



GRAND FINALE



COOKBOOK AUTHOR GESINE BULLOCK-PRADO SAYS FAREWELL TO VERMONT'S HARVEST SEASON WITH A SIMPLE FEAST INSPIRED BY NATURE'S FINAL FRUITS—AND HER GERMAN ROOTS.



APPLE CIDER COCKTAIL



BY PAIGE PORTER FISCHER PRODUCED BY NANCY WALL HOPKINS PHOTOS CON POULOS
RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING GESINE BULLOCK-PRADO PROP STYLING JULIE JASMIN

DUSKY RED PLUMS CLING ON THE BRANCH AS GESINE BULLOCK-PRADO STARTS HER RITUAL MARKING THE END OF THE FALL HARVEST,

plucking those last plums and pears from the trees and pulling the final sun-ripened grapes from their vines. “It’s the beginning of peak leaf season when the air is first turning crisp, and the fact that all of this goodness dovetails with Oktoberfest is cause for one last hurrah,” she says.

To celebrate, Gesine and her husband, Ray, will gather friends at Freegrace, the 222-year-old tavern and stagecoach stop they’ve made their home. The 6-acre Vermont farm features a centuries-old barn, an ancient corncrib, a sweet little chicken coop, and a stable housing ducks and geese. “The landscape here reminds me of Bavaria, where I spent much of my childhood, and the house came with a history of conviviality that I was so

drawn to,” Gesine says. Her roots show in her entertaining: “My family’s house in Germany was always full of family and friends. My grandmother nurtured everyone with her food.”

This evening, she and Ray will fling open the doors of their barn, where they’ll serve apple cider cocktails and home-brewed beer made from homegrown hops. Gesine will bake her coveted Bavarian pretzels, or *brezen*, and reinterpret her mom’s roast chicken by adding clusters of the season’s last grapes to the roasting pan. Though inspired by Gesine’s favorite German comfort foods, the menu represents both Bavaria and the Green Mountains of Vermont—the two places she loves the most.



NÜRNBERG
BRATS

HELGA'S
POTATO
SALAD

ROASTED
CHICKEN
WITH GRAPES

BRAISED
CABBAGE WITH
BRUSSELS
SPROUTS AND
SQUASH

Gesine’s party menu honors her mom’s German cooking and the season. She stays true to Helga’s Potato Salad, but she does add Brussels sprouts and butternut squash to the braised red cabbage. Her *beschwipster huhn* (tipsy chicken) uses Gewürztraminer and grapes from her vines. Bratwurst from her mother’s hometown, Nürnberg, round out the spread.

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"There's nothing precious about my parties," says Gesine, who created a welcoming table by placing a set of salvaged shutters over an old stone well. A thick slab of live-edge maple supports a colorful runner of farm fruits and market finds, such as persimmons, quince, figs, and pears. Crabapple clippings fill galvanized buckets.

“THERE'S A GENTLENESS IN THIS CHANGE OF SEASONS THAT I LOVE TO CELEBRATE.”

—GESINE BULLOCK-PRADO

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BRAISED CABBAGE WITH BRUSSELS SPROUTS AND SQUASH



Gesine's cider cocktail refreshes with delicate flavors of local gin and both hard and homemade cider. A mustardy vinegar sauce accented with caraway seeds adds zip to braised red cabbage. "You can't be German and not serve *rotkohl* (red cabbage) with a meal," Gesine says. What's *zwetschgendatschi*? It's a plum tart that's "buttery, rich, and beautifully sweet... and tart," according to Gesine. The gathering is complete when the pet goose, Mama, joins the party under the sugar maples strung with white lights. ■



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BAVARIAN PRETZELS

