



The Mountain Telephone

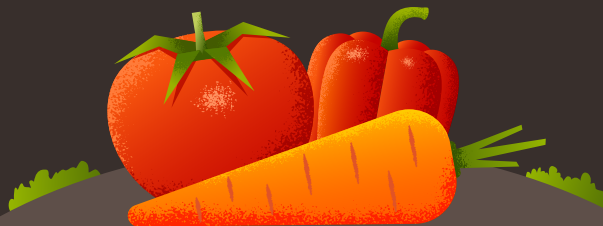
MAY/JUNE 2017

CONNECTION



FARM-FRESH PRODUCE

Local markets provide seasonal delights



BUILDING A WORKFORCE

National employers connect with Kentucky workers



SMALL BUSINESS WINNER

Scott's Body Shop keeps customers rolling





Tired of robocalls?

FCC proposes new rules to block those unwanted calls

Last year, U.S. consumers received about 2.4 billion robocalls monthly, according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The regulatory agency is proposing new rules that could bring relief to consumers weary of this annoying — and sometimes dangerous — practice.

The FCC is considering rules that would give telephone companies the authority to block spoofed robocalls — wherein callers fake their Caller ID information in order to hide their identity — when a subscriber requests that calls originating from that number be blocked. The proposed rules would allow providers to block spoofed robocalls when the spoofed Caller ID information cannot possibly be valid, including numbers that have not been assigned to anyone.

In its proposal, the FCC highlights the danger of robocalls by referencing IRS reports. “There have been over 10,000 victims of a scam in which callers pretend to be representing the IRS and claim the called party owes back taxes,” according to the FCC. Threatened with arrest or deportation, victims of these scams have collectively paid over \$54 million.

More recent reports tell the story of callers already having some personal information about a targeted consumer or business, then tricking them into saying “yes” to a seemingly harmless question in order to falsely authorize charges to their victims.

While the idea of blocking calls may seem like a good one on the surface, the FCC is quick to point out that a balanced approach must be taken. “It is also important for the Commission to protect the reliability of the nation’s communications network and to protect consumers from provider-initiated blocking that harms, rather than helps, consumers,” according to the FCC’s proposal. “The Commission therefore must balance competing policy considerations — some favoring blocking and others disfavoring blocking — to arrive at an effective solution that maximizes consumer protection and network reliability.”

These latest steps from the FCC continue efforts by industry, regulatory and consumer groups to put an end to robocall practices — and that is welcome news for the millions of Americans on the receiving end of those annoying calls. ☑



RURAL CONNECTIONS

BY SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Taking the voice of rural America to Capitol Hill

Working in the nation’s capital, sometimes it can feel as if people have forgotten how to work together toward a common goal. That is one reason I look forward to springtime, when NTCA hosts our annual Legislative and Policy Conference. Leaders from telcos just like yours, from all across the country, visit D.C. to meet with policymakers and to speak with one voice — yours.

As this year’s conference began in late March, telco leaders gathered for a meeting with new FCC Chairman Ajit Pai. A product of rural America himself, Chairman Pai shared with us his ideas on ways to ensure that discussions among our elected officials about improving the nation’s infrastructure also include the critical role of broadband.

Telco leaders came to Washington ready to share with lawmakers their stories, data, challenges, investment plans and economic opportunities for rural America that they are primed to kick-start. The energy and enthusiasm of this group was inspiring, as they went from meeting to meeting reminding policymakers about the importance of broadband for all Americans.

There are significant challenges when working to deliver broadband in rural areas, such as federal regulations and funding — not to mention the challenges inherent with building infrastructure to areas of low population density and rugged terrain. But you can be proud to know that your telco is part of a much larger family of service providers that is taking your message to lawmakers: that rural broadband is good for all of America. ☑

Build Broadband With Us!

As Washington focuses on improving our nation's critical infrastructure, broadband needs to be a key component of those plans. Why?



Rural broadband providers contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy and support billions of dollars in e-commerce.



The rural broadband industry supports nearly 70,000 jobs.

(From 2015 survey)



Members of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association serve rural customers in 45 states, covering 37 percent of the nation's landmass.



Rural broadband providers collaborate with local leaders on broadband-enabled solutions.

TAKE ACTION!

- ▶ Sign up to be an advocate at www.buildbroadbandwithus.com.
- ▶ Follow and share at www.twitter.com/NTCAconnect and www.facebook.com/NTCARuralTelecom.
- ▶ Contact your U.S. elected officials and let them know that "I am served by a rural broadband provider, and I know firsthand the positive impact this vital service has on a community. Please include rural broadband in your plans as Washington focuses on building our nation's infrastructure." (For contact information for your U.S. senators and U.S. representative, visit www.usa.gov/elected-officials).

#BUILD BROADBAND WITH US



Better care during a busy season

Summertime. It's the season for cookouts, vacations and long days of fun in the sun. Unfortunately, it's also the season for more scrapes, cuts, bites and falls. But Mountain Telephone is providing the technology that may help take care of those "oops" moments.



SHAYNE ISON
General Manager

In the summer, more of us go outside to work in the yard, play sports or explore the great outdoors. And whenever our activity levels increase, we are more likely to experience an accident that leaves us seeking medical attention.

Medical data shows that in the summer, we as Americans experience more falls, auto accidents, dog bites and injuries related to sports, water, bicycling and skateboarding. In fact, some hospitals even refer to summer as "trauma season."

At Mountain Telephone, there are many reasons we've built a robust broadband network, but one of the most important reasons is to help doctors, nurses and other providers take better care of the people in our community.

Across the country, broadband is enabling rural doctors, small hospitals, rehabilitation therapists, pharmacists and regional specialists to connect with patients and with each other in ways that were impossible only a few years ago. From cloud-based appointment scheduling and medical record keeping to automated inventory tracking and ordering, there are dozens of ways providers are harnessing the power of broadband to provide their patients with better care.

Doctors can compare symptoms and diagnoses with colleagues around the country. X-ray images can be sent to specialists at major hospitals for analysis. Nurses can transmit prescriptions to pharmacists so that medicine is ready before a patient even arrives at the pharmacy. And everyone in the medical field has an unbelievable amount of training opportunities and research right at their fingertips.

This year, as there's more talk in Washington about investing in infrastructure, it's important to remember that infrastructure doesn't just mean roads and bridges. At Mountain Telephone, we've invested millions of dollars in building the broadband infrastructure that connects the cornerstones of our community, including education, public safety, commerce and, of course, health care. With that in mind, we're happy to join telcos across the country in NTCA's campaign encouraging federal, state and local officials to "Build Broadband with Us." I hope you will review the information on Page 2 of this magazine to find out more about this campaign.

As your local broadband provider, we're proud of the strides our local health care providers are making in caring for their patients and proud of the role we play in helping them.

I hope everyone has a fun, safe, injury-free summer. But know that if you fall victim to trauma season, local health care providers are backed by a strong broadband network to help deliver the best possible care and get you back out there enjoying summer again. 📞

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CONNECTION

MAY/JUNE 2017

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Mountain Telephone

Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc., is a member-owned cooperative dedicated to providing communications technology to the people of Elliott, Menifee, Morgan, Wolfe and a section of Bath counties. The company covers 1,048 square miles and supplies service to nearly 12,000 members.

Send address corrections to:
Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative
P.O. Box 399 • 425 Main St.
West Liberty, KY 41472
Telephone: 606-743-3121

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On the Cover:



Not only do area farmers markets provide excellent produce, but they also create an additional source of income for local growers.

See story Page 12.

Congratulations!

Board attorney named to national association

West Liberty lawyer D. Joleen Frederick was recently elected to chair NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association’s Legal Committee.

She has served as the attorney for the Mountain Telephone board since 1996. She has long been active with NTCA, which represents more than 800 independent, community-based telecommunications companies nationally.

The legal committee consists of a diverse group of attorneys offering advice to rural telcos on local, state and federal laws and regulations, including topics such as the Communications Act, employment law, tax law, intellectual property law and many other legal matters.

The role of this committee at NTCA is to use their expertise on these issues to provide member education and to improve the quality of NTCA’s advocacy.

Frederick has served on the Legal Committee since 1999 and has held office as vice chair for the last two years.

NTCA is a leader for innovation in rural and small-town America and advocates on behalf of its members in the legislative and regulatory arenas.

Also, the association provides training and development, publications, industry events and an array of employee benefit programs. In an era of exploding technology, deregulation and marketplace competition, NTCA’s members are leading the IP evolution for rural consumers, delivering technologies that make rural communities vibrant places in which to live and do business. Because of their efforts, rural America is fertile ground for innovation in economic development and commerce, education, health care, government services, security and smart energy use.



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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

(2) fax: 202-690-7442

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

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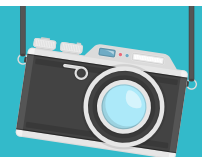
HAVE A HAPPY HOLIDAY!

Mountain offices will close Monday, May 29 to observe Memorial Day.



Don't forget

Mountain Telephone’s Annual Directory/Calendar Photo Contest. Deadline for entries is June 1, 2017.





COAST OF THE TOWN

Experts discuss their favorite thrill rides

The anticipation is heart-throbbing. There's nothing between you and the ground but a metal bar across your lap as the train of terror rises to the top of the first drop, the grinding and creaking of machinery heard above the screams. Higher and higher you go; your heart is pumping. Do you dare look down? Then, suddenly, you're in a free fall, jerking 'round and 'round, down and under, sometimes upside down. Before you know it, you've stabilized. Then in front of you is another mountain to climb, and in the distance you see rails that seemingly defy gravity. Are you ready to take the ride?

We asked four people — all of whom have nerves of steel and find death-defying coaster rides a pleasant way to spend the day — about their favorite roller coasters around the South.



**Kevin Lusk, 40,
Chattanooga, Tennessee**
Favorite coaster: Dollywood's
Wild Eagle

Like many, Lusk's passion for coaster-riding began as a child when his parents took him on trips to Walt Disney World. On off years, they'd visit parks closer to home, such as Atlanta's Six Flags, Opryland in Nashville (now closed) and Lake Winnepesaukah in North Georgia near Chattanooga. "Riding coasters gets in your blood, and you can't stop," he says.

His favorite coaster to date is Dollywood's Wild Eagle, a coaster that defies gravity and tradition by taking riders on a trip along the side of the tracks rather than in cars directly on them. The coaster is America's first wing coaster and is perched 21 stories above Dollywood. It takes riders on a unique experience, creating the sense of soaring high above the Smoky Mountains. "You truly do feel like an eagle flying," he



Dollywood's Wild Eagle

says, adding that his 8-year-old daughter, Aleah, rode it for the first time last year and now “wants to ride it again and again.” Like father like daughter. “It is without a doubt her favorite coaster, too,” Lusk adds.

Hometown favorite ride: Lake Winnepesaukah’s Cannonball

“It was built in the 1970s and was my first big coaster. It’s a big old wooden thing — an oldie but a goodie.”



Chuck Campbell, 56, Williamsburg, Virginia
Favorite coaster: **The Intimidator 305 at King’s Dominion**

A California native, Campbell frequented the many parks around the state and by the age of 12 was hooked on coasters, but he admits to being rather frightened of them at first. But the defining moment happened when he took his initial ride on an old wooden coaster, the Wild Mouse, along the boardwalk at Santa Cruz beach. “It featured a series of hairpin turns, and the cars were designed to lean over as you changed direction,” Campbell says. “Then, there was a ‘double down’ followed by a sharp hill and curve upward, which threatened to catapult riders into the Pacific. It was terrifying! But I decided that the boardwalk’s large wooden coaster, the Giant Dipper, couldn’t possibly be scarier, so I gave it a try. I’ve been riding coasters ever since.”

But it’s the Intimidator 305 at King’s Dominion in Virginia that he finds hard to beat when it comes to a coaster that will leave your stomach in your throat. “It’s hard to top that fast ride up the lift hill, followed by a 305-foot plunge into a huge banked curve,” he says. “Many riders, including me, experience what’s called a ‘gray out,’ in which the world becomes fuzzy around the edges for a few moments until the g-forces let up. The rest of the ride is a great mix of high-speed changes in direction that throw riders around like rag dolls.” Campbell ranks the Intimidator 305 among the top 10 worldwide.

Hometown favorite: The Griffon at Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, Virginia

“Griffon’s cars ‘hang’ over the edge

for a few seconds, giving riders a chance to reconsider their lives before the big plunge,” he says, adding that the ride gives you a great view of the James River if you can open your eyes long enough to see it.



Erik Johnson, 43, Gainesville, Florida
Favorite coaster: **Fury 325, Carowinds, Fort Mill, SC**

It wasn’t until his early 30s that Johnson developed his love for the big coasters. Until then, he stuck to the smaller ones. But with a bit of encouragement, plus researching at themeparkreview.com, a bible of sorts for coaster lovers, Johnson took the plunge and hopped on Kumba, a legendary coaster at Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida. Since then, he’s ridden many of the nation’s biggest and has found Carowind’s Fury 325, the world’s tallest full-circuit coaster, to be his favorite. “It’s one of the best examples of what I would call a speed coaster,” he says. “Instead of having a lot of up and down airtime hills, Fury has more twists and turns to help the coaster maintain its speed.”

Kentucky Kingdom in Louisville has his runner-up pick. “Kentucky Kingdom really has become a great park since it reopened in 2014,” Johnson says. “As for the coasters, I really liked Lightning Run. While



The Intimidator 305 at King’s Dominion

medium-sized, it’s pretty wild and produces a lot of fun airtime moments. They’ve added Storm Chaser since I was last there, and I understand that one is quite good.”

Hometown favorite: Kumba

“After my first ride, I was hooked and embarked on my new hobby to travel all across North America to ride roller coasters,” Johnson says. “It was one of the coasters that really brought on a resurgence to roller-coaster building in the early 1990s.”



Michael Betzler, 51, Montville, New Jersey
Favorite coaster: **New Texas Giant, Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington, Texas**

Like many beginners, Betzler admits to being a little afraid of coasters in his youth. That all changed after watching a documentary on Pennsylvania’s Leap The Dips, the oldest of all coasters in the United States. His interest was piqued, and he joined roller coaster clubs, met other enthusiasts and embarked on a hobby that has taken him across 31 countries. He has visited 445 parks and, so far, has ridden 1,427 roller coasters. His adventures led to the creation of The Big Mike Road Show, an internet production all about his rides. His favorite is the New Texas Giant, an award-winning wooden behemoth that opened in 1990. It soon fell into disrepair, however, and closed. But the wooden frame remained, and the coaster was rebuilt and reopened better than before with a metal track covering the wood structure. “It’s fast and smooth and such a great ride,” Betzler says. “This was the first coaster of its kind — a hybrid coaster with metal on wood — and now there are many more like this around the world.”

Favorite hometown ride: Kingda Ka at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, New Jersey

“It was once the fastest coaster in the world — now second — at 128 miles per hour in 3.5 seconds. And it’s still the world’s tallest at 456 feet high.”

Scott's Body Shop named Small Business of the Year



Mountain Telephone Assistant General Manager Quentin Murphy, left, presents Kevin Elam and his wife, Ursula, with the Small Business of the Year award. Elam's mother, Connie Elam, is seated.

What led you to start this business?

Scott Elam took auto body vocational training in high school. Later, he and his wife, Connie, started their own business. When Scott Elam passed away in 2004, the Elams' son, Kevin, took over the business. "It's all I've ever done, and I love carrying on the tradition my father started," Kevin Elam says.

What is the best part of your job?

"Knowing you're doing quality work and the customer is satisfied when the job is finished is important to us," Kevin Elam says. "We have a lot of word-of-mouth advertising, and we love that people know about our work from hearing about it from others."

Why is it important to shop and do business locally?

"We try to keep as much of our business as close to home as we can, and we appreciate the customers who do business with us," Connie Elam says. "If we all do as much as we can to support small businesses, it helps more people in our community."



SCOTT'S BODY SHOP

Owners: Kevin Elam and Connie Elam

Year Founded: 1978

Description: Estimates were written by hand and parts orders were from a catalog when the business opened. Now, the auto body repair shop has web-based estimates and does much of its work with customers, adjustors and vendors through email. "The technology has really changed the way we handle operations," Kevin Elam says.

Location: 2825 Old Highway 172 West Liberty

Phone number: 606-743-7394

"Small businesses are the backbones of our communities. We are proud of entrepreneurs like the Elams who continue to work hard to keep their businesses moving ahead. Running a small business can be challenging, and we appreciate the strong dedication to their trade."

-Mountain Telephone Cooperative General Manager Shayne Ison



CELEBRATING NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

April 30-May 6, 2017 is National Small Business Week. America's 28 million small businesses account for about half of all jobs in the private sector. Mountain Telephone is proud to celebrate their contributions by spotlighting our Small Business of the Year. Congratulations to **Scott's Body Shop** and to all the small businesses we are honored to serve!



Tracie Spencer, left, is Telework's Beattyville hub manager. The program provides training needed for people to find telecommuting jobs.

Working from home

Teleworks USA connects rural workers with jobs

BY JEN CALHOUN

More than a year ago, Loretta Robinson began suffering from intense migraines that eventually led to seizures.

No longer able to drive, the Scranton, Kentucky, resident was forced to quit working at the job she held in Winchester, about 50 miles away.

But with the help of Teleworks USA, Robinson resumed working. This time, however, she's ditched the long commute and instead works from home.

Teleworks USA, an initiative of the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP), identifies and develops work-from-home positions while training potential employees

in teleworking skills, resume-writing, applying for jobs, and interviewing.

Many of the jobs offered through Teleworks have been with companies such as U-Haul, Sony and Amazon. Starting pay can range from \$8 to \$10 per hour, while jobs with commission could bring in as much as \$17 per hour.

Robinson works with Concentrix, a company that provides customer support by phone for Apple products, such as Mac computers, iPhones, Apple TVs and Apple watches.

"I don't know what we would have done without it," Robinson says of the position. "We wouldn't be able to pay bills."

Tracie Spencer, Teleworks' Beattyville hub manager, says the program has helped many workers like Robinson find

alternatives to long commutes or leaving the area to find jobs.

"You see the struggles in our area," Spencer says. "There are a lot of people who don't want to leave their families to move an hour or two away. They want to stay home, or they need help with child care. This is a great way to stay home and still earn a good wage and get an opportunity for advancement."

Each company's requirements for working from home are different, Spencer notes. Some positions, like Robinson's, allow for semi-flexible schedules to accommodate personal preferences or needs.

"Many people come to us not knowing what Teleworks USA is or what to expect," Spencer says. "When they get in our classes, it's like a whole new world of opportunity is opened up to them — jobs they never thought of doing or never knew they could do while living and staying in the area. With the hub here, that's all a reality now, and we're changing people's lives."

The Beattyville hub opened on March 30, 2016. Kentucky Teleworks hubs are also located in Hazard, Annville and Harlan.

In a little over a year, the Annville hub helped bring in more than 177 jobs and brought in an estimated \$3.5 million in new wages to Jackson and surrounding counties, according to information from EKCEP.

The Beattyville hub has proved successful as well, Spencer says.

"We were designated to get 50 jobs in our first year," she says. "We already had 69 by mid-February, and we're hoping to hit the 70 mark by our one-year anniversary." ☎



For more information on Teleworks USA programs, call Wendy Lawson at 606-743-3133 or contact your local Kentucky Career Center office. Office locations and phone numbers can be found at kcc.ky.gov.

A key question for modern parents

What age is appropriate for the first mobile phone?

As I was watching my son warm up with his teammates at a fourth-grade basketball tournament, one of the other parents leaned over and asked me at what age we planned on giving him a mobile phone.

My initial thought was, “I don’t know, a long time from now!” When I said I wasn’t sure, the parent informed me that they decided 12 was the magic age for their kids. As I thought about this, I couldn’t help but think that I was 18 and in college before I had my first mobile phone. Do 12-year-olds really have mobile phones? When I asked that very question, I quickly found out that several of the 10-year-olds currently playing basketball already had mobile phones.

Does a 10-year-old need a mobile phone? A 12-year-old? At what age is a phone necessary for our kids? Truthfully, I don’t know. Owning a mobile phone is a big responsibility.

You need to decide what age is right for your kids based on their maturity and need. If your child is responsible and involved in activities that frequently take them away from parents, such as sports, then maybe life would be easier for everyone if they had a phone. The decision shouldn’t be treated as simply giving them another toy or gadget, though. A



mobile phone provides a child access to the world, and they need to understand that it is a privilege, not a right. I believe it should be considered a rite of passage much like getting a driver’s license.

We have found a middle ground we can live with for now. We gave our son a GizmoPal when he was 8. The GizmoPal is a wearable mobile phone that can only send and receive calls from a few select

contacts that I designate. This allows my son to call me when he needs to, and I can reach him when he is away from me. This might be when he’s playing at the city park, when he might be getting home late from a ball game, or when he is in a crowded store. The GizmoPal doesn’t allow apps; it’s simply for calling or for the child’s caretaker to track them to a location. Through the GizmoPal app, I can see exactly where he is on a map on my smartphone.

Ultimately, as a parent, the choice is yours. What is right for your family may not be right for mine. I still haven’t decided a “magic” age for my sons. Only time will tell when I cave in to the pressure of a mobile phone. My hope is that I can delay that day as long as possible. I plan on sticking to the simple GizmoPal for my sons for the foreseeable future. ☑

ONLINE RESOURCES

For more information on this topic, go to www.common sense media.org and look under Parent Concerns. They have a whole section dedicated to cellphone parenting.



CARISSA SWENSON
IS A TRAINING
AND EDUCATION
CONSULTANT
FOR CONSORTIA
CONSULTING.

*Parenting
Tip*

If you think your child is old enough to need a cellphone, the **GizmoPal by LG** may be the place to start. Wearable as a watch, the phone allows your child to call parents and allows parents to see where they are. GizmoPals are available at Amazon, Verizon and Best Buy starting at \$75 plus subscription.

ALL GOOD IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Broadband access helps drive real estate value

According to the experts, June is the busiest month for moving in the United States. And whether people are buying, selling or looking for a new place to rent, broadband plays a role in where they decide to move — and how much they are willing to pay.

Access to a **24 Mbps CONNECTION** increases a home's value by

3.8%

over one where only dial-up is available.

Homes with **FIBER AVAILABILITY** have a transaction price that is about

1.3%

more than similar homes in neighborhoods where fiber is not available.

Access to a **GIGABIT CONNECTION** increases the sale price for homes by

7%

over homes with a top speed of less than 25 Mbps. That's an average difference of \$5,437, or about the same as adding a fireplace.

People who live in multifamily housing units, such as apartments and condos, say fast and reliable internet service is the **single most important amenity** — more important than cable TV, a pool, security and workout facilities.

For landlords, giving renters access to fiber broadband can **increase resident satisfaction** and reduce churn. In apartments and condos, renters frequently spread the word about better broadband access, bringing in more renters.

51%

of homebuyers used the internet to find the house they purchased.

Fiber broadband increases condo purchase prices by

2.8%



Fiber broadband increases rental values by

8%

That's \$40 per month on a \$500 monthly rent payment.



Farm fresh

Healthy options and community make local farmers markets grow



BY JEN CALHOUN

When Ray Perry first started selling his produce at the Wolfe County Farmers Market in Campton about six years ago, he figured he'd learn a little bit about farming and a little bit about selling.

But what the retired corrections officer didn't know is how much he'd learn about business, marketing and human nature.

"I've learned some things from other farmers about the way people are," says Perry, who runs Ray Perry Farms. "You've got to read the customer if you want to stay in business."

Perry is one of thousands of growers registered with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, says Sharon Spencer, marketing specialist for the state's network of farmers markets.

Currently, about 160 farmers markets are registered in 111 of the state's 120 counties, including one each in Wolfe and Morgan counties. Some counties offer multiple markets, which range in size, offerings, and numbers and types of vendors — all depending on the tastes of the region's customers, Spencer says.

"We've had some markets that have been around for about 30 years, but we've noticed a huge increase in them in the last five years," she notes. "This is happening because folks want to change their eating habits, and they want to shop locally."

Growers like Perry have found that, more and more, people are looking for those homegrown tomatoes, pole beans and potatoes they grew up eating.

"Some older people don't garden as much as they did, but they're looking for the foods they know," Perry says.

Sarah Fannin, an extension agent who works closely with the Morgan County Farmers Market in West Liberty, believes part of the trend is the shared tastes and culture of the area. "Our farmers market brings so much to our community because people know where they can find fresh, homegrown local produce that reflects the taste of our area," Fannin says. "That's what makes them so special. You can't go to just any place and find that red-and-yellow tomato that tastes like what you

grew up with. It's such a niche market and such a unique thing to experience."

While Morgan County Farmers Market has been around for about 20 years, others are newer and often coincide with other community-building efforts, such as downtown revitalizations.

"(The markets) have made a huge difference, especially when you've got a lot of downtowns that are trying to bring business back," Spencer says. "They'll start a farmers market in the area and combine it with a lot of special events, like Music on the Square. It makes a huge difference for our producers as well — all while bringing this fresh, local, healthy food to the community."

Fannin agrees.

"This provides a safe area to sell their product," she says. "They're not out the cost of a storefront or a building. They get to have the benefits of being part of an association like this. So, instead of viewing other farmers as competition, they realize that the more vendors there are, the more customers are likely to stop by."

While some producers may be backyard gardeners looking for a little extra money for a surplus crop, most are longtime farmers trying hard to stay on the farm and make a living, Spencer says. But doing that requires business savvy and a constant review of market forces.

"Our producers are always looking for something different for their customers to keep them coming to the markets," Spencer says.

For Perry, that means getting an early start on the growing season. While many farmers markets in Kentucky get started around the first week in May, more are opening earlier to accommodate an increasingly impatient customer base.

Perry says he's noticed how shoppers tend to want homegrown produce when they want it, despite the limitations of the growing season.

"When people come to the farmers market, they're looking for certain things," he says. "And early on, when the market is just getting started, (vendors) just don't have those things."

To accommodate them, he, like other

growers, has turned to greenhouses and high tunnels. High tunnels, also called hoop houses or caterpillar tunnels, are similar to greenhouses, but the produce is grown in-ground, and the tunnels aren't usually heated. The structures help farmers extend their growing season without compromising their products.


Currently, Perry maintains one 8-by-8-foot greenhouse and one high tunnel. He plans to build another high tunnel soon, however.

"A lot of customers are looking for homegrown, ripe tomatoes," he says. "That's my specialty. So, I've learned that if I can get those to the customers a little bit earlier, they'll keep coming back all summer."

The rise in popularity of the markets hasn't been lost on the government, either, Spencer says. More government programs recognize the markets as a way to support health initiatives while also supporting local agriculture.

Three federal nutrition programs with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are offered at eligible and participating farmers markets throughout the state. They include the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP); Women, Infants and Children (WIC); and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

But it's the sense of community that the markets have helped foster that keeps people coming back, says Fannin, who has watched the Morgan County Farmers Market grow and prosper into a community event — even as tourism sites such as www.kyproud.com feature farmers markets as a draw for out-of-town visitors looking for an authentic experience.

"The friendships that have happened at the farmers markets, where farmers get to know their buyers, have been really special over the years," she says. "So many people will stop in just to talk to the farmers. That's just an experience you can't get at a big-box retail store. You can purchase a product, and you know what the ties are and the effort and the care that farmer took to bring that tomato to the market." 



History, fine dining and ... SPOONBREAD

Spoonbread is served with every meal at Boone Tavern Restaurant in Berea, Kentucky.

The tavern is known throughout the country, and the world, for many things. Its history goes back more than 100 years to when it opened as a guesthouse for Berea College. And it has built a reputation for award-winning accommodations and customer service.

The inn, one of just a handful of Kentucky hotels to receive the LEED green building certification, has hosted many dignitaries, including the Dalai Lama, President Calvin Coolidge, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and auto magnate Henry Ford.

But sometimes it's the simplest of things that builds a reputation, and in the case of Boone Tavern's restaurant, it's the spoonbread.

"The fascination of it brings people here," says Executive Chef David Poulton.

Some say spoonbread was born of a mistake. Maybe the first cook added one egg too many and it turned into a soufflé rather than the intended cornbread. That's the most likely scenario. But for sure, this culinary gaffe turned into a mainstay of many Appalachian meals in the late 1800s. Its light, airy texture made for a more elegant presentation than cornbread. Also, since cornmeal was readily available in the South, spoonbread became more common than yeast breads.

Now it's not so common, but still, some people come to the restaurant, located inside the inn on Berea's campus, just to get the spoonbread, says Bruce Alcorn, a Berea native who has been in charge of spoonbread production for more than 40 years.

The recipe has been the same since

innkeeper Richard Hougen first developed and served it to guests in the 1940s, and Alcorn has the recipe imprinted in his mind. The trick to a successful batch, he says, starts at the beginning — allowing the milk to scald without coming to a full boil.

"You can mess it up if you don't do that," he says.

Alcorn estimates he makes 24 to 28 pans — eight servings per pan — of spoonbread daily, sometimes more, sometimes less depending on the time of year.

Any cornmeal will work, but in keeping with the restaurant's farm-to-table mission, the cornmeal used at Boone Tavern Restaurant comes from the Berea College farm store whenever possible, Poulton says.

Other products gleaned from the store include beef, pork, bacon, oatmeal and other processed foods. Fresh vegetables are used from the college's farm whenever they are in season. The majority of food products that cannot be obtained from the college farm and store are from farmers and other members of Kentucky Proud, a program established by the Department of Agriculture in the Bluegrass State.

The spoonbread recipe has remained the same through the years, but there have been a few incarnations that the restaurant experimented with before Poulton came on board more than two years ago.

"I've been told that we once served it with three different butters — plain, apple butter and cinnamon butter. And once we made chocolate spoonbread for a dessert. I heard that didn't go over real well," Poulton says.

Now the spoonbread is back to its origins, served warm with plain butter — honey if you ask — with every lunch and dinner entree. The options include



David Poulton is executive chef at Boone Tavern, where a farm-to-table mission — and its famous spoonbread — keeps patrons coming back to the historic restaurant.

favorites such as "Pork Chops the Tricky Way" (pork loins breaded with tomato and Parmesan) served with cheese grits, braised greens and mustard cream, as well as lamb meatloaf served with mashed butternut squash, local wild mushrooms, balsamic glaze and cucumber yogurt sauce. Both dishes have roots in Appalachia, but you'll find them on the menu alongside seared scallops with asparagus and ricotta ravioli or a dish with an Asian influence — tempura salmon with papaya honey glaze and a wasabi drizzle.

For those unable to make the trip to Berea to sample the dishes — and the spoonbread — Poulton is happy to share some of the inn's recipes. 📄



FOOD EDITOR
ANNE P. BRALY
IS A NATIVE OF
CHATTANOOGA,
TENNESSEE.

Boone Tavern's Spoonbread

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
(1 tablespoon softened, 3
tablespoons melted)
- 3 cups milk
- 1 1/4 cups white cornmeal (preferably
stone ground)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon fine salt
- 2 eggs, well beaten

Grease a 9-inch round cake pan with some of the softened butter. Cut out a parchment paper circle to fit inside the pan, nestle it into the bottom, and grease the paper with the remaining softened butter. Set the prepared pan aside. In a 2-quart saucepan, scald milk (do not allow to fully boil), whisking occasionally, over high heat. While whisking, pour in cornmeal in a steady stream. Whisk vigorously to incorporate the cornmeal, about 1 minute. Remove pan from heat and set aside to let the cornmeal mixture cool to room temperature. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Transfer the cornmeal mixture to the bowl of a standing mixer fitted with paddle attachment. Add the remaining butter, baking powder, salt and eggs and mix on medium speed until the mixture is uniform and aerated, about 15 minutes. Pour batter into the prepared pan and bake until golden brown and puffy and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 1 hour and 20 minutes. Serve immediately with butter.

Lamb Meatloaf

Meatloaf:

- 1 medium onion (finely diced)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 pounds ground lamb
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
- 3 tablespoons dried oregano leaf
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 eggs



Mashed butternut squash:

- 2 cups cubed butternut squash
(peeled and seeded)
- 2 cups cubed baking potatoes
(peeled)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup warm milk
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Cucumber sauce:

- 8 ounces plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup grated seedless cucumber
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Balsamic-glazed mushrooms:

- 2 cups mushrooms (rough
chopped)
- 1 (8-ounce) can beef gravy
- 2 tablespoons balsamic glaze
- Olive oil

For meatloaf: Saute onion in olive oil until translucent. Add all dry ingredients and simmer 2 minutes. Let cool.

Combine mixture with ground lamb and eggs. Mix thoroughly. Form loaf on baking pan or other cooking vessel. Cook at 350 degrees until internal temperature of 155 F degrees. Let rest before serving.

For mashed squash: Boil squash and potatoes until soft. Drain. Combine with butter and milk. Mix thoroughly. Season to taste.

For cucumber sauce: Mix all ingredients together. Chill for one hour.

For mushrooms: Saute mushrooms until soft. Add gravy and glaze. Simmer 5 minutes.

To Serve: Place mound of mashed squash on plate and top with a slice or two of lamb meatloaf. Top with a spoonful of balsamic-glazed mushrooms. Serve cucumber sauce on the side. Makes about 6 servings. 🍽️



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