



Family Ties
DNA testing reveals
new relatives **C3**

Hobbit holes idea 'took off for us'

Units used as playhouses,
sheds and chicken coops

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

THORNDIKE — Drive down a dirt road in the tiny Waldo County town of Thorndike, and suddenly it seems as if you may be on your way to Middle Earth.

For here is the workshop of Wooden Wonders, a small, family-owned business, and where its rounded "hobbit holes" take shape before wending their way to other destinations around the country. The company was started eight years ago by Rocy and Melissa Pillsbury, as a way to combine Rocy Pillsbury's talent for building homes and the couple's shared love of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of The Rings" books and movies.

"We didn't set out intentionally to start a hobbit hole business," Melissa Pillsbury, 36, said recently. "But it's what took off for us."

Over the years, the business has grown and changed, she said. Originally, they built and delivered the hobbit holes to customers around Maine and New England who wanted them for playhouses, garden sheds and chicken coops. But two years ago, they decided to expand their reach and put their resources into a line of hobbit holes that could be shipped as a kit to locations far away from central Maine.

Pillsbury quit her day job at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, and the couple launched themselves into figuring out the tricky logistics of making a fool-proof kit that can be assembled by the recipients and still looks good. They pre-paint them and install the windows, and the finished hobbit holes smell of fresh pine and cedar. They look like places where children could easily spend hours in imaginative play.

"We made the leap," she said.

The line of hobbit hole kits runs the gamut from \$400 doghouses to the \$7,995 "Bag End" model playhouse which is designed to support a sod roof and be placed underground. The family still designs and builds custom hobbit holes, too, and spent all summer building three adult-sized, fully insulated

See Wonders, Page C2

Snout-to-tail workshop set for Deer Isle

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

What are you doing this weekend? If butchering a pig has long been on your list, listen up.

Learn to smoke a swine, where sausage comes from and a great deal more on Oct. 23-25 at the nose-to-tail butchering and charcuterie workshop run by culinary school Edible Island on Deer Isle.

The intense class led by master butcher Brian Polcyn and Michael Ruhlman, co-author of "Charcuterie" and "Salumi," gets you up close and personal with a heritage pig.

"This brings in people from all over the place who are interested in furthering their understanding of curing meats," said John Altman, owner of David's Folly Farm in Brooksville, where a portion of the workshop is held.

Designed for chefs and food lovers, the experience delves deep.

See Butchering, Page C2



TROY R. BENNETT | BDN

Bison roam a pasture at Beech Hill Farm in Waterford. Ted and Doretta Colburn keep 23 bison on their spread in western Maine.

It's 'a good life'

Maine ranchers create a home where the bison roam

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

On a sprawling, upland pasture, where docile cows long grazed, a newer tenant occupies the field.

They are neither soft nor cuddly. In fact, the owners of Beech Hill Farm & Bison Ranch in Waterford are so buffaloed by their herd that they keep a respectful distance.

"We consider each one dangerous," rancher Ted Colburn said.

The mighty American mammals that can weigh a ton and charge at 30 mph are not pets, though Colburn and his wife, Doretta, have named a few.

Bison farming is what the couple call a "life-extension program." Every morning they rise early and plan their day over coffee. Compared to cattle raising, bison rearing is hands off. They feed on grass during the summer and organic hay during the winter. Pasturing 23 bison is an active, full-time pursuit. Maintaining fencing and caring for an abandoned calf keeps them busy when they aren't growing organic vegetables, pruning fruit trees and tending their 47 rolling acres.

"They have a good life while they are here," said Ted Col-



TROY R. BENNETT | BDN

Ted and Doretta Colburn run Beech Hill Farm in Waterford, where they raise bison for meat.

burn, who purchased the buffalo farm from his cousin in 2007 and moved here from Connecticut for a new adventure. "They have resort living," he said. Their owners do not.

"There is not a day that we don't wake up and look out to see where the bison are," Doretta said. "You have to be ever vigilant."

Bison on the rise

According to the National Bison Association, bison is staging a major comeback.

"Today, roughly 400,000 bison now roam the pastures and rangelands across North America, and more than 90 percent of those animals are on private ranches," NBA's website states.

Demand in bison has grown in double digits for the past five years. Many point to media mogul Ted Turner, who has a string of bison ranches and successful Ted's Montana Grill restaurants serving bison burgers and meatloaf.

In Maine, free-range chicken and grass-fed beef have long

See Bison, Page C2

'Disturbingly imaginative' show explores origin of 'superweeds'

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

BELFAST — Susan Smith's art first catches your eye and then your heart, as with "The Botany of Sacrifice," her current show at Waterfall Arts in Belfast.

"Disturbingly imaginative," one attendee wrote in the guest-book after seeing Smith's vision of the dark side of large-scale agriculture, and that's just what the Dover-Foxcroft artist and teacher had in mind. In the show, four giant paintings of so-called "superweeds," created by the use of pesticides and resistant to chemicals, dominate the walls. Small bundles of botanical

material, methodically wrapped and steamed in seawater for hours in her kitchen, have been placed at the base of the paintings.

"I call them the sacrifices," she said. "I call the superweeds the gods."

The idea for the art began a year ago, when Smith read an article about the oppression and exploitation of farm laborers — many of whom go into the fields to spray the pesticides by hand and pay for their work with their health.

"It's talking about our need to have these absolutely perfect crops. Then meanwhile, behind

See Smith, Page C2



ABIGAIL CURTIS | BDN

Artist Susan Smith of Dover-Foxcroft unwraps one of the steamed botanical bundles she made for "The Botany of Sacrifice," her ongoing exhibit at Waterfall Arts in Belfast.

Maine Harvest Festival
Celebrating Farm Fresh

Save the Date!
November 14th & 15th
Cross Insurance Center
Bangor, ME

Maine Harvest Festival has been nominated as a contender for USA TODAY'S 10Best Fall Harvest Festivals! Vote until Sept. 28th at 11:59AM at maineharvestfestival.com

Proud Sponsors

St. Joseph Healthcare
St. Joseph Hospital
In the Spirit of Healing
stjosephbangor.org

We've expanded in 2015! Interested in being a vendor? Spaces are still available to showcase your Maine-made products! Register at maineharvestfestival.com