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STAY ON THE FARM

BY MICHELLE DEVONA

Tucked in a forest off Oregon's northern coast, North Fork 53 Retreat Center is the ideal getaway if you're looking to experience a 21st-century manner of homesteading. Named after the North Fork Nehalem River that runs next to the homestead, the quaint 1930s farmhouse has been remodeled by owners Ginger and Brigham Edwards into a modernized yet cozy abode complete with a wood stove, board games, snug couches, a riverfront deck and several guest rooms. The copper-toned kitchen, which back in the day was a dairy barn where cows were milked, is now a spacious gathering place with long tables and counters and includes all the utensils needed for friends and family to cook a farm-fresh meal together.

One of the first homesteads of the north Nehalem valley, North Fork 53 was once a small dairy farm that operated under the early Tillamook dairy cooperative. Raw milk was shipped down the river to the Aldervale Creamery where goods like cream, butter and cheese were processed. While the homestead has gone through some transitions over the years, including

its run as a private rental space for weddings and parties, the Edwards take inspiration from its original role as a farmland, which enables them to share their bounty with visitors and the surrounding community.

In keeping with the homesteader spirit, North Fork 53 is about as farm-to-table as it gets. In fact, it's very likely you'll find Ginger busy in one of the surrounding gardens when you arrive. An avid organic farmer, she's been growing vegetables for a decade as R-evolution Gardens, and is eager to educate people about sustainable agriculture. Each season brings a new batch of produce, so be sure to check their website to find out what's popping out of the ground.

While visiting, you'll get to explore the forage-friendly vegetable and herb gardens, where, according to Ginger, you are welcome to "pick, taste, smell" and prepare freshly plucked plants right from the source. In case you're curious about what's involved behind seed and soil, there's an interpretive trail you can take through the permaculture gardens to learn more

about the food and herbs being grown. Groups also have the option to hire a private chef to provide farm-to-table meals with garden-picked vegetables and herbs and locally sourced meats and seafood. For those who are keen to learn their way around the kitchen, North Fork 53 partners with SeaFolk Artisans to host workshops where you can learn about pickling, sourdough bread baking or cheesemaking, to name a few.

In addition to the organic garden, farm produce is also available at the onsite farm store, which also provides local, organic grass-fed meats, teas and juices. Refuel in the morning with some healthy breakfast choices like house-made granola, seasonal fruit and yogurt, smoothie bowls and freshly baked sourdough bread, scones and muffins, all of which either come straight from the farm or from nearby local purveyors.

Part of a growing network of farmers and business owners looking to establish their quiet coastal region as a sustainable-goods destination, North Fork 53 is one of the many stops on the North Coast Food Trail, an agritourism program launched by Visit Tillamook Coast that brings visitors straight to the very source where food is grown and harvested.

“The local, sustainably grown food is so vital now because increasingly we see the need for a healthy and safe food system that supports family farmers and keeps rural Oregon thriving,” reveals Ginger. “We have a truly unique growing climate that can produce everything from oysters and sea salt to cheese, vegetables and foraged mushrooms. There are few places on



the planet you can visit where you can experience local food so first-hand and know you are directly supporting small and sustainable producers with every bite.”

For more information on the North Coast Food Trail, visit tillamookcoast.com/foodtrail. To make reservations at North Coast 53, go to northfork53.com.

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An advertisement for the Eastern Oregon Beer Festival (EOBF). The background shows a large crowd of people sitting at picnic tables at an outdoor festival. In the foreground, a woman with blonde hair is smiling and holding a large glass mug of beer. She is wearing a black t-shirt with the EOBF logo and the text "A Great Day" and "AUGUST 19, 2017". The text "Northeast Oregon Is Calling You!" is written in a stylized font across the top left. The EOBF logo, which includes a map of Oregon and the text "EASTERN OREGON BEER FESTIVAL", is in the bottom right. The text "Great Beer, Great Friends, A Great Day" is in the center. At the bottom, it says "La Grande, Oregon... home of the" and "and more!".