



**BIRDS OF A FEATHER** “As I’ve gotten older, it’s nice to collaborate,” says Bloomfield (holding a Rhode Island Red) of her partnership with Tom Adams of London’s Pitt Cue. The two opened Coombeshead Farm in Cornwall to visitors this summer.

EPICUREAN TRAVEL

## ENCHANTED APRIL

New York-based chef April Bloomfield spent years searching for a country retreat to provide guests with first-hand exposure to her rustic culinary skills. She finally found one—thousands of miles away in her native England.

BY JAY CHESHES  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAHEL WEISS

**O**N A BRISK morning in late September, April Bloomfield is up well before dawn, stoking a pit-fire just outside her new farmhouse kitchen. The British-born New York-based chef, hair pulled tight behind headlamp straps, is running on fumes under the black Cornish sky. She cooked dinner for 12 guests last night before catching three hours of sleep. “I’d rather be busy than not,” she says. “I like moving.” She adds a log from a wheelbarrow to the hole in the ground, then shovels on smoldering embers from a nearby stone stove. “There’s something very peaceful about a fire, just watching it, feeling its presence,” she says, squatting on a stump. “Whenever you cook over fire everybody gets a little bit silent.” A haunch of aged British beef starts to brown on a rack high above the flames. “We’ll cook it real slow for about six hours,” she says as the sun begins to crack the horizon. “We’ve invited some friends. I don’t get to see my friends all that often, so it’s kind of nice to get them down.”

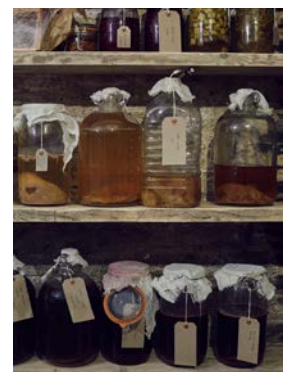
For years, armed with the belief that she no longer wanted to buy her meat from “big corporate distributors,” the 42-year-old chef has been chasing a dream of owning a farm where she can grow and raise things and cook them on site—part of Bloomfield’s grand plan to exert more control over the food she serves, from the escarole in the >



**GREEN ACRES**  
Clockwise from left: Purple sprouting broccoli; a corner table allows guests to watch the kitchen's goings on; a stand of beech trees in a meadow has become the farm's logo; house-made pickles, vinegar and cordials.



**FARM FRIENDS**  
Left: Bloomfield with Tom Adams, co-owner of Coombeshead. Middle Left: Cèpe mushrooms foraged from the nearby woods, ready to roast.



John Dory Oyster Bar's extra-creamy Caesar salads to the ground beef in the Spotted Pig's cult burger blend. Last spring, after several years spent scouring the New York area and coming up empty, she closed on 66 acres quite a bit farther from her adopted home than anticipated, partnering with young London chef Tom Adams on a rambling former dairy farm across the Atlantic in Cornwall.

The two chefs met in 2012 after Bloomfield wandered into Adams's Pitt Cue in London's Soho neighborhood—then a new, tiny venue that had begun life as a food truck serving British barbecue and bourbon cocktails along the south bank of the Thames (the restaurant recently moved into a larger space in East London). "I really loved the vibe, refreshing, different," says Bloomfield, "with a lot of spice and fermenting, and just really good pork." They cemented their friendship a few months later when Adams, then 24, spent a few weeks cooking at Bloomfield's bustling meat-focused New York restaurant, The Breslin.

Coombeshead, the farm they purchased together in April, exists in its own remote bubble—three and a half hours from London on the Great Western Railway out of Paddington station. While no meat or

produce from the farm will make it to Bloomfield's restaurants in New York or San Francisco—or to Los Angeles, where she's opening a new spot soon—they may eventually end up on a homecoming menu in London. Bloomfield began her career in the English capital—rising to sous-chef at the River Café before her move to New York in 2003 to launch the Spotted Pig, her pioneering West Village gastropub. "I like the idea of doing restaurants in places I like to spend time in," she says. "We've looked at spaces in London over the years; we were thinking maybe we'd do another [Spotted] Pig."

The Cornwall farm, which includes five cozy rooms for overnight guests, is just one piece of the puzzle as Bloomfield aims to become more self-sufficient. Last year she hired a pair of butchers—Jocelyn Guest and Erika Nakamura—to work full-time in New York, breaking down whole sides of beef. The young women have assumed key roles in a new project, White Gold, her seventh restaurant with partner Ken Friedman—a neighborhood restaurant with its own butcher shop—which opened this fall on New York's Upper West Side. Bloomfield and Friedman are still hunting for the fantasy farm to supply their New York restaurants, ideally near her country

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house along the Hudson River. "I've done things in a kind of discombobulated way," she says, "but I think I'll get there in the end."

Before joining forces with Adams, Bloomfield, raised in the very urban setting of Birmingham, England, still dreamed of adding livestock farmer to her résumé. Adams, who grew up among pigs and chickens in a rural hamlet southwest of London, was already rearing hogs on a friend's farm in Cornwall. Three years ago he invited Bloomfield down for a weekend of butchering, cooking and feasting with friends on the farm; scenes of the two of them cooking together were featured in the PBS series *The Mind of a Chef*.

That weekend set the stage for their eventual partnership at Coombeshead, just six miles from the farm where Adams, for now, still keeps his pigs. "April and





**COUNTRY LIFE**  
From far left: The main Georgian farmhouse; spoons in the dining room; a view of the barns from a sheep-mown meadow.



**BED & BREAKFAST**  
Left: Celeriac tendrils wrapped in house-cured bacon, prepped for roasting. Right: One of the farm's six guest rooms. Far right: The breakfast spread.



I had been mumbling about buying a farm," he says, "but that really informed it. It was such a special atmosphere, like-minded people absorbed by something creative, working together, not looking over each other's shoulders."

Though the barns and grounds were in good shape already, Adams worked briskly to get the place up to snuff, with his restaurant staff and immediate family all pitching in. "It was a case of everyone mucking in," he says, "painting, moving rubble." Bloomfield weighed in long distance on the decor and furniture. Over the summer, they welcomed their first paying guests.

"I think as I've gotten older, it's nice to collaborate," says Bloomfield, who plans to visit the farm every couple of months. "It doesn't all have to be about me." Adams, who moved full-time to the farm last spring—he returns to London just two days a week—hopes to begin raising his woolly Mangalitsa pigs, known for their richly marbled flesh, in a wooded corner of the property next year. There are already chickens to provide fresh eggs for breakfast on-site, as well as Hebridean sheep and honeybee hives.

The main Georgian farmhouse features a living room warmed by a wood-burning cast-iron stove

and sheepskin throws. An honor bar, surrounded by cookbooks, offers Scotch and house-made cordials and tinctures. Dining is family-style around a long wooden table, or, in good weather, outside on a repurposed barn door. Overnight guests are received like old friends and are allowed to linger in the kitchen to observe the cooking and nibble. The breakfast spread includes granola, house-churned butter and Cornish sausage. Just-baked bread and house-made charcuterie are available all day.

If all goes as planned, two more barns on the property will eventually house a small restaurant, bakery, cooking school, smokehouse and additional guest rooms. This vision for Coombeshead, and what it will become, has many sources of inspiration—from Philip Warren Quality Butchers in the nearby town of Launceston, which supplies London restaurants like Pitt Cue and the Ledbury, to Dan Barber's Blue Hill at Stone Barns outside New York, to Francis Mallmann's remote Patagonian island where Bloomfield spent a few days cooking whole beasts outdoors early this fall. Starting next year, guest chefs will come to the farm for a few days at a time to forage, teach and cook. "All our friends will come do workshops," says Bloomfield, mentioning that she's already invited

Mallmann, Argentina's king of live-fire cooking, and René Redzepi, of Copenhagen's Noma.

After breakfast, during my visit, Bloomfield gathers blackberries and cèpes in the forest, while inside the farmhouse Ben Glazer, a visiting baker from London who's consulted on Pitt Cue's bread, shares the secrets to his crusty, sourdough loaves. That afternoon, as chickens scamper by, a 10-person film crew, boom mic overhead, shoots the outdoor cooking for a one-hour "celebration" special of *The Mind of a Chef*, airing on Netflix this winter.

Toward the end of the day, Bloomfield serves her lunch feast to a small group outside, including Adams and his long-time girlfriend, Lottie Mew (who helps run the farm)—a spectacular spread of smoky grass-fed Friesian beef with creamy dill and wild garlic emulsion, house-pickled garlic scapes and nasturtium seed capers, all paired with free-flowing magnums of Ornellaia's second label wine.

Adams, who earlier had helped dangle cabbages and kohlrabi over the pit-fire, says the day's activities remind him of the first weekend he spent together with April. "That's what we're trying to get in this place, some bustle."

"Yeah," says Bloomfield, "some energy." ●