

On This Mountain Morning

On the porch of Glade Valley Bed and Breakfast, a dry-erase easel welcomes guests by first names and room assignments — inn owner Margaret Connor is a retired school-teacher, eighth grade science — and announces that breakfast is served at 8:30 a.m.

In the morning — just like every morning for the past 10 years — Margaret covers the dining table with a jaw-dropping, family-style breakfast: Fried eggs. Scrambled eggs. Quiche and omelets with a creamy hollandaise sauce. Pottery bowls full of grits. Platters of sausage. Bacon. Country ham and hash browns and homemade biscuits with homemade apple butter and jellies and oatmeal pancakes with homemade blackberry syrup. Homemade cinnamon buns.

On a table by the front door, five leather guest books are filled with handwritten comments — love letters, really — from past visitors. Nearly all rave about those cinnamon buns.

As everyone takes their seats around the table, Margaret's husband, Jim, stands and gives a morning blessing. It's simple and heartfelt, a reminder to feel gratitude for abundance, for nature, for each other. Then everyone passes plates and chats about what brought them here, to this part of the North Carolina mountains, to Alleghany County and this inn, which sits within walking distance of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Stone Mountain State Park is about 10 minutes away; McRitchie and Jones von Drehle wineries are 12 miles south.

After breakfast, all of the guests head out somewhere — hiking, maybe, at Doughton Park. Canoeing or kayaking on



the New River. Pumpkin picking. Christmas-tree hunting.

That's what brought Margaret and Jim here.

For years, they drove to Alleghany County from their home in Colfax — Jim worked for Gilbarco, 28 years — to get their Christmas tree. In 1982, they rented a vacation cabin near where their B&B is now located. Margaret spent her time baking; Jim and their three children spent the days skating at the rink in Sparta and painting ceramic ornaments for the tree.

"We just did stuff we didn't do at home," Margaret says. It was the happiest time.

When the couple decided to change careers, they came back to Alleghany County in search of property to build a bed and breakfast. In 1999, they bought 29 acres, but didn't start construction until 2004. Two years later, the white-cedar log home went up. They named the six guest rooms for national parks, an homage to family trips, and filled the 60-foot front porch with a glider, a swing, and six bent-twig rocking chairs. In April 2006, their first guests came, and Margaret made breakfast: Eggs. Grits. Sausage. Homemade cinnamon buns.

On this mountain morning, more than 3,000 breakfasts after that first one, the house is quiet. The guests are away on their adventures. Margaret and Jim clean up to the sound of instrumental piano music playing softly over the inn's speakers. Dishes clink going back into cabinets, counters are wiped down, coffee is measured out for tomorrow, when the house will be full again — abundance — another morning in these beautiful mountains for which to be grateful.

Want to go?

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