





Building Community Spirit, Loaf by Loaf

by Ray Werner

Catch the 61B bus from Regent Square to Braddock and you just might catch a whiff of pungent-sweet sourdough bread, on its way to a brick oven.

Benjamin Franklin would approve. You recall he was seen with a loaf of bread under each arm as he strolled along Market Street in Philadelphia. No doubt Ben's bread was also baked in a brick oven similar to one run by Chatham University student Shauna Kearns.

A student in the Falk School of Sustainability's Master of Arts in Food Studies (MAFS) program, Shauna has a ready smile and her eyes light up like arctic stars at the mere mention of bread. On her lap is a plastic container of several pounds of sourdough rising to the occasion and ready to be baked in Braddock's community brick oven. It's a trip she makes two or three days a week.

While she shapes her bread, she is also helping to shape the new community spirit that is a catalyst behind all the good things happening in this comeback town. Their newest community brick oven will be built this July next to the new and much-anticipated Superior Motors restaurant.

"With the addition of Shauna and our new oven," said Mayor John Fetterman, "Braddock's fortunes will certainly continue to rise."

Shauna's passion has deep roots. "I grew up in Toronto in a family that treasured the outdoors and loved to cook with locally grown foods. The first time I made bread, I just fell in love with it."

That love landed her an apprenticeship at Tracebridge Sourdough in England.

"This incredible couple, Katie Venner and Gordon Woodcock, run a small-scale bakery in Somerset. They have a brick oven they made from reclaimed materials. With their

weekly pizza nights, they bring people together with food and music and community spirit. I learned so much from them."

Shauna brought a jar of Tracebridge sourdough starter back to Toronto from the UK, which she still uses for her bread. Then, she apprenticed at St. John's Bakery, a nonprofit next to a mission that trains the unemployed. This will be the model for the bread-baking training program Shauna plans for Braddock.

These past few summers, Shauna has also led canoe trips on the Ravensthorpe and Coppermine Rivers in the Arctic, and she's going back this summer, along with her sourdough starter, to paddle the Keele. Yes, she bakes bread in the Arctic wilderness. Much like the Klondike miners did during the gold rush in the late 19th century. But Shauna mines a different kind of gold.

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SHAUNA KEARNS, MASTER OF ARTS IN FOOD STUDIES CLASS OF 2015

BRADDOCK BREAD



- To learn how you can help Shauna build community in Braddock, contact her at braddockcommunityoven@gmail.com
- To learn more about Touchstone Center for Crafts, go to www.touchstonecrafts.org
- For more about Tracebridge Sourdough, go to: www.tracebridgesourdough.co.uk
- To learn more about the Food Studies program, visit falk.chatham.edu/foodstudies

“These canoe trips in the Arctic are little communities,” she says. “They’re nomadic, self-sufficient. We eat only what we catch and carry. Baking bread in a small portable Dutch oven every day in the middle of the nowhere encourages a community spirit. It’s the same kind of spirit I discovered in Braddock.”

Shauna received one of the initial **Falk Sustainability Summer Fellowships**, which will help her participate this summer in an oven-building workshop at Touchstone Center for Crafts in Farmington, Pennsylvania, and to serve as an apprentice at their oven-use workshop in September.

For Shauna, it’s all about what bread from a brick oven can do to bring people together – to learn, to share, to develop a skill and give something back to the community.

“Bread sales from the Braddock oven,” Shauna says, “have always gone back into the project. The Falk Fellowship helps ensure this can continue. Imagine, 100% of our bread sales goes right back into it – to buy flour and support the construction of the oven. It will be for sale Saturdays at the Braddock Farm Stand beginning in June.”

So, while breaking bread, Shauna is also breaking the mold. What comes out of the community oven in Braddock is extraordinary. But what comes out of her community spirit is changing people’s lives.

FALK SUMMER SUSTAINABILITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Thanks to the generosity of the \$15 million Falk Foundation grant to the Falk School of Sustainability, students selected for the Falk Summer Sustainability Fellowship Program will be guaranteed up to \$5,000 in income for their summer placements. These opportunities may be either student acquired or come from one of the Falk School’s developed placements with organizations working on various sustainable projects. The Falk Summer Fellowship program is competitive, with priority given to applicants who express a preference in international and/or community development contexts.



Ray Werner initiated the first community brick oven in Braddock, still in use, and along with fellow oven builder and baker Rich Jones, will conduct the oven-building and oven-use workshops at Touchstone this summer. Their “Bricks and Bread, The Pittsburgh Community Brick Oven Project,” has been endorsed by The Sprout Fund, and the first community oven for Pittsburgh is planned for Larimer Avenue.