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Life in the Country

Change is a-Brewin'

Weary of Boston's big-city bustle, a New York couple heads home to open a farm and fermentory in the mountains.

Meet Elizabeth & Jake!

Elizabeth Starks and Jake Sackett enjoy afternoons on their newly built farmhouse's porch with their wirehaired pointing griffon, Pez.



The fermentory's dining room sits on the first floor of Jake and Elizabeth's farmhouse. (Their living quarters are upstairs.) The bar is an antique general store counter, and the shelves are accented with vintage milk bottles from Jake's grandparents' old dairy farm.



Inspiration takes many forms, and for Elizabeth Starks and Jake Sackett, who met at Cornell University, it was brewed and bottled. "We started making beer in our dorm," explains Elizabeth. It was just for fun, a side project as they prepared for post-grad life in Boston, where she worked in consulting and Jake attended law school. After a few years, though, the couple started scheming up a return to their roots in rural New York. (She's from the Hudson Valley; he grew up in the Catskills.) "We dreamed about creating a place where people could gather," says Elizabeth.

So the pair worked stints at a brewer in Cambridge, then, in 2019, signed the papers on a 20-acre parcel of land in Bovina Center, New York. Here, they built Bovina Farm & Fermentory (bovinafarmfermentory.com), a live-work compound where, in addition to brewing saisons, lagers, and ales, they grow vegetables, raise chickens, donkeys, and ducks, and tend their orchard. In 2021, the couple began hosting what have become seasonal weekly dinners on the property. Each course is paired with beer made in the on-property barn, and "by the end of the night, even the wine drinkers have usually been converted," says Jake.

On days off, the couple often hikes the surrounding hills. "One of the best things about building a business here is benefitting the community," Jake adds. "We rely on our neighbors, too. It's true what they say: It takes a village—or a small town."



ABOVE: Bovina's brewed-on-site beer is made with locally grown grains. **RIGHT:** The couple's four-course family-style dinners are prepared with ingredients from the property's garden and other nearby farms.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) CHRISTIAN HARDER (2), NATALIE CHITWOOD.



PHOTOGRAPH BY NATALIE CHITWOOD.

Come summer, Elizabeth and Jake also host outdoor feasts, which always include their homemade ice cream. "It's super-creamy because we use duck eggs," says Elizabeth.