



with a little help
from her friends

Kentucky woman creates an Appalachian masterpiece



Barbara Napier is an artist in the truest sense of the word, a person whose imagination changes the way we see the world.

She doesn't need canvas, paint, or brushes to realize her artistic vision. Instead, she has used salvaged building materials, hammers, and nails to create a masterpiece in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains—her bed-and-breakfast inn, Snug Hollow Farm.

"I'm an artist, and this is my palette," Barbara explains. "Snug Hollow Farm is my greatest creation."

The bed-and-breakfast inn is located in eastern Kentucky, "where the mountains kiss the bluegrass," Barbara likes to say. As you drive down the crooked road that leads to her farm, you are transported back to a simpler time—before air conditioning and cell phones. The narrow gravel road dips and turns like a roller coaster at the county fair. You know you're getting close when you reach the cow gate.

Snug Hollow Farm is just a little further around the bend. The rustic, three-story house looks like it has been there for ages. It's hard to believe that Barbara Napier began building the inn in 1998—with a little help from her friends.

Barbara first saw the farm in 1976. "When I saw it, I said, 'We have to buy this place.'" She did,

and she raised her two sons in the 135-year-old log cabin located on the farm.

For many years, Barbara and her husband owned a farm store in nearby Irvine, Kentucky, where they sold everything from grass seed to Martin guitars. Almost everyone in Estill County traded with them. But when her marriage ended, Barbara struggled to hang onto the business. She was forced to declare bankruptcy, and everything she owned was sold at auction. That's when her family and a friend stepped in, pooling their money to buy back Snug Hollow Farm for her.

Exhausted, Barbara retreated to the rustic, mountain cabin she loved. And among the hollows, she says, she found healing and peace.

Barbara was working at nearby Berea College when she decided she'd like to share the healing experience of Snug Hollow Farm with other people. She had never imagined herself an innkeeper—had never even heard of the concept of a bed-and-breakfast inn. She just wanted to share the Appalachian lifestyle, so she began working on her dream.

BY BETTY TERRY / PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARCY BLACK / RECIPES COURTESY OF BARBARA NAPIER



Once again, Barbara's friends came to the rescue. They came to lend a helping hand and brought along friends who had never even met Barbara.

"People bought into my dream," Barbara recalls. "They just showed up on my doorstep, saying, 'I hear you have a house to finish.'" A stranger from Louisville, who was a master plumber, did the plumbing for free. A friend built the kitchen.

"It was one big, fat blessing," Barbara recalls. "I was blown away." Within six months, the house was finished. And on New Year's Eve in 2000, Barbara decided to take the plunge and hang out her innkeeper's shingle. "I said, 'I'm a bed-and-breakfast'; and within a week, I had guests."

Today, the main house at Snug Hollow Farm houses two guest suites—"The Sweetie," which sleeps five, and "The Pearl," which sleeps four and opens up to a large, private, sleeping porch. Just a short walk away is the restored log cabin that was



once Barbara's home, which can accommodate up to nine people.

When guests call to make reservations at Snug Hollow Farm, they often inquire about things to do at the inn. They're frequently taken aback by Barbara's answer. "Nothing," she says into the phone receiver. "We have no television, no video games," she elaborates, "and no air conditioning." And, it must be added, no cell-phone coverage.

The lack of these modern amenities is part of the charm of Snug Hollow Farm. It makes you slow down and pay attention to the world around you. Suddenly, you find that you have time to watch hummingbirds flit around the zinnias in the garden or to take a hike up to the pond to catch a glimpse of the horses in the pasture.

In the evening, you can view the sun setting behind the mountains from the back porch. Then you can retire to the parlor to join in a lightning-fast game of "Crazy Scrabble" with other guests. And if you're lucky, you might persuade Barbara to play her banjo. If her sister, Kim Russo, is visiting, the two women might favor you with an old-time hymn, such as "Down to the River to Pray," sung in two-part harmony.

At night, you sleep with the windows open to catch the mountain breezes. Lying in a huge king-size

"This is what we do best. To



An assortment of windows purchased from a window company that was going out of business gives the façade of Snug Hollow Farm an eclectic appearance.



bed, surrounded by windows on three sides, you slowly become aware of the sounds of the forest waking up around you.

The Appalachian landscape is beautiful in any season, Barbara notes. “I have guests here most of the year-round.” January is especially conducive to rest. “A lot of women writers come here to write,” she notes. Gwen Rubio, author of *The Woodsman’s Daughter*, has been a frequent guest. When Gwen’s first novel, *Icy Sparks*, was chosen as an Oprah’s Book Club selection, she brought the television show’s crew to Snug Hollow Farm to show them the place that had inspired her to write.

Snug Hollow is a working, organic farm, so meals are special, too. “People love to eat, and I love to cook,” says Barbara, whose recipes are inspired by her mother and sisters, Kim and Brenda. When you come to Snug Hollow Farm, you’ll certainly eat well. At breakfast, you’re likely to be greeted by Barbara’s crispy oatmeal and cornmeal waffles, served with fresh fruit and real maple syrup, or her smoked Cheddar omelets with homemade biscuits and gravy.

Upon request, Barbara will also prepare dinner for you. “I like to make real food,” she says. Her summer specialties include eggplant Parmesan, blackberry shortcake, and homemade rosemary bread. You’ll come away from the table feeling so

satisfied that you might not even notice you’ve just eaten a vegetarian meal.

A few years ago, Barbara asked her friends at nearby Berea College to write a business plan for her. They said she should try to double her business each year. “In 2005, my business doubled; and in 2006, it tripled,” Barbara explains. “Now my business plan is just to get up in the morning.”

“I love living here. I like the quiet. I like living in Kentucky. I have to be true to what it is.” After all, she says, “This is what we do best. To say, ‘Hello,’ and put you up.”

Snug Hollow Farm is located approximately 20 miles east of Berea, Kentucky, and approximately one hour from Lexington. For more information, visit Snug Hollow’s Web site, www.snughollow.com. For reservations, call Barbara Napier at 606-723-4786.

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Guests at Snug Hollow Farm enjoy Barbara Napier's homemade Rosemary Braided Bread, fresh from the oven.



Snug Hollow's Rosemary Braided Bread

Yield: 1 loaf

Preparation: 30 minutes

Rise: 15 minutes

Bake: 15 minutes

- 1½ cups warm water**
- 3 tablespoons dry-active yeast**
- 1 teaspoon honey**
- ½ teaspoon lemon juice**
- 1¼ cups olive oil, divided**
- 4 teaspoons salt**
- 1 cup whole-wheat flour**
- 3½ cups or more all-purpose flour, divided**
- 1 egg, beaten**
- ¼ cup chopped rosemary**
- 3 tablespoons chopped sage**

- In a large bowl, combine warm water, yeast, honey, lemon juice, ¼ cup olive oil, and salt.
- Add whole-wheat flour and 1 cup all-purpose

flour and stir. Let stand for 5 minutes.

- Add remaining all-purpose flour until you are able to turn out dough onto a floured board to knead. Add small amounts of flour to dough and knead for approximately 6 minutes, or until dough is soft. Pour a little olive oil in hands and continue to knead until dough pops up when punched. Leave dough on board, cover loosely with plastic wrap, and let rise for 15 minutes.
- Divide dough into three sections. Roll each section into a long rope, and braid strands into a loaf. Pinch ends and tuck under. Transfer to a baking sheet. Brush with beaten egg, cover loosely with plastic wrap, and let rest for 5 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 400°.
- Bake for approximately 15 minutes, or until golden.
- Mix together remaining 1 cup olive oil, rosemary, and sage. Pour mixture over hot bread. Serve warm.

Snug Hollow's Very Crisp Oatmeal and Corn Waffles

Yield: 4 to 5 servings

Preparation: 15 minutes

Bake: 2 to 3 minutes per batch

1¼ cups rolled oats (not instant)
½ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
½ cup plain cornmeal
3 tablespoons brown sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
¾ teaspoon salt
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup heavy cream
1 cup milk
6 tablespoons melted butter
Garnish: maple syrup, yogurt, and fresh fruit

- Preheat waffle iron to Medium.
- In a large bowl, combine oats, flour, cornmeal, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt. Stir in eggs, cream, milk, and butter. Let stand for 2 minutes.
- Pour approximately 1 cup batter onto hot waffle iron and bake for 2 to 3 minutes, or until waffles cease to steam. Keep an eye on the waffle iron; these waffles crisp up quickly.
- Serve with maple syrup, yogurt, and fresh fruit on the side, if desired.

Waking up to a breakfast of hot, crisp waffles, served with real maple syrup, is one of the pleasures of staying at Snug Hollow.





Bowtie Pasta with Lemon Cream Sauce and Snap Peas

Yield: 6 servings

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cook: 5 minutes

- 12 ounces dry bowtie pasta**
- 12 ounces (approximately 2 cups) fresh snap peas**
- 7 tablespoons butter**
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon zest**
- 6 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh garlic**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh herbs, such as basil or thyme**
- 3 cups heavy whipping cream**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- 1½ cups chopped fresh tomatoes**
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese**

- Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside.
- Steam snap peas in a steamer insert over boiling water or in a microwave oven on High (100-percent power) for 3 to 4 minutes. Plunge peas into an ice bath to stop the cooking process. Drain and set aside.
- In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter. Add lemon zest and juice, garlic, and fresh herbs. Stir together and cook for 1 minute.
- Add cream and bring mixture to a boil; turn off heat. Stir in salt and pepper.
- Add cooked pasta and snap peas; stir thoroughly to combine. Transfer to a serving bowl, and top with chopped tomatoes and a generous sprinkling of Parmesan cheese.

Redolent of garlic and rosemary, Kentuscan Bean Soup is a very brothy and fragrant soup.

Kentuscan Bean Soup

Yield: 4 servings

Preparation: 15 minutes

Cook: 25 minutes

- ¼ cup butter**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh garlic**
- 2 tablespoons rubbed sage**
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary**
- 1½ tablespoons tamari soy sauce***
- 3 tablespoons nutritional yeast****
- 1½ cups water**
- 2 (15.5-ounce cans) great northern beans, rinsed well**

- In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat; add garlic, sage, and rosemary. Let mixture cook slowly for a few minutes.
- Add tamari soy sauce and yeast and stir until mixed. Add water and beans. Bring to a slow boil and turn off heat. Warm before serving.

**Tamari soy sauce is made without wheat. It is lower in sodium and has a more mellow flavor than regular soy sauce. It can be found in the Asian foods section in your local supermarket.*

***Available at health-food stores.*



Chocolate Tart

Yield: 8 servings

Preparation: 30 minutes

Bake: 40 minutes

Crust:

1¼ cups all-purpose flour

¼ cup confectioners' sugar

½ teaspoon salt

7 tablespoons chilled butter, cut into pieces

1 tablespoon cold water

Filling:

1 cup semi-sweet or bittersweet chocolate morsels

6 tablespoons butter

2 eggs

¼ cup sugar

2 tablespoons light corn syrup

1 tablespoon espresso powder

1 pinch salt

½ cup chopped walnuts

- Preheat oven to 350°.
- To prepare crust, combine flour, confectioners' sugar, and salt in the work bowl of a food processor. Cut in chilled butter, using the pulse button. Add cold water and blend to make a dough.
- Using floured hands, press dough into the bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom.
- Bake crust for 20 minutes. Remove from oven when crust is only lightly browned.
- To prepare filling, in a small saucepan over low heat, melt chocolate morsels and butter. Set aside.
- In a medium bowl, whisk eggs. Add sugar, corn syrup, espresso powder, and salt, and whisk together. Stir in butter-chocolate mixture and chopped walnuts. Mix one final time and pour into partially baked crust.
- Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until center is set. Serve warm with ice cream.



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—Barbara Napier