



Mountain Telephone

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022

CONNECTION



Delicious destination

RedPoint BBQ serves more than just 'cue

COMMUTES AND TELECOMMUTES

FARM GETAWAYS



By SHIRLEY BLOOMFIELD, CEO
NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association

Faster broadband benefits rural America

As the chief executive officer of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association, I am proud to represent 850 small, independent broadband providers who are offering some of the highest possible broadband speeds to some of the most remote parts of the country. Thanks to NTCA members, many rural Americans have higher internet speeds than I have where I live just outside Washington, D.C.

We currently have a once-in-a-generation opportunity through billions of dollars of funding recently made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and other federal programs to bridge the digital divide and bring broadband to those who still lack it. As broadband is deployed thanks to this funding, we must ensure that recipients are using it to provide the best possible services.

Recently, Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel initiated a process to redefine what it means to have broadband-speed internet, raising the standard. This move continues us down the path needed to give rural residents the internet service they not only need but also deserve as they connect to vital resources like telemedicine, online education, employment opportunities and much more.

A new, more realistic, standard provides a range of benefits, including clarifying the true needs of rural areas and the funding required to serve them.

We have long advocated that, as a nation, we need to aim higher and do better when it comes to setting broadband objectives. We applaud Chairwoman Rosenworcel’s efforts. We look forward to continuing to work with the FCC and other agencies to bridge the digital divide. 🗨️

A bridge to the future

Your communications provider is your link to vital resources

The digital world increasingly weaves its way into our lives, replacing formerly physical resources, tasks and tools. Consider restaurants, for example. For some, scanning a QR code with your phone to view the options online has replaced physical menus.

Rapid expansion of digital resources was a trend before the pandemic, but it’s only accelerated in the years since.

In an article this year for Wired — “The Digital Divide Is Coming for You” — Bhaskar Chakravorti, dean of global business for The Fletcher School at Tufts University in Massachusetts, described having broadband and mobile internet as table stakes. Without those services, you don’t exist digitally, he says.

Your rural internet service provider is committed to bridging the digital divide between you and vital resources like these:

<p>BANKING</p>	<p>STREAMING TV</p>	<p>HEALTH CARE RECORDS</p>
<p>GOVERNMENT RESOURCES</p>	<p>EVENT TICKETS</p>	<p>WEATHER ALERTS</p>
<p>GAMING</p>	<p>HOME SALES AND PURCHASES</p>	<p>COLLEGE APPLICATIONS</p>

What's the password?

How to build — and remember — strong passwords

It's difficult to do anything online without piling up a few passwords. Using the same one for multiple sites can leave your private information vulnerable to cyberattacks, and devising strong passwords full of random letters and symbols can make them impossible to remember.

A good password doesn't have to be unintelligible, but it does need to be random enough to avoid any clear patterns. Here are a few helpful tips for building passwords that will keep your online accounts secure without forcing you to hit the "Forgot my password" link every time you want to log in.

At least 12 characters — the longer your password, the more difficult it will be to crack. In general, you should create passwords with a minimum of 12 to 14 characters. But more is always better.

Change it up — using a mix of different characters like numbers, symbols, capital and lowercase letters makes your passwords stronger.

Avoid full words — using your favorite team's name as a password

doesn't cut it anymore. In fact, you should avoid using any full words you might find in the dictionary. That goes for any common phrases, too.

Diceware — one exception to the above rule is the Diceware method. By stringing truly random words together, you can build a secure passphrase that is easier to remember than a jumble of letters and numbers. To help with this process, search for the Diceware Password Generator. It can randomly select between two and eight words to build your passphrase.

Avoid obvious substitutions — "Password" doesn't become stronger if you change it to "P@ssword." Avoid substituting obvious symbols for letters. If it has occurred to you, it has probably occurred to a hacker.

Go to the manager — if you're having trouble keeping track of all your logins, a password manager can help. Programs like Dashlane, LastPass and Keeper manage your passwords across numerous sites and devices, making it easier to avoid repeats. All you need to remember is one strong password, and you're set. 🗝️



Tired of passwords?

Apple may have the answer

At its Worldwide Developers Conference earlier this year, Apple demonstrated a new "passkeys" feature that may spell the end for passwords.

Rather than inputting a password for every site you visit, passkeys would use a biometric sign-in like the Touch ID or Face ID that currently exists on iPhones and iPads. Websites and apps on non-Apple devices would provide a QR code that sends authentication to the user's phone or tablet.

Just a month earlier, Apple joined with Google and Microsoft to support the development of new passwordless logins on both mobile and desktop devices. So, even if passkeys don't crack the code, you may not need to juggle passwords for much longer.

The power of a cooperative

Your voice guides our mission

When it comes to a for-profit business, some would say a company is what it sells. The nature of the product defines the culture, the business's interactions with customers and how it spreads its message. For instance, a manufacturer with a production plant creating physical goods is fundamentally different than a local real estate agency or medical facility.



SHAYNE ISON
General Manager

The day-to-day realities of the many job roles and policies needed to make that product possible can shape how a business operates, how consumers view it and even how employees view themselves. For Mountain Telephone, there's no doubt about our products or the expertise needed to make them possible. Simply put, we know rural communications better than anyone. Our roots are in telephone networks. After all, not that long ago, copper wires strung from pole to pole throughout our area were our primary ties to the world. Fortunately, we've moved well past those days, and we're now far more than a telephone company.

Today, we're a true communications hub using fast internet service to link you to the information you need. Our systems keep pace with the latest innovations to create the best experience for

you. Now, telephone services are only a single part of that product mix — one component of the complex, powerful and reliable infrastructure we've created to link our community to all the resources at our fingertips. Streaming television and music. Telemedicine and online learning. Movies and social media. Many of these are labeled as modern necessities, and we make it possible for you to connect to them.

Our technical experts have the skills to maintain and support the latest systems. We train our staff to not only anticipate the questions you may have about your services, but also to have the knowledge to provide clear answers.

At a very basic level, the services we provide do define Mountain Telephone — at least in part. You see, we're more than simply a communications company. We are also part of a national community of organizations responsible for bringing services to areas larger national companies would not serve.

Unlike businesses that put profit or stock values above all else, cooperatives proudly go a different direction. We are member-owned, and we put your needs, as a member, along with the needs of the communities we serve, first.

Does that mean we're not worried about income? Of course not. We're vigilant stewards of the cooperative's finances. In a world of escalating costs and ever-changing technology that's no small task.

As a cooperative, though, we're also governed by our members through a board of directors. Other communications companies can't say the same, particularly the large national providers. We are part of the community, devoted to making life here better for everyone. In fact, that's a central principle of every cooperative — concern for the community.

We support local organizations and businesses through donations, scholarships and more. The members of our team live here, shop here and enjoy our rural way of life just as you do.

Together we've created Mountain Telephone, and we couldn't be prouder to serve you, our friends, our family, our neighbors and our cooperative members. Thank you. 📞

The Mountain Telephone Connection is a bimonthly newsletter published by Mountain Rural Telephone Cooperative, © 2022. It is distributed without charge to all member/owners of the cooperative.



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 11,500 members.

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On the Cover:



Dario Ventura creates a vibrant community with RedPoint BBQ — a restaurant, cocktail bar and relaxing retreat in the Red River Gorge area.
See story Page 12.

Photo by William LeMaster

Why a cooperative?

October is National Cooperative Month, so we want to take a moment to celebrate the people who make our cooperative possible: **YOU!**

As a member of Mountain Telephone, you aren't just paying for a service you need. You're also investing in your community and future. Here are a few reasons you can be proud to call yourself a member of a cooperative.

YOU'RE TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR EXPERIENCE

Decisions that affect you aren't being made by wealthy stakeholders who live in a city far away. Instead, you and every member are invited to take an active role in electing representatives who set policies and make decisions. This puts you in control of decisions that affect your experience and your wallet.

YOU'RE SUPPORTING YOUR COMMUNITY

Cooperative members, employees and leaders are your neighbors. As local residents, they care about providing vital resources and creating sustainable growth that benefits everyone. As part of our cooperative, you support that growth and community spirit.

YOU'RE CONNECTED TO YOUR HISTORY

Mountain Telephone was founded when local residents banded together to solve their own problems. When big companies wouldn't bring telephone services to small towns, our founders took matters into their own hands. They ensured that our region would have access to communications technology so rural families and farms could survive and thrive.

YOU'RE INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE

Just as cooperatives fought to bring reliable telephone service to rural America decades ago, we're working hard today to bring you fast, reliable internet. By working together once more, we're ensuring that our region will be able to access the latest technologies for improved quality of life, education, health care and business.

**Cooperatives make a sustainable future possible — and you make our cooperative possible!
Thank you for being a member of Mountain Telephone.**



Safe Halloween treat guide

Halloween is nearly here, and food plays a big part in the fun and festivities. Even while celebrating, it's important to watch out for foodborne illnesses, food allergies and more. Here are a few tips for trick-or-treaters and their parents:

- **Snacking:** Children shouldn't snack on treats from their goody bags while they're out trick-or-treating. Give them a light meal or snack before they head out — don't send them out on an empty stomach. Urge them to wait until they get home and let you inspect their loot before they eat any of it.
- **Safe Treats:** Tell children not to accept — and especially not to eat — anything that isn't commercially wrapped. Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.
- **Food Allergies:** If your child has a food allergy, check the label to ensure the allergen isn't present. Do not allow the child to eat any home-baked goods he or she may have received.
- **Choking Hazards:** If you have very young children, be sure to remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies or small toys.

Source: [Foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov)

HAPPY
Labor Day

Mountain Telephone wishes you a relaxing and safe Labor Day weekend. In recognition of our employees and the Labor Day holiday, we will be closed Monday, Sept. 5.

GETTING AWAY

to the farm

A few days in a pastoral setting can do wonders for the heart and mind

Story by ANNE BRALY

The South's diversity of rolling pastures, mountain vistas, natural springs and lakes makes it an appealing getaway. But why book a hotel stay when you can wake up to the call of a rooster and go to bed with the hoot of an owl?

Farm stays are one of the best ways to absorb nature, eat home-grown food and learn about rural life. Farmers are welcoming guests by turning their barns and unused dwellings into overnight accommodations for a vacation you're likely to remember for years to come. And who knows? Maybe you'll realize farm living is the life for you.

It's a win-win for guests and farmers. These stays give guests a few days off the beaten path, and they allow landowners to bring in income while educating the public about working the land. "It's a way for farmers to show the inner workings of their farms, what it takes to grow food for their tables, who we are and the stories we

hold. Also, it's nice to welcome city dwellers to our farm to bridge a growing urban-rural divide and offer them our countrysides for relaxation, calm, play and connection," says Scottie Jones, a farmer and founder of the U.S. Farm Stay Association.

And for small farmers, it's a way to make much-needed money for new equipment and for upkeep and repairs of old farm equipment. The extra funds also help with costs like insurance, retirement savings and college funds.

"In the last decade, the concept of hosting guests on one's farm has risen to the surface, especially as booking sites such as Airbnb and VRBO have made the daunting task of taking reservations much more easy to handle," Scottie says.

So, if you're considering something different for your vacation this year, here are some Southern farms opening their gates to overnight guests.



Photo courtesy of By Faith Farm



Devoted to feeding the hungry, By Faith Farm creates opportunities for visitors to pitch in and help.

Photo courtesy of Lori Birkhead



Photo courtesy of Lori Birkhead



Photo courtesy of Kokovoko Breeding Farm

REVIVAL HILL FARM

Cullman, Alabama

Milk cows, pick herbs from the garden, gather eggs from the henhouse or just sit back and enjoy life at Revival Hill Farm. The farm stay has one bedroom and a roomy living area with couch, television chairs and kitchenette. It's attached to the farm store/milking parlor with a private outdoor entrance and access to farm animals, garden, fire pit, pond, pasture and woodlands with numerous trails for hiking. If you need more space, Revival Hill also has a house you can rent. This three-bedroom, two-bath accommodation is located across the street and has a full kitchen, laundry room, open-concept living area and beautiful covered back porch.

The farm is a stone's throw from Smith Lake Park, so tow your boat. There's plenty of boat parking at the farm.

Nightly rate: \$172

Reservations: [Airbnb](#)

STONEWOOD FARM

Ridgefield, South Carolina

Enjoy life at a slower pace at this farm with its menagerie of goats, chickens, horses, dogs and friendly felines. The farm offers overnights, glamping-style, in a 14-by-20-foot tent on a raised platform with an outdoor dining area set up for roasting s'mores at night or for drinking your coffee in the morning. The tent sleeps six and comes complete with lanterns, heaters, snacks, a coffee maker and a television with a large selection of movies.

The farm is located in the South Carolina Lowcountry, not too far from Charleston and Hilton Head, so you can

spend a day touring the city and then come back to the country to unwind.

Nightly rate: \$95

Reservations: [Airbnb](#)

BY FAITH FARM

Joelton, Tennessee

This farm works a little differently than some others. With a mission to grow healthy food for those in need, 100% of your nightly rate will go toward feeding the hungry in surrounding communities. It's a farm stay with a purpose.

Stay in a 1,500-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath modern loft apartment with kitchen and living room above a red barn. Wander the fields, hike the trails or sit beside a pond and reflect on your peaceful surroundings just 15 miles outside the busyness of Nashville.

Pick vegetables from the donation gardens or help harvest food for By Faith Farm's food bank collections.

Nightly rate: \$275

Reservations: [Airbnb](#) or [byfaithfarm.com](#)

KOKOVOKO BREEDING FARM

Corinth, Kentucky

Pop a tent out in the open fields or make reservations for the carriage house. Either way, you'll spend time in the beautiful outdoors of Central Kentucky's horse country.

Swedish Gotland ponies and Lincoln Longwool sheep graze over 150 acres of Kentucky rolling hills and forest. It's unspoiled. It's organic. It's totally natural. Bring your binoculars — the bird-watching is great. Or sign up for a fiber workshop. And helping out with the farm chores is always appreciated.

Left: Visitors to By Faith Farm enjoy an interactive experience.

Middle: At By Faith Farm in Joelton, Tennessee, the goal is to grow healthy food for those in need, and money raised from visitors helps feed the hungry.

Above: The carriage house at Kokovoko Breeding Farm can sleep five — perfect for families or friends traveling together.

The carriage house can sleep five, so bring the family — but leave your electronics at home. They won't work here. This is a chance to immerse your family in a totally different way of life. Stroll down the country roads, look for wildlife, play in the creek, baa at the sheep and visit the ponies — they always love a good brushing.

Nightly rate: \$50-\$200

Reservations: [farmstayus.com](#)

THE SHAGGY GOAT

Waleska, Georgia

Pet the goats, feed the chickens, learn about beekeeping, try your hand at gardening or hike or bike the nearby mountain trails. Or just spend the day lolling in your hammock. It's up to you. Your time is your own at The Shaggy Goat, a farm in the beauty of the Southern Appalachians of North Georgia.

Overnight accommodations are in a one-bedroom cottage on the property with views of the working farm, so join in and learn a thing or two. There's a pool just a few yards from the cottage — don't forget your bathing suits. On warm days, take your pillow outside and nap on the sleeping porch. Bring your own food, but don't be surprised to find the makings for s'mores in the evening or fresh-from-the-farm eggs and honey for breakfast. 🐔

Nightly rate: \$226

Reservations: [Airbnb](#)

THE LONG DRIVE

Stories of commuting and telecommuting

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography by WILLIAM LEMASTER AND COLTON RUDD

Charlie Keeton started working from his home in West Liberty in 2001. As one of the few members of a pilot program for his Louisville-based company, the technology professional would show up for work through a dial-up connection, hook to the company's mainframe hub and get to work designing and developing information technology applications.

Charlie considers himself lucky to have been part of the early program. Otherwise, he says, he would have had to rent an apartment in Louisville and only see his family on weekends. "Family was the main reason back then," says the Morgan County native who wanted to raise his kids near where he grew up. "Today, I can see many reasons for people to work remotely — gas prices, car maintenance, the cost of eating out every day and even the cost of business attire."

BEGINNING OF AN ERA

In the early 2000s, Charlie and his company helped pioneer teleworking. And while it wasn't unheard of, it was unusual enough to raise eyebrows. Many people connected telework with too-good-to-be-true scams.

But with the spread of high-speed internet and other factors, telework continued to grow in the early part of this century. Statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau reported that between 2000 and 2010, the number of people who worked at least one day at home per week increased by more than 35%.

Today, those numbers have skyrocketed. More than two years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 59% of the U.S. workforce clocks in from home all or most of the time, according to a Pew Research Center survey. Before that, only about 23% of workers teleworked frequently.

“Back in 1992, when I started my first IT job, I had no choice but to relocate. Now I wouldn't have to.”

— Charlie Keeton, West Liberty resident who works from home



Charlie Keeton started working from his home in West Liberty in 2001 through a pilot program with his Louisville-based employer.

CHANGING OUR WAYS

The rise in telecommuting is no surprise, however. Telework can offer some pretty big benefits, especially in an age of high gas prices and inflation. It can allow employees to operate from wherever they choose, while giving them the flexibility and freedom to work with different companies. It also lets businesses recruit beyond their geographic talent pool and reduce the costs associated with maintaining office spaces.

Charlie loves that he's gotten to be close to his family. He can also see how it's helped co-workers who were able to move when their spouses got job opportunities out of town. "Back in 1992, when I started my first IT job, I had no choice but to relocate," he says. "Now, I wouldn't have to."

Still, telecommuting is not for everyone or every business, he says. "It has its pros and cons, but it's worked for me. I also think the next generation can and will benefit from this type of work style. Technology will keep evolving, and it opens doors and connections that were not possible before."

DRIVING FORCE

Many important jobs will never lend themselves to telecommuting.

Jason Rudd, a Frenchburg resident, drives almost 900 miles a week to work as an equipment operator on a road construction project in Pikeville. Jason has been working in road construction for about 26 years, and about 15 years of that time required long commutes. "The farthest project I've had was probably in Beckley, West Virginia," Jason says. "But



Jason Rudd, a Frenchburg resident, drives about 900 miles a week for his job in Pikeville.

it's like anything else — you work for what you want."

He wanted more for his family. When his 15-year-old son, Colton, was a baby, Jason's wife worked at the health department. The cost of day care would have taken most of her paycheck, so she began staying home. As a result, Jason took higher-paying jobs that required him to travel to supplement her lost income.

All in all, Jason doesn't mind the drive too much. It's a necessary part of his life, and he's gotten used to it. During his 3 1/2-hour daily commute, he likes to crank up Southern rock and country music on the radio. And when the gas prices took off in early spring, Jason took his diesel-fueled truck off the road and bought a used compact car to get to work.



Currently, Jason spends about 3 1/2 hours commuting for his job as an equipment operator.

The time away also lets him appreciate his family and the life they've built. They're not struggling, and that's important. "It would have been great to get a job where I could've been home with them every night," he says. "I could've stayed here and made a living, but I would've lived paycheck to paycheck." 📱

Workers with access to workplaces outside their homes

January 2022

38%

say their workplace is unavailable

61%

choose not to work from workplace

October 2020

64%

say their workplace is closed or unavailable

36%

choose not to work from workplace

Source: From the Pew Research Center survey "COVID-19 Pandemic Continues to Reshape Work in America."

Find your wavelength

Podcasts let you tune in to your passions



Podcasts have seen an explosion in popularity in recent years, thanks to their variety and the connections hosts forge with their listeners. If you've never listened to a podcast before, you can think of them like prerecorded radio shows on your favorite topics.

But, because listeners can download podcasts to a phone or computer and play them at any time, audiences can go as deep or as light as they want on a given topic. Podcasts also don't require the full attention video does, meaning you can drive to work, answer emails or cook dinner — all while continuing to enjoy your favorite programming.

In the early days of podcasting, following your favorite show meant navigating a technological obstacle course of downloads and synced devices. Today, the process is as easy as downloading an app.

Apps like Apple Podcasts and Stitcher make it easy to search thousands of the latest podcasts and subscribe to your

favorites for free. If you have the Spotify app, you're already set. Just go to the Search tab and choose "Podcasts & Shows" to start adding new discoveries to your list.

Not sure where to start? Here are a few of our favorites to get you going:

▶ **"Criminal"** — One of the first true crime hits, even before "Serial" hit the scene, "Criminal" tells the "stories of people who've done wrong, been wronged, or gotten caught somewhere in the middle." Going beyond tales of murder, it takes a critical look at the impact of crime on its victims and perpetrators.

▶ **"This American Life"** — "This American Life" has been on the air since 1995, so there are plenty of stories to catch up on. Described as little movies for radio, each episode is also a little different. But they all tell the true, entertaining and often surprising stories of the people and events shaping our American lives.

▶ **"The Big Picture"** — Struggling to keep up with the latest movie releases? Hosts Sean Fennessey and Amanda Dobbins run down all the movies you need to see while also discussing old favorites and interviewing the people behind them twice a week.

▶ **"Lore"** — Truth is scarier than fiction in this documentary podcast series that explores the dark corners of history. Gather around the audio campfire to listen in on true historical tales, legends and folklore biweekly.

▶ **"Sound Opinions"** — Chicago music critics Jim DeRogatis and Greg Kot know everyone's a critic. Each week, they get together to discuss music's greats, talk shop with artists and share their opinions on the latest releases on this independent radio show and podcast. 📻





The newest spectator sport

Streaming platforms like Twitch let gamers build massive followings

Gamers have thriving online communities, including platforms like Twitch, that give millions of fans from around the world a place to share their knowledge and experience, while also providing countless hours of entertainment.

WHY WATCH INSTEAD OF PLAY?


Staying up to date with the latest and greatest video games can be expensive and time consuming. Sometimes game descriptions and reviews aren't enough — it's better to see a game in action. Avid gamers can check out a Twitch stream to see if a game is right for them, gain insight into a game's features, and find updates and creative fixes to problems. Many people subscribe to Twitch channels just for the entertainment value.

It's also a way to engage with others in the gaming community. Live broadcasts

feature an interactive chat where viewers can talk with the streamer and other viewers. These connections with like-minded people and interesting personalities keep people interested and coming back for more.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STREAMING YOUR GAMING?

There are many incentives for live-streamers. The revenue potential can be sky high — some streamers have built careers, earning millions and striking deals with game publishers to get exclusive early access to the newest games.

The higher a streaming channel's subscriber count, the more opportunities the streamer has for exclusive marketing partnerships. Viewers can also donate to the channel during the broadcast. The biggest Twitch streamers get most of their income from paid subscription fees. 

While the Twitch website and app are still the most popular, other platforms have sprouted up as well.

YouTube

YouTube's gaming section, [youtube.com/gaming](https://www.youtube.com/gaming), has functions similar to Twitch, and it's gaining popularity with amateur streamers because its optimized search engine makes it easier for a beginner's content to get noticed.

The audience is shared with YouTube, so the potential pool of viewers is vastly greater than on Twitch. For streamers, YouTube has greater potential for earnings from advertisements.

Facebook Gaming

Facebook Gaming is growing as existing Facebook users check out the video gaming hub that can be easily accessed through the main social media site or [FB.gg](https://fb.gg).

There's also a Facebook Gaming app enthusiasts can download to discover content, connect with other gamers and casually play mobile games. Like the other popular streaming platforms, Facebook allows users easy access to uploads from their favorite streamers. But, like its main site, Facebook Gaming users can join groups and like topics to tailor their timelines to their specific interests.



Finding a FOOTHOLD

RedPoint BBQ combines great food, cool drinks and a beautiful setting

Story by JEN CALHOUN | Photography by WILLIAM LEMASTER

Dario Ventura remembers hopping off the school bus every day at Miguel's Pizza where he'd help his family at the restaurant and play around on the rocks and the river running behind it. "Climbing was on my front doorstep from day one," he says. "And Miguel was my dad, so when it came to climbing and cooking, I didn't have a whole lot of choice."

Growing up that way eventually led Dario and his friends to open their own place — RedPoint BBQ, a restaurant, cocktail bar and nature retreat situated on a sprawling old farm just east of Campton.

Entrees can include everything from a Texas-style brisket to blackened catfish and fried chicken, while the cocktails give the spot an upscale feel. "It's not overly fancy, but it's still really good food," he says. "We focus on the basics of food. We want everything to be cooked well so it brings out the flavors."

FROM BARN TO BARBECUE

Dario spent years working with his father at the family business before opening RedPoint in 2021. "The reason I had the opportunity was because my brother graduated from college and decided at the last minute to come run the family business," he says. "It freed me up to start this."

Like his father, he wanted his guests to enjoy healthy food while still getting to experience the beauty of nearby Red River Gorge. The name RedPoint comes mostly from a rock climbing term with a few meanings. "It means doing something to the best of one's ability," Dario says. "It can also mean getting to the top without falling. Also, the restaurant is literally out on a point on the Red River, so the name ties all that together."

The point he refers to is a 100-acre piece of land in Rogers a few minutes from the Red River Gorge and Natural Bridge State Resort Park. The property includes two waterfalls, a lake for fishing and plenty of open spaces to enjoy a walk before and after dinner. They're also in the process of installing a Frisbee



Top: RedPoint BBQ was forged from a 90-year-old cattle barn on a 100-acre tract in Rogers, just minutes from the Red River Gorge and Natural Bridge State Resort Park.

Right: Dario Ventura opened RedPoint BBQ in 2021 with a focus on good food, sophisticated cocktails, a natural setting and a sense of community.



golf course. "The goal is to make it a common-use area — just a rustic spot for people to enjoy," Dario says.

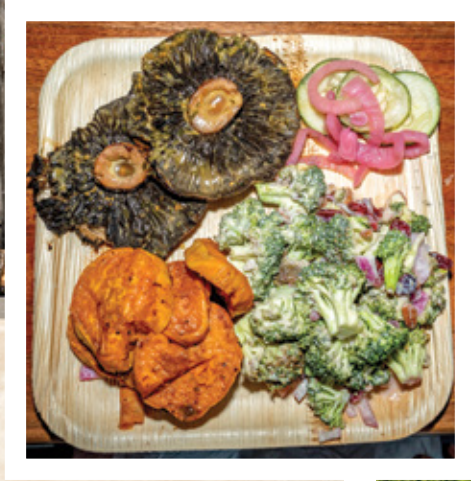
He and his friends also renovated the farm's 90-year-old cattle barn into a restaurant space that's modern, casual and upscale. Inside, the restaurant is outfitted with wood beams and black iron accents, and the bar sparkles with rows of glassware. "It's got this kind of laid-back, rustic feel," he says. "But it's also a good place for a nice night out, so you get the best of both worlds."



Clockwise from left: Pulled pork with baked beans and coleslaw.

The view from RedPoint BBQ's patio overlooks the scenic areas around the Red River Gorge. Visitors are encouraged to take nature hikes, fish and relax before and after dinner.

Grilled Portabella mushroom with baked sweet potato and broccoli salad.



PERFECT PAIRINGS

While he's not a classically trained chef, Dario's been in the business long enough to know how to bring out the best flavors in the food he cooks — and so does the rest of his team. "We know what's good and what's bad," he says. "It's not overly fancy, but it's still really good food. We focus on the basics. It's not overseasoned or overspiced, and it's got to be cooked well and tender."

They also work with local and regional farmers for catfish and seasonal produce. "All of those are Kentucky grown when it's available," he says. "And instead of offering a bunch of sides, we wanted to focus on a few good sides that pair well with what we already have on the menu — like hot chicken, brisket or pulled pork."

The cocktail menu also stands out for its simple sophistication. "I created it with a friend of mine who's a designer," Dario says. "It's the kind of cocktail menu you wouldn't normally find in this area. They've got a fancy, city vibe."

At its heart, RedPoint is a place to get good food, good drinks and relax around nature. "We still keep it affordable," he says. "It's a good place to go out and get a nice meal, a nice cocktail or maybe just dessert. The patio's really nice in the afternoon."

Most of all, Dario hopes it's a place that fosters a spirit of community and friendship — a place where people are happy to be together. "I like looking out on a busy night and seeing people enjoying themselves," he says. "It's nice to know that something you've created is doing that." 📍

The RedPoint *experience*

RedPoint BBQ is a unique eatery and cocktail bar situated on 100 acres in the heart of the Red River Gorge at 356 Jim Smith Road in Rogers, just west of Campton. The property features two waterfalls, and the owner encourages guests to enjoy hiking, fishing or a rest on the grounds. Main entrees include everything from Texas-style brisket to fried chicken and blackened catfish, with a focus on ingredients and preparation. The venue itself offers live music some nights and a relaxed, European feel. For more information, hours of operation and the latest events, visit the RedPoint BBQ Facebook page, or find them on Instagram.

It's time to go LOW AND SLOW



Cooking ribs at a low temperature for a long time tenderizes the meat and adds delightful flavor.

The aroma of smoke wafting through the air as meat slowly cooks goes hand in hand with a lazy summer afternoon. Smoking is not the same as grilling. There's a science to it that scares off some cooks, but break it down step by step, and you can become quite adept at making tender briskets and fall-off-the-bone ribs.

Smoking, more commonly known as barbecuing, takes time and patience. Defined simply, the technique takes a tough piece of meat and cooks it slowly over indirect heat for extended periods — often 12 to 16 hours and sometimes even more — while the smoke flavors the meat and gives it its mouthwatering flavor and texture. Any expert will tell you that the key to the best barbecue — that kind that wins competitions — is cooking it low and slow.

Cooking over high heat tends to dry the meat out very quickly. Any moisture within the meat is essentially blasted out, leaving it tough, dry and difficult to chew. Smoking meat slowly at a low temperature, on the other hand, keeps the moisture from evaporating too quickly, allowing you to achieve the perfect combination of tenderness and juiciness.

Here are two recipes that are good for beginners.

The 3-2-1 rib recipe is one many home smokers use. This method is easy and generally foolproof, creating ribs that are so tender you can pull the meat off the bone with your fingers. And pork butt is basically a no-brainer. Just rub it down with your favorite blend of seasonings or use the recipe that follows. Place it on the smoker and within just a few hours, you'll have tender pork perfect for sandwiches. Add a side of beans and some potato salad, and you'll have the makings of a beautiful, tasty summer dinner.



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3-2-1 RIBS METHOD

1 rack of ribs
Your favorite rub
Your favorite barbecue sauce

STEP THREE:

Liberaly coat the ribs with rub and allow them to “marinate” while you bring the smoker to 225 F. Place the ribs in the smoker, and add whatever wood chunks you want — cherry or hickory are popular. Smoke the ribs for 3 hours, maintaining the 225 F temperature. If you are smoking thinner back ribs, you may want to smoke them for just 2 hours. Any longer, and you may find the ribs dry out too much.

STEP TWO:

The second stage is when the

meat tenderizes. Remove the ribs from the smoker and wrap them tightly in foil. This steams the meat and the result is tender, juicy ribs. Just before closing each rack of ribs in the foil, put a little bit of beer or apple juice in with the ribs. This helps the steaming process. Put the ribs, wrapped in foil, back in the smoker for 2 hours at 225 degrees.

STEP ONE:

This final stage is when you sauce the ribs. Use your favorite barbecue sauce to liberaly coat the ribs on both sides before placing them back in the smoker for a final hour. The result should be a rack of ribs you'll never forget.



SMOKED BUTT

Smoked pork butt is a good one for beginners. The meat is not expensive, and the result is a mouthful of summer.

- 1 (7-8 pound) bone-in pork butt
- Olive oil
- Water

Dry rub:

- 1/4 cup light brown sugar packed
- 2 tablespoons black pepper, coarsely ground
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onions
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Spritz:

- 1/4 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

Prepare the smoker: Fill the hopper of your smoker with wood pellets, applewood, hickory, pecan or cherry. Start the smoker on the smoke setting for 5 to 10 minutes. Increase heat to 250 F.

Fill a small baking dish with water and set aside.

Prepare the pork butt: Place all dry rub ingredients in a small bowl and stir with a fork to combine. Place pork butt on a baking sheet and rub the entire butt with olive oil. Sprinkle the seasonings over it and rub them in, covering every bit of the butt.

Place the baking dish filled with water on the grate on one side of the smoker.

Fill a small spray bottle with the apple juice and apple cider vinegar and set aside.

Place pork shoulder on the grate and close the lid. Keep the smoker temperature around 250 to 275 F while smoking during these first several hours. Smoke for approximately 4 hours, spritzing with the spray bottle every hour.

Check the internal temperature of the pork using a meat thermometer. By this time, the pork should be at least 145 F.

Completely spritz the pork one last time and carefully wrap it in aluminum foil. Place pork back into the smoker and lower temperature to 225 F. Smoke pork about



A perfectly cooked pork butt is a great start to a summer sandwich.

another 4 hours, but do not spritz during this stage of cooking.

Check the internal temperature of the pork shoulder using a meat thermometer. You're looking for your pork shoulder to be about 200 F. Anywhere from 195 to 205 F is a good range. Remove pork from the smoker and let rest for at least 20 minutes but up to 2 hours. Shred or chop as desired. 📄



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