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# all in the family

THE WINERY, DISTILLERY, AND RESTAURANT RUN BY A LAUREL HIGHLANDS CLAN

## THERE'S NOTHING LIKE FAMILY.

John and Sharon Klay would probably agree, considering that they named their Western Pennsylvania winery after their only son, Christian. If you've lived in the area for a while, you've probably heard of Christian Klay Winery, a scenic farm and tasting room in the Laurel Highlands. But have you heard of the craft distillery that the actual Christian Klay recently opened across the street? Or the gourmet farm-to-table restaurant owned by Sharon Klay's sister, located just down the road?

All of the businesses are attracting a following among the culinary curious, and for good reason. The distillery first: In 2013, Christian moved back home after an unfulfilling experience running a computer repair shop in Morgantown, West Virginia, where he earned his undergraduate degree. While planning his next move, he helped his parents at the winery and fell in love with the brewing process. He created a cider, and when it exceeded his expectations, he experimented with other products. Last year, he opened Ridge Runner Distillery, a craft distillery across the street from his parent's winery.

Christian's timing coincided with a recent change in liquor laws, which — thanks to extensive lobbying by Pittsburgh's innovative Wigle Whiskey — allows craft distilleries to sell their products on-site. He currently offers five: a grain-based vodka, a 100-percent corn moonshine, an apple pie moonshine, a peach moonshine, and a white rum. The recent acquisition of a 300-gallon combination mash tun and stripper still, as well as eight American oak barrels, open up the possibility of several new offerings in the near future. Think lemon drop and butterscotch moonshine, flavored vodkas, lavender gin, and perhaps even a bourbon that uses a grain bill sourced entirely from Pennsylvania farms.

Now the farm-to-table restaurant: Dr. McCarthy's Kitchen got its start in July 2015, when Dr. Roxanne McCarthy — Sharon's sister and Christian's aunt — moved to the Laurel Highlands to be closer to her family. Unlike Christian, Roxanne came from Manhattan, where she worked as a Wall Street attorney. At 35, she became a stay-at-home mom. But, missing the excitement of closing multi-million dollar deals, she returned to school for her PhD in Neuropsychology. There, she began to formulate



▶ Sharon Klay (left) runs the winery while her son, Christian, operates the distillery, and her sister, Roxanne, works the restaurant.

hypotheses about the way in which processed foods impact the brain.

At the same time, she ran her own miniature laboratory at home. She cooked foods for her kids that used minimal or no oil, butter, and animal fat, and became something of a neighborhood legend for her chocolate chip macadamia nut scones. After moving to the Laurel Highlands, she began developing the idea for a high-end, farm-to-table restaurant, based on her research — a concept that she calls “guiltless gourmet.”

The idea for Dr. McCarthy's Kitchen took form when she called Nemaocolin Woodlands

Resort and asked if she could shadow someone in the kitchen. Chef Josh Diehl worked at Nemaocolin's Lautrec, one of only 25 restaurants in the United States to hold both a Five-Diamond designation from AAA and a Five-Star designation from *Forbes*. When Josh heard about Roxanne's plans, he asked about positions in her future kitchen.

After hiring Josh as head chef, Roxanne hired the most personable people she could find (based on the advice of Paul Bolles-Beaven, the Chief People Officer of Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group, who told her to choose personality over experience, because enthusiastic people could always be



The cozy chicken confit at Dr. McCarthy's Kitchen is surprisingly light, a characteristic found in all of the menu's guiltless comfort food.

Ridge Runner vodka (on tap at the distillery) makes a great Moscow Mule.



Sharon Klay is an institution in the Laurel Highlands, hosting memorable events at her picturesque winery (and often seen pruning the vines herself).

trained). The staff at Dr. McCarthy's Kitchen are an interesting, varied bunch: One speaks fluent French, another talks cogently about political science, and a third moonlights as a professional rapper.

"They're friendly, they're funny, they keep each other laughing all the time," Roxanne says. "They have each others' backs. People pick up on that."

Roxanne is quick to point out that the restaurant wouldn't have been possible without a supportive community. The sense that one gets while at the restaurant — and walking around town — is one of family, where co-workers and neighbors look out for one another. Much of the produce McCarthy uses comes from Footprints Farm, a

family farm up the road from the restaurant founded by Jeremy and Ellen Swartzfager.

Trained as an opera singer, Jeremy now raises grass-fed goats, cows, and sheep, as well as pastured turkeys, chickens, and pigs. He also grows herbs and vegetables in fields that he plows with draft horses, a technique that he learned from a blind Amish man. The Swartzfagers sell whole animals to Dr. McCarthy's Kitchen, which Chef Diehl butchers, a skill that he perfected during his apprenticeship at Nemaacolin.

But Roxanne plays her part in supporting the community as well. As a student at NYU, she remembers walking past beautiful little East Village restaurants and dreaming that she could

one day afford them. When she started a restaurant of her own, she wanted to make sure that good food remained affordable.

"The thought that someone would look in the window and say, 'I wish I could afford this,' makes me sad," she says. No single item on the lunch menu exceeds \$16 (Pasture-raised Pork Humba served on a sauté of peppers, onions, pineapples, black beans, and organic rice), and most are \$10 or less. Longhorn grass-fed beef burgers from Vantage Point Ranch in Uniontown run just two dollars per ounce. On the dinner menu, a Scottish Salmon Filet from Euclid Fish costs \$24, though most items hover around \$20. And bottled beers and ciders, all of which come from Pennsylvania, cost just three dollars.

### CHRISTIAN KLAY WINERY

412 Fayette Springs Road, Chalk Hill, PA

Open: Sunday through Thursday from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM, and Friday and Saturday from 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

### RIDGE RUNNER DISTILLERY

417 Fayette Springs Road, Chalk Hill, PA

Open: Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM, and Friday and Saturday from 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

### DR. MCCARTHY'S KITCHEN

1186 National Pike, Hopwood, PA

Open: Tuesday through Thursday from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, Friday and Saturday from 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM, and Sunday from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM and 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM.