



daytrip: LEXINGTON, VA



## Shenandoah's Finest

BY MARYLOU CROWLEY

Whether you're exploring the beautiful Shenandoah Valley in Virginia for an extended vacation or just traveling along the famed Blue Ridge Parkway, schedule some time in the quaint and historic town of Lexington. Stop at The Red Hen for dinner and Sweet Things for dessert.





The Red Hen is Lexington's first farm-to-table restaurant; although the term is overused these days, they take this concept very seriously. Everything on your plate will most likely be sourced from a local ranch or farm. Even the gorgeous plates and bowls are made by Earth Fire and Spirit studios, located just down the street.

As a nod to the craftsmanship of the food producers in the area, The Red Hen's menu tells you where the ingredients have been sourced for every dish. It's a seasonal, almost daily-changing menu that's offered to lucky diners. It's fun to read that the herbs for the risotto, served alongside the Pan Seared Arctic Char, came from Sunflower Flats and that Donald's Meats, also in Lexington, supply

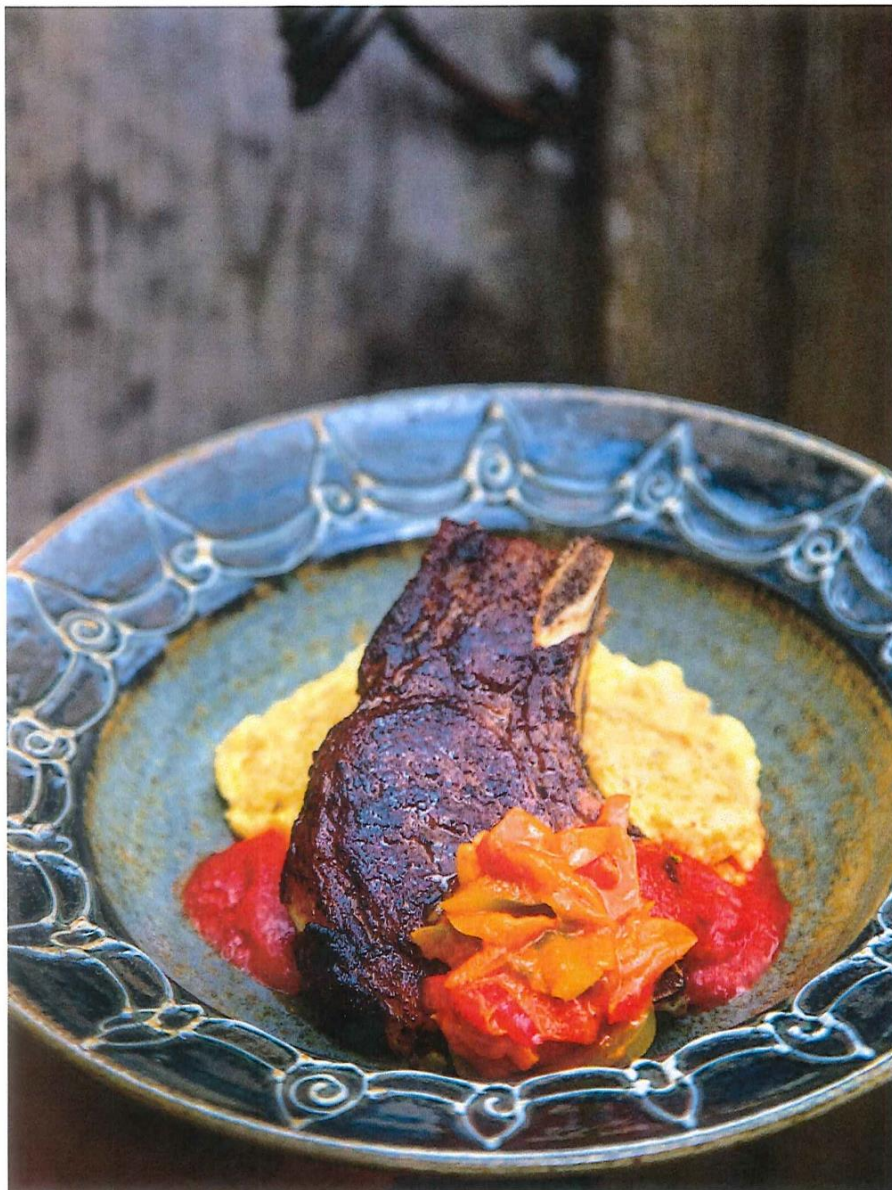
the duck and smoked bacon for the Cardamom Spiced Duck Breast. It would be wonderful if all restaurants acknowledged their hard working farmers this way.

Take all these fresh ingredients and put them in the hands of talented Chefs Matt and Becca Adams, and you're in for a special treat.

You'll be tempted to have dessert here, too, and you can't go wrong with that choice. But other options also exist in Lexington, including Sweet Things ice cream shop where you're welcomed by the sight and scent of homemade waffle cones being made at the entrance. Once the cones cool, pile one high with a few scoops of their delicious homemade ice cream. It's a great way to cap off a memorable dining experience.







## Recipes of The Red Hen

### PAN SEARED PORK CHOP, GRITS, ROASTED TOMATO & PEPPER PURÉE WITH PIPERADE SERVES 2

#### For the pork chops

- 2 8-ounce bone-in pork chops
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Place a cast iron pan on high heat; coat with olive oil.
3. Sprinkle each chop with salt and pepper.
4. When the oil is hot but not smoking, sear the chops on each side, about 2 minutes.
5. Add butter; remove from heat and spoon baste chops.
6. Place chops in oven and cook to desired doneness, approximately 6 to 8 minutes (145°F or more). Rest chops 5 minutes before serving.

#### For the piperade

- 2 red peppers, seeded, deveined and sliced into thin strips
- 2 green peppers, seeded, deveined and sliced into thin strips
- 1 red onion, sliced into thin strips
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled, crushed and finely chopped
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
- 1/4 teaspoon esepette pepper
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

1. Place a heavy skillet on medium high heat and coat with oil. When oil is hot but not smoking, sauté peppers and onion.
2. When vegetables begin to release liquid, add garlic.
3. Once garlic becomes fragrant, add tomato paste. Cook peppers until tender and tomato paste starts to darken.
4. Add stock and allow to incorporate, cooking for an additional 4 to 5 minutes.
5. Add butter and allow to melt, then mix in esepette pepper powder.

Intermezzo



- #### For the tomato purée
- 4 large ripe tomatoes
  - 1 tablespoon olive oil
  - 2 red peppers, roasted and peeled
  - 1/4 cup tomato paste
  - 1/4 teaspoon esepette pepper powder
  - 2 teaspoons sambal chili paste

- Salt
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Cut tomatoes in half, remove core and drizzle with olive oil and a sprinkle of salt. Place tomatoes on a sheet pan, cut side up,



and slow roast them for approximately 2½ hours.

3. After roasting, lightly squeeze excess juice through a fine strainer and reserve for another use (such as gazpacho). Set pulp aside.

4. Place tomato paste in a frying pan set over medium heat. Cook, while stirring, until paste darkens. You may need to add a little of the reserved tomato liquid to help move the tomato paste around the pan. After 10 to 15 minutes, add in roasted tomatoes and peppers and stir to incorporate.

5. Continue to cook on the stove an additional 20 minutes. Remove the contents to a blender and carefully purée the hot mixture until smooth.

6. Season with salt, esepette, and chili paste. Mix in butter and serve.

For the grits  
MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

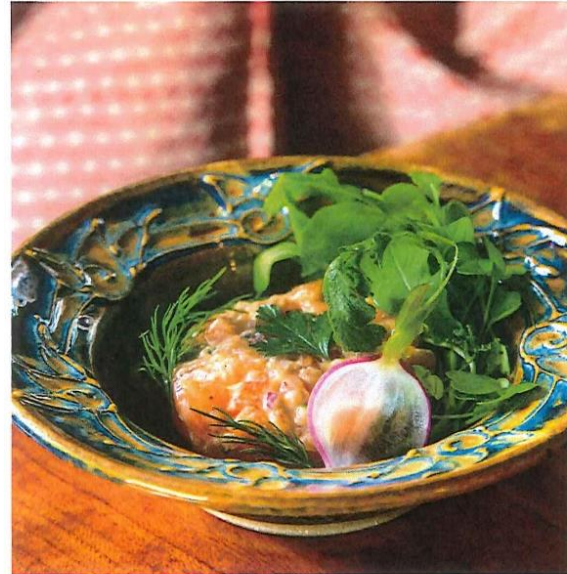
- 1 cup grits
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Pinch esepette pepper powder

1. In a heavy bottomed pot, add water, milk, butter and salt. Bring to a boil. Slowly whisk in grits. Stir well.

2. Reduce temperature to low and cover. Cook for approximately 20 to 25 minutes, stirring frequently. Add pepper.

SALMON TARTARE  
SERVES 6

*Agrumato is an olive oil in which lemons are pressed along with the olives, resulting in a very fresh lemon flavor. If you can't find any agrumato, use good olive oil mixed with a bit of lemon zest. In a raw seafood dish like this, quality is paramount. Make sure to purchase the fish from a trusted fishmonger. Serve with finely-diced red onion and a side salad of arugula and radishes.*



- 1 pound Scottish salmon, cleaned and cut into small dice
- 2 tablespoons crème fraîche (or sour cream)
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped red onion
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped scallion
- 1 tablespoon agrumato oil
- Pinch sea salt
- 1 radish, very thinly sliced
- 1 cup arugula
- 1 small handful fresh parsley, for garnish
- 6 sprigs fresh dill for garnish

- 1. Place a metal mixing bowl in the refrigerator for 20 minutes.
- 2. When bowl is cold, combine salmon and crème fraîche, along with the agrumato and freshly ground pepper.
- 3. Add red onion and scallion. Add a pinch of sea salt and mix gently just until ingredients are incorporated. Taste and adjust seasoning as necessary. Do not overmix; each little cube of salmon should be lightly coated with the dressing.

- 4. Place a small ring mold on the center of each plate. Fill with salmon, pressing lightly. Remove the mold and surround tartare with baby arugula and freshly sliced radishes. Garnish with a few sprigs of dill and parsley.

CARDAMOM SPICED DUCK  
BREAST WITH BACON LENTILS  
& BRANDIED PEACHES  
SERVES 2

*The Red Hen crafts its own signature spice blend which can be purchased online at [squatrecup.com/store/the-red-hen](http://squatrecup.com/store/the-red-hen).*

For the duck

- 1 breast of duck, preferably magret, cut into two portions
- 1 teaspoon Red Hen Signature Spice Blend, or more to taste
- Salt

- 1. Preheat oven to 425°F.

- 2. With a sharp knife, score the skin side with cross-hatch cuts that reach through the fat layer but leave flesh intact. This helps render off excess fat and leaves a crispy skin. Lightly season with spice blend and a sprinkle of salt.

- 3. Heat a heavy skillet over medium high heat. Add duck breasts, skin side down, lightly pressing to ensure skin is in contact with pan. Allow to sear, rendering fat, approximately 4 minutes. Turn breasts over and baste skin with rendered fat for an additional minute.

- 4. Place breasts on a roasting pan and place in oven. Cook for 4 to 6 minutes for medium rare. Allow to rest for 5 minutes before slicing.

For the bacon lentils

- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ pound smoked bacon, chopped
- 1 cup green lentils
- 4 tablespoons tomato paste, divided in half
- 2 shallots, sliced

- 3 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 teaspoon sambal chili paste
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

- 1. Place a large Dutch oven on medium high heat; coat with oil. Once oil is hot, add the bacon; stir with a wooden spoon, breaking up clumps.

- 2. When the bacon begins to brown, add shallots and garlic.

- 3. Once the shallots begin to sweat, add 2 tablespoons tomato paste. Cook 3 minutes, or until onions are well coated.

- 4. Add lentils, bay leaf and enough water to cover. Simmer for approximately 30 minutes, adding water as necessary and stirring every few minutes to keep the lentils from sticking.

- 5. Once the lentils are cooked, remove the pot from the heat and season with salt and pepper.

- 6. Add the remaining tomato paste to brighten the flavors, along with chili paste

to taste.

For the Dijon crème fraîche

- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 4 tablespoons crème fraîche
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

- 1. Mix all ingredients together.
- 2. Set aside for serving.

For the brandied peaches

- 3 ripe peaches
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup brandy
- ¼ teaspoon salt

- 1. Cut the peaches in half; remove pits. Slice into wedges or cubes and set aside.
- 2. Coat the bottom of a cast iron pan with sugar. Place skillet on medium heat and allow the sugar to gently melt and caramelize. Watch carefully and remove from the heat when the sugar turns golden brown.

- 3. Carefully place peaches into sugar.
- 4. Add 1 cup of brandy away from the flame. Be sure to pour the brandy out of a measuring cup, not the glass bottle itself.

- 5. Allow the brandy to come up to a simmer. Then tilt the pan slightly, away from you, and light the warm brandy with a long-handled lighter. Be careful: the brandy will combust in a big "woosh." Gently jiggle the pan as it flames, to allow most of the alcohol to cook off. When flames subside, sprinkle with a touch of salt and continue cooking the peaches until tender, about 4 to 6 minutes.

- 6. Gently remove fruit from the pan, leaving juices behind. Continue to reduce liquid to the thickness of maple syrup. Pour the remaining sauce over the peaches and serve.

- 7. To serve, spoon a generous helping of warm lentils into the center of each plate. Place sliced duck portion on top. Add about 2 tablespoons of warm brandied peaches. Serve with a small dollop of Dijon crème fraîche.

