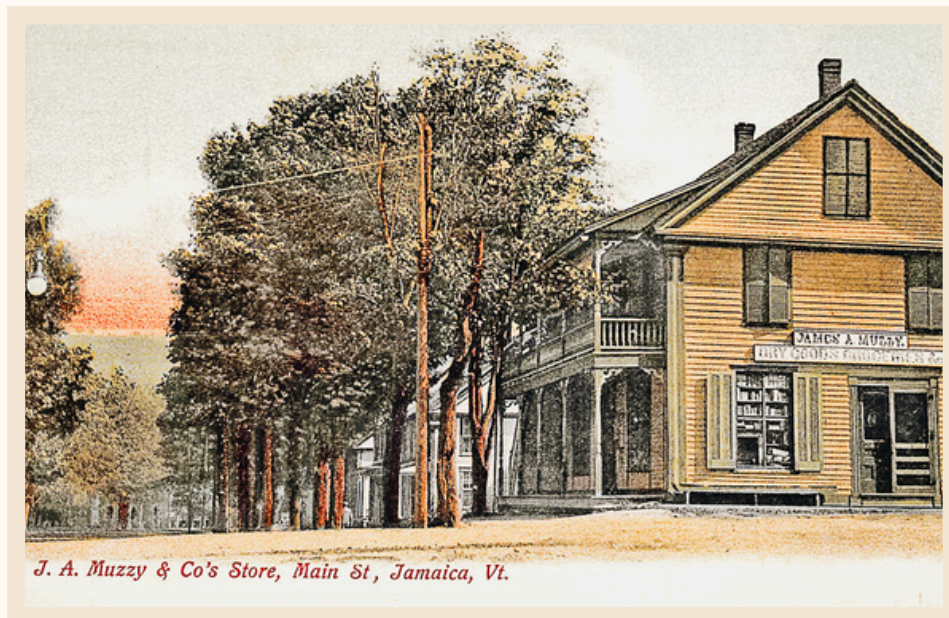
Serve warm or at room temperature.

To store and reheat quiche, let cool completely, cover with foil and store in refrigerator for up to three days.

Reheat, covered, in 325 degree oven for 15 minutes.

The Mad Crow Tavern's Maple Gooney Butter Cake

This simple, seemingly plain, old fashioned cake is gooey, buttery, and subtly sweet. At the Crow, it's served for dessert with ice cream and fresh fruit. Bobbie always order and extra piece (or two) to take home. It's perfect with a cup of coffee or tea, late in the morning, or as an afternoon snack with a tall glass of milk.



[Postcard of a Vermont roadhouse—the inspiration for the Mad Crow Tavern]

Maple Gooney Butter Cake

Ingredients

For the Cake:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup pure maple syrup
- 3 tablespoons sour cream
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the Gooney Topping:

- 12 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 1/4 cups pure maple syrup
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 9 x 13-inch pan with baking spray.

For the Cake Layer:

In a large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Stir together. Add softened butter and mix together on medium-low until the mixture resembles damp sand.

Whisk together eggs, maple syrup, yogurt, milk, and vanilla.

Pour liquid ingredients into mixing bowl and combine with flour mixture on medium speed until well combined (about one minute).

Transfer to prepared pan in an even layer.

For the Gooney Topping:

Whisk together softened butter, maple syrup, flour, egg, vanilla, and salt.

Pour over the cake layer.

Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes (cake will look firm on the bottom and slightly gooey on top).

Cool completely. Sprinkle with confectioners sugar if desired. Cut into bars.

Mill House Inn's Baked Pumpkin-Maple French Toast

At the Mill House Inn, New York chef, Gino Morelli uses his creative talents to the delight of visitors and villagers alike. And, what's more delicious in the cooler months than a warm breakfast redolent with the sweet and spicy flavors of pumpkin, maple, cinnamon, and nutmeg?



Baked Pumpkin-Maple French Toast

Assemble the night before for a stress-free holiday morning you and your guests are sure to enjoy.

Ingredients

- 1 1 lb loaf brioche bread, cut into cubes
- 1 8oz package cream cheese, cut into small cubes
- 8 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups of whole milk
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1/2 cup maple syrup (please, please, please use real maple syrup!)
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

Directions

Butter a 9×13 casserole dish.

Layer 1/2 the bread cubes in buttered casserole dish. Follow with the cubed cream cheese. Top with remaining bread cubes.

Whisk together eggs, milk, canned pumpkin, maple syrup, vanilla, pumpkin pie spice, and salt. Pour evenly over layered bread cubes. Gently press bread cubes to ensure all are coated with egg mixture. Cover casserole and refrigerate for at least two hours or overnight.

1/2 an hour before baking let casserole sit at room temperature.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Sprinkle with pecans and place in oven, covered with foil, for 30 minutes.

Remove foil and continue baking for another 25-30 minutes until the center is firm.

Serve with warmed maple syrup on the side.

Enjoy with a side of bacon or sausage, sliced oranges, and a mimosa!

The Mill House Inn's Blueberry Chèvre Cheesecake Popsicles

Chef Gino Morelli incorporates local, fresh ingredients into the food he serves his guests. Fresh plump blueberries, goat cheese from Crowley Farm and honey from a local apiary provide the secrets ingredients for his sweet, tangy treat. On summer afternoons, guests of the inn enjoy sitting on the covered porch and cooling off with this grown-up version of a popsicle. But these could easily be served for dessert, too!



Blueberry Chèvre Cheesecake Popsicles

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups fresh (or frozen, thawed) blueberries
- Zest of 1 lemon, divided
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, divided
- 6 tablespoons local honey, divided
- 1/3 cup water
- 3 ounces goat cheese, softened
- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/3 cup graham cracker crumbs

Directions

In a medium saucepan, combine blueberries, 1/2 of the lemon zest, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 2 tablespoons honey, and water.

Over medium heat, bring mixture to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally for 10-15 minutes, until liquids are reduced by half and mixture is thick and bubbly.

Let cool to room temperature.

Puree until smooth. You should have about a cup.

In a blender, combine goat cheese, cream cheese, milk, vanilla, remaining lemon zest, lemon juice, and honey.

Puree until smooth.

Divide blueberry puree among 10 (3 ounce) popsicle molds. Pour cheesecake mixture over blueberry mixture, leaving 1/2 inch of space at the top.

Using a chopstick or skewer, swirl layers slightly.

Sprinkle graham cracker crumbs on top, and gently press into cheesecake layer.

Place popsicle stick into the center and freeze for several hours until solid.

Enjoy!!

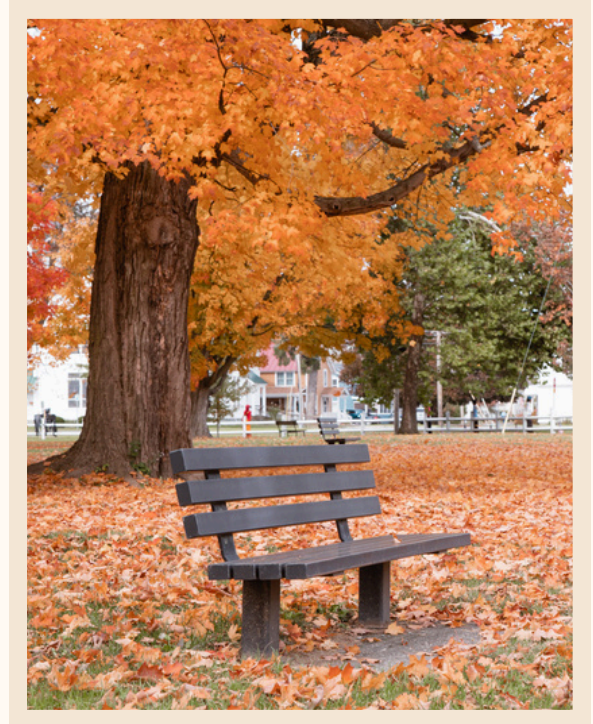
The Mill House Inn’s Harvest Festival Mulled Apple Cider

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Stonebridge, Vermont’s annual harvest festival was in full swing, and the oversized tent was busting at the seams with partygoers dressed in a dizzying array of vibrant costumes. Bluegrass music floated in the cool night air while feet stamped on the makeshift dance floor to the band’s absurdly appropriate rendition of The Cuckoo’s Nest.

The foofaraw was doing its all to keep me busy snapping photos. As the leader of the Stonebridge Keep it Snappy Shutter Club, it was my job to take photos of the weekend’s festivities—a task that was more pleasure than work.

Getting into the spirit of the masquerade party, I dance-walked toward the bar and joined the queue for my first cocktail of the evening—the Mill House Inn’s signature mulled apple cider, with a healthy splash of rum. Villagers were talking about how delicious it was, and if the aroma wafting from the steaming pot was any indication, I was in for a special treat.



Mulled Apple Cider (Spiked or Not)

Ingredients

- 1 gallon fresh apple cider (local if you can)
- 1/4 cup maple syrup or brown sugar (optional, depending upon the level of sweetness you prefer)
- 1 orange, sliced
- 2-3 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon whole cloves
- 1 tablespoon whole allspice
- 4 star anise
- 1 1/2 cups spiced rum (Optional. Bourbon works, as well)

Directions

In a large stainless steel pot, add apple cider, maple syrup (if using), orange slices, and spices. (For easier cleanup, use a spiceball or cheesecloth for spices.)

Bring mixture to a boil.

Reduce heat to a simmer. (I like to transfer the mixture to a crock pot, set to low.)

Simmer for 2-3 hours.

Remove orange slices and spices.

Add rum and serve!

Optional: garnish with apple slices, orange slices, or cinnamon sticks.



The Rosebud Café's Grand Opening

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Stars twinkled in the cloudless sky. Surrounding my stone patio, tiki torches flickered. Rose refilled my wineglass while I sat back, taking it all in. It was the perfect August evening in Stonebridge, Vermont. It had been only two months since I'd made a harrowing escape from a crazed killer. Little by little, life was returning to normal as I prepared to open my photography business.

“Next week is the ten-year celebration for my coffee shop.” Rose set the wine bottle down and smiled. “Would you like to put on an apron and be part of the celebration?”

“Like recreating the opening?” I said with a laugh. “I hope you plan to have more help this time.”

“You know it. As much as I'll never forget the day, I don't *really* want to relive it.”

“Hey, we muddled through.” I raised my wineglass in a toast. “To the beginning of an epic friendship.”

“Here, here.” Rose and I clinked glasses. “So, what do you say?”

I'd never forget the grand opening of the Rosebud Café. At the time, Dan, Emma, and I had been weekenders on our way to Alicia's house for a quick getaway. Excited about the new coffee shop's opening day, we'd parked our car near the village green and walked to the café to find a long line snaking out the door. There'd been plenty of grumbling customers, shifting from one foot to the other. Out-of-staters came to Vermont for the relaxed atmosphere, but relaxing wasn't something that came naturally to most of us.

I'd peeked in the door to find a woman alone behind the counter, frantically trying to fill everyone's complicated coffee orders. That was another thing about weekenders. Despite our flatlander notion of Vermont being lost in time, we still our expected soymilk no-foam-extra-shot-vanilla-caramel macchiato—it just needed to be quaint.

The Rosebud Café's Grand Opening Cont'd

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Without thinking, I jumped behind the counter to take orders, pour coffee, and run the cash register while the woman made the more complicated espresso drinks. For nearly an hour, we'd worked side-by-side without introduction.

A lull finally came, and with a side-eyed glance, she asked, “Are you some kind of angel or something?” Her lips spread into a broad smile.

“Hardly.” I smiled in return and held out my hand. “Bobbie Brooks. Weekender extraordinaire, and sister of Alicia Crowley.”

“No kidding?” Her sparkling blue eyes widened. “I didn't see that one coming. You seem much nice... Umm, let's just say the two of you seem nothing alike.” She cranked her neck to peer up at me. “Well, except for your height. Anyway, I'm Rose, and I am beyond happy to meet you.”

That had been ten years ago. I set my wineglass on the wide arm of my Adirondack chair and said with a chuckle, “I bet you regret offering me free coffee for a lifetime.” Since then, I'd moved into the house next door to the Rosebud and was a daily visitor.

“Pfft. Not a chance. Besides, don't think I don't see you sneaking payment when you think I'm not watching.” Rose sipped her wine. “I've got special aprons and everything. The celebration wouldn't feel right without you.”

“Did you really think you needed to ask?” I said. “Of course I'll be there.”



The Rosebud Café's White Chocolate-Wild Berry Scones

In the summer, blackberries and black raspberries grow wild along the edge of the forest. Unable to resist the juicy, ripe berries, the pace of Bobbie and Darcy's morning walks slow as they both pick (and snack) along the way.

I used blueberries in the scones pictured below, but enjoy using wild berries when I have them. Freezing beforehand helps keep the berries and juices intact.



White Chocolate-Wild Berry Scones

Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons cold butter, cut up (I like to place the butter in the freezer while assembling the ingredients, then grate it into the flour mixture)
- 1/3 cup white chocolate chips
- 1 large egg
- 1/2 cup half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/3 cup wild berries (any berries will work—fresh or frozen)

Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees

In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder, sugar and salt. Add butter to bowl, cutting it in with a pastry blender, fork, or two knives. Mixture should be crumbly.

Add white chocolate chips and mix.

In a small bowl, whisk together egg, half-and-half, and vanilla. Add to flour mixture and toss with a fork until the ingredients are moistened and hold together. Gather into a ball and place on a lightly floured surface. Knead several times. Sprinkle berries over dough before folding one final time.

Pat dough into an 8-inch round.

With a sharp knife, cut into 8 wedges.

Place wedges on an ungreased baking sheet, slightly apart.

Sprinkle with course sugar, if desired.

Bake about 12 minutes, until golden brown.

Serve immediately.

The Rosebud Café's Apple Crumb Muffins

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“Hey, girl,” Rose called out as I entered the Rosebud Cafe.

The festival crowd had turned the coffee shop into a madhouse. I made a beeline to the only empty stool at the counter.

“I’ve only got a minute,” Rose said before plunking a plate on the counter in front of me. “Apple muffins with an oh-so-yummy crumb topping. Hot from the oven, and simply to-die-for, if I do say so myself.”

The spicy scent of cinnamon wafted from the steaming muffin and my mouth watered. “You’re a godsend.”

“Don’t you forget it.” Rose’s eyes twinkled. “Now, tell me the latest scoop.”

As I regaled my friend with all the latest from our ongoing investigation, I couldn’t help moaning—just a little—as I took a bite of the muffin. Soft and buttery with the sweetness of fresh apples. It was perfection.



Apple Crumb Muffins

Ingredients

For the Muffins:

- 1 3/4 cups all purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup yogurt or sour cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 1/2 cups peeled and chopped apples (1/2 inch dice)

For the Crumb Topping:

- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar (light or dark)
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted

Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Spray or line 12-count muffin tin.

Make the Crumb Topping:

Mix brown sugar, cinnamon, and flour together in a medium bowl.

Stir in melted butter, mixing with fork.

Set aside.

Make the Muffins:

Beat softened butter and both sugars on high speed until smooth and creamy (about 2 minutes).

Add eggs, sour cream, and vanilla. Beat on medium speed for another minute.

Then turn to high and beat until creamy.

With mixer on low, add flour and milk until all flour is incorporated.

Fold in chopped apples.

Spoon batter into each cup. Add crumb topping.

Bake for 5 minutes. Without removing pan from oven, reduce temperature to 350 degrees and continue baking for 15-18 minutes.

Remove muffins from oven and allow to cool in the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to continue cooling.

The Rosebud Café's Oatmeal Jam Bars

“Oatmeal, butter, and jam combine to make a breakfast bar that is scrumptious without being too sweet. Enjoy with a hot cup of coffee or tea for an “instant” breakfast!”



Oatmeal Jam Bars

Ingredients

- 10 tablespoons unsalted butter, very soft (I microwave in 10-12 second increments)
- 2/3 cup light brown sugar, lightly packed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup jam or fruit preserves (I like to buy local jam from my farmer's market)

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Line an 8x8 inch pan with parchment paper, leaving an overhang.

Whisk softened butter with brown sugar and vanilla.

Combine flour, oats, baking soda, and salt.

Stir flour mixture into the butter and sugar mixture to form a thick dough.

With a wooden spoon, press a little more than half of the dough into the prepared pan.

Bake in preheated oven for 8 minutes.

Spoon jam evenly over the top of pre-baked crust, avoiding the edges to prevent burning.

Sprinkle the remaining dough over the top without pressing down.

Return pan to oven and bake for 15-18 minutes until the top is golden.

Cool on wire rack for 1-2 hours before cutting.

Serve warm with coffee or tea.

Caught on Camera

Coming September 2024

Level Best Books

Blue skies and wildflowers signal the start of summer in southern Vermont, and the Stonebridge Keep it Snappy Camera Club lenses are zoomed in on...murder.

It's been more than a year since the sudden death of her husband, and photographer Bobbie Brooks wants nothing more than to escape her grief. Fleeing her life in the city, she seeks a fresh start in the serenity of the Green Mountains. But Bobbie's new beginning comes to a halt when she finds a member of her camera club dead beneath the village's idyllic covered bridge. Tragic accident or something more sinister? With a keen photographer's eye, Bobbie suspects murder.

As if transitioning to small-town life wasn't challenging enough, Bobbie's missing scarf is found at the murder scene, making her the primary focus. Scorned by local gossips, she enlists the help of her camera club sidekicks and shifts her lens from photographer to amateur sleuth. Wasting no time, they set out to catch the killer. Using the deceased's photos, they expose her fatal photography hobby—and no shortage of suspects. Secrets, lies, and blackmail—each clue brings them closer to the killer, and danger!

Her camera holds the answers... But can she develop the clues in time to stop the killer?

