Two-Hundred MINUTES IN ... MILTON

written by **CHRISTINE KIRK**

Nodding to their ever-changing charm and steady draw, we're highlighting ways to spend 200 minutes in a different *Points North Atlanta* community for each of our 2017 issues. Whether you spend all 200 minutes in one place or divvy it up to discover several, enjoying your time in this neighborhood starts now.

SITUATED AT THE NORTHERN TIP of Fulton County is Milton, a young town incorporated 11 years ago by combining the former communities of Birmingham, Fields Cross Roads and Crabapple. As I took in the pastoral expanses in between winding drives that lead to family farms, I got the sense that this picturesque community is incongruous to the bustling neighbors east and south of here.

"Downtown" Milton, amidst quiet neighborhoods, schools and churches, is a charming town center near the Crabapple Crossroads with neatly manicured sidewalks and a walkability that encourages exploration. Refurbished country-style cottages and newly painted farmhouses are the faces of its small businesses, shops and boutiques. These are complemented by newer structures like Crabapple Market, a mixed-use development of crimson brick accented with dark wood paneling and wrought iron, which fronts the new City Hall. I set out to do some exploring, a little shopping and to meet the residents and business owners of Milton to find out what they love most about their town.

NUMBER 146

ARTFUL SPREADS

Cheese fanatics rejoice! A pale yellow storefront with white trim sits off Birmingham Highway and is home to **Cheeses & Mary**, a specialty shop packed with artisanal cheeses, jams and handcrafted gifts. You can easily spend a good amount of time perusing the thoughtfully selected inventory, and there's nothing generic about this shop or its owner.

Anthony Bourdain once said, "You have to be a romantic to invest yourself, your money and your time in cheese." After meeting Mary Mayer, I would have to agree. A friendly, petite brunette with purple-rimmed glasses, Mayer gushes about her passions: cheese, small business and supportive communities.

From Connecticut, Mayer moved to Georgia eight years ago where the idea for her unique shop came to her. "When I started Cheeses & Mary, the whole purpose was to support the local, small-batch producer," she explained. After engaging in the rapidly growing farm-to-table scene, she became passionate about supporting local producers.

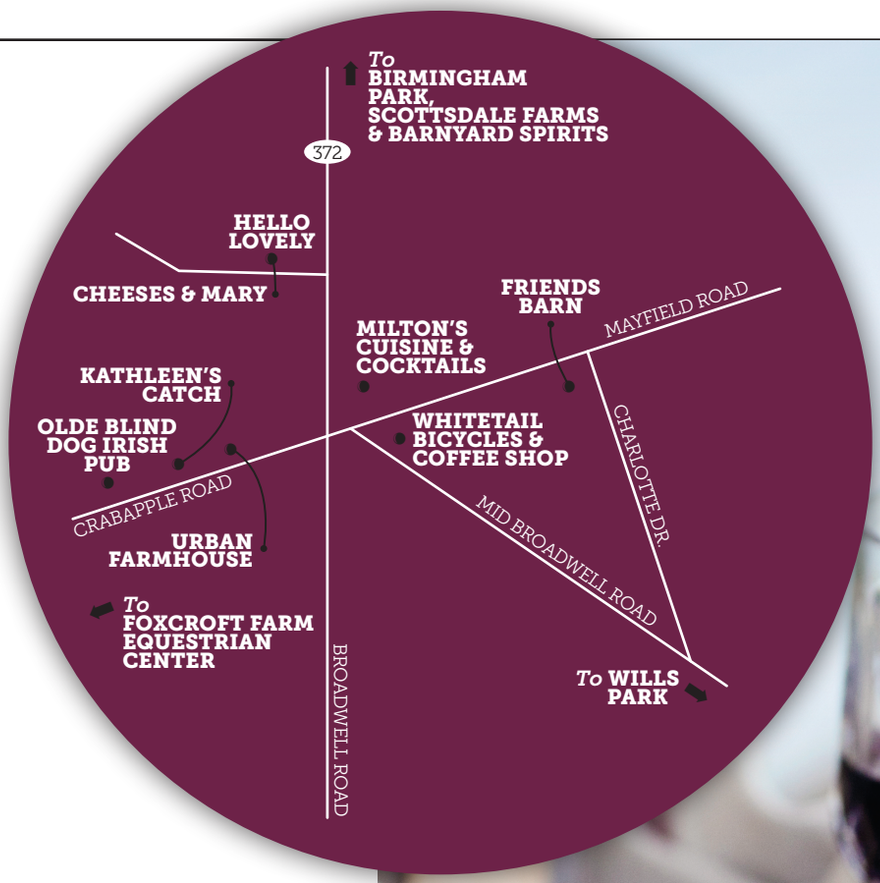
"If you sell cheese, you're supporting these people on an everyday basis," she remembered thinking. Her shop carries artisan cheeses by local and small producers that you won't find anywhere else. More than unique, these cheeses are delicious.

Top sellers include "Barely Buzzed" by the Beehive Cheese Company. This cheese with an espresso and lavender rind has won awards at both the American Cheese Society competition and the World Cheese Awards. Another favorite is "Greenhill" by Sweet Grass Dairy of Thomasville. Sweet Grass products bear the mark "Barn Free," which means the animals are raised in open-pasture year round. Mayer said, "you can taste the soil, you can taste the grass; it is unadulterated."

She pointed out a freshly stocked shipment of "Capra Gia" from Carrollton. This goat cheese comes in a variety pack of flavors and it's just off the delivery truck. "It's almost like I'm on the farm, that's how fresh it is," she said. No lengthy chain of buyers and sellers to contend with, everything is straight from the source, passing only through Mayer's hands into yours.

In addition to cheese, the shop sells locally made art, gifts and other artisanal edibles. For an easy $20 gift, she suggests pairing Fairywood Thicket strawberry lavender jam with Angel Lane shortbread. Some beautiful pottery nearby caught my eye, which she said is made by her friend and local potter, Teri Truitt.

In typical small-town fashion, Truitt dropped by soon after to let Mayer know she'll fire her kiln soon and bring more pottery for the shop. I also noticed some delicately embroidered linens on display. They're handmade by Reclaimed Linen, a company run by a North Carolina artisan who repurposes discarded fabrics into fully



functional linens. And they're only available at Cheeses & Mary.

I shamelessly dug into the cheese tasting at the front of the shop. Flavored jams are there for pairing, displayed on a marble pedestal. "I got that at Urban Farmhouse," Mayer revealed. She tells many of her customers about Kim Hirsch's shop, which is just around the corner. "We want to help the people, who like us, are trying to fulfill their dream," she said.

Speaking generally on that subject, Mayer emphasized that community support is key for small ventures like hers. "If you want all these cool little shops, then you have to shop there. If you want to eat jams that were made yesterday in someone's jam pot the old-fashioned way, then you have to buy them," she said. This is what got her started in this business. "I fell in love with food, and I love

Cheeses & Mary

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIZ ERIKSON



Whitetail Bicycles

the people who are going back to doing it the right way," she said.

Why is this philosophy so representative of Milton as a whole? "We still have vistas here," she said of her new home. "There are many people intent on preserving the rural aspects of Milton, and let's hope they all succeed."

№147

GETTING IN GEAR

Milton is no Mayberry, but it seems far away from Atlanta. Finding Milton to be "small, kind-of-quaint," Shaune Huysamen opened **Whitetail Bicycles** here, part bike shop and part café. It seems an unusual combination, but I gladly sipped a Stumptown espresso while browsing the selection of bikes by brands like Seven Cycles, Parlee Cycles and Cannondale.

"The reason I opened is that I just wanted to do something different," said Huysamen. Bike shops often double as a hangout in places like South Africa, Colorado and California, according to Huysamen, who moved here from Capetown, South Africa 18 years ago.

"After school, South Africans typically go to Europe for a year before college. I came to America and never went back," he said. As far as Milton goes, he said he likes "the small-town feel. It's the way of life, perfect for riding."

Whitetail is notable for its American-made bikes, specialty brands and adorable kids' cycles. Everything is high-end or custom made. "The biggest build we've done was a tandem (two-person) titanium bike made in Boston," he said. "It was handmade, exactly to their specifications."

I asked about repairing my bike, a yellow 1976 Schwinn Paramount. He told me that a couple times a month people might bring in a vintage bike. "We like to do different stuff that other people don't want to do," he said.

In customary beat-of-his-own-drum fashion, Huysamen surprised local officials when he applied for an alcohol license. Soon he'll be adding a few craft beers to the mix. People can come hang out, or even have a seat and do some work. "We have some people that don't cycle at all, they just come for coffee," he said. Others sometimes wander in to chat with Wayne Nix, mechanic and sales associate often recognized as former cast member on Discovery Channel's "Moonshiners."

The cycling clientele that come to Whitetail value the personal service. "They like the non-corporate, non-chain," Huysamen said. "Bike shops are very tough because of online bike sales and Amazon. We don't appeal to that. The people that come here want to buy from a local store, and they want to have that personal interaction. They call me at night. They have my cell-phone number."

№148

SADDLING UP

The scenery of Milton beckons you outdoors. With several public parks for hikers, joggers and nature-lovers, Milton also caters to a large equestrian community. The welcome sign greets you with the silhouette of a galloping horse. Their Publix, with a barn-like exterior, is flush with horse-themed décor and is no stranger to locals shopping in riding gear.

"Everywhere you drive in Milton you are surrounded by bucolic, verdant pastures filled with some of the most gorgeous horses," said Melinda McBrayer, an equestrian property specialist that lives and rides in Milton. She

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINE KIRK



Scottsdale Farms

also pointed out the strong sense of community between horse-lovers that is evident all over town.

As a rider, she finds Milton ideal for its proximity to equestrian venues, facilities and suppliers. Venues nearby, like **Foxcroft Farm Equestrian Center**, offer lessons and competition training. She loves Milton's proximity to Wills Park Equestrian Venue, and that Birmingham Park offers riding trails and parking for large horse trailers.

Also, she felt right at home attending nearby Birmingham Methodist Church. "I joined because the first time I visited, I found it to be the only church I've ever attended where you had equestrians dressed in their finest horse show attire on their way to Wills Park to compete," she remembered.

Professionally she helps her clients find the ideal equestrian property, whether they want something smaller for one or two horses, or they're looking for a working horse farm with rings and riding pasture. And Milton is just right for those interests. But she's also excited to participate in Mayor Joe Lockwood's newly formed Equestrian Committee. This committee will focus on ways to keep Milton a flourishing equestrian community. So be on the lookout for new horse trails and more reasons to get in the saddle.



Milton Cuisine & Cocktails

Nº 149

FARM TO FORK

Horse and farm themed décor is rampant at **Scottsdale Farms.** The 12,000-square foot timber frame barn is massive enough to keep you browsing (and dreaming) for hours. But this landmark is more than an interior design store. What began as a side gig is now a 65-acre fully functioning farm. In 1982, Luca Gianturco started a small business of Christmas tree lots to help pay for college. Now he and his family run Scottsdale Farms, which has expanded into a hub for all-things-horticulture. You can arrange custom landscaping for your home (or farm), order floral arrangements or consult



Kathleen's Catch

on-site interior designers. It's truly a one-stop shop.

Scottsdale Farms serves as a gathering place during the holidays. October brings the Pumpkin Patch, and everything else needed for fall decorating. True to its humble beginnings, Scottsdale has a huge selection of Christmas trees throughout the season, including an assortment of evergreens suited to the Georgia climate. I'll be stopping by this December for a live tree I can plant again after Christmas. But, this time, I came for the produce.

Scottsdale runs its own vegetable garden year-round and sells its veggies right inside the barn. The on-site café, Bella Luna, incorporates them into its Italian-inspired menu as well. For a quick bite, grab a smoothie or the Veggie Farm Salad. If you're making a day of it (which is easy to do), arrive early for the Quiche of the Day, made with the eggs from their resident hens. I chose the Adult Grilled Cheese, which was stuffed with a thick, juicy slice of tomato bursting with sunny flavor.

Milton's Cuisine & Cocktails is another neighborhood staple that takes the "farm to fork" concept quite literally. Chef Derek Dollar's locally sourced, seasonal menu uses fresh produce every day from their own garden, Milton's Acre. The menu focuses on freshness with creative touches of Southern flair. Dollar encourages first-time diners to try his grilled pork tenderloin, with creamed corn grits and jalapeno honey, or his signature pickle-brined fried chicken, which is only offered on special occasions.

Earlier this year, Dollar and his crew began offering Milton's Prime Cuts menu. Tasting each purveyors' steaks side by side, Revere Meats won the battle and Milton's now serves their six- and nine-ounce filets, an aged 14-ounce grass-fed Delmonico ribeye, a 16-ounce dry aged bone-in New York strip (which is sliced and pulled from the bone for ease of attack), and Milton's signature Wagyu flank steak. While the Prime Cuts add great allure to the entrée offerings, it's still Dollar's attention to accoutrements that gives Milton's dining experience added sizzle. Loud Mouth Farm's mushroom confit with truffle essence is meaty and hearty, and a revelation. His duxelles truffle butter is an exquisite accompaniment to both filet or strip, and the smoked Gouda creamed spinach with crispy shallots or charred Brussels sprouts and apples with cracked mustard-sherry bacon vinaigrette are welcome additions to any table. Dollar's unique mac-n-cheese also yields wide grins.

Personally, I am looking forward to their monthly Garden Series. Milton's Acre is a serene backdrop for these four-course dinners, paired with wine. This experience offers a chance to see where Milton's vegetables are grown, an uncommon intimacy for diners.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHRISTINE KIRK; BLENCOE & CO. PHOTOGRAPHY

Nº 150

FRESH CATCHES

I've spent years working in upscale restaurants and dabbling as chef de cuisine in my own kitchen, so I place a great importance on the quality and source of ingredients. Once you've tasted the good stuff, your palate won't let you turn back. So, Kathleen's Catch was a must-visit for me.

Kathleen Hulsey opened this fresh seafood market in 2015, in addition to her already successful location in Johns Creek. She sources

ASSISTED LIVING AND MEMORY CARE





CALL TODAY TO SCHEDULE LUNCH AND A TOUR!

Live, Love, and Thrive

…is our philosophy that we integrate into everything we do because we recognize the importance of seniors staying active and purposeful.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF WHAT YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO:

- Enchanting Outdoor Space with Walking Paths
- Culinary Delights
- Exceptional Care
- Certified Dementia Practitioners

PSL
The Phoenix at Milton
A Phoenix Senior Living Community

13943 HIGHWAY 9 N
470-238-6400 | www.phoenixsrliving.com

her products directly through Inland Seafood, the largest distributor in the Southeast, thereby significantly reducing the time it takes to go from the dock to your plate. Delivered fresh daily (except Sundays), everything comes from strictly controlled fisheries focused on sustainability and being responsible stewards of the environment. You won't find this quality at the grocery store.

You also won't find Jon Beatty, the Catch's resident chef. Born and raised just 10 minutes away, Beatty remembers the locally iconic Silos being a lot bigger. "All this," he said, gesturing beyond the shop, "this was all farmland when I was a kid. Atlanta's too big, it's growing too fast."

After training at the French Culinary Institute in New York City, Beatty worked abroad, honing his culinary skills in Italy and France. He's lived all over: New York, Chicago, California. The irony that he's come back to his hometown as a fishmonger does not escape him, he mentioned jokingly. But quality food is his obvious passion, and in this industry that makes an impact.

"There is a huge trust factor, and we work diligently every day to be sure we are providing the very best products available. We know where it comes from and what it tastes like. And to be sure we can tell you the best ways to prepare it, we have Chef Jon," said Hulsey.



Milton Library

A chalkboard sign by the entrance lists the schedule for Beatty's upcoming cooking demonstrations. He teaches seafood preparations that are delicious and easy to recreate at home. His favorite dish so far is a monkfish picatta. Overhearing this, another employee popped his head up from below the counter to enthusiastically confirm its deliciousness. "Yeah, I made it for him," laughed Beatty.

For people on the run, Beatty prepares "Catch-to-Go" meals, which are fresh, healthy and easy-to-make meals for people that don't have time to cook (or maybe just don't feel like it.) "Also, we're going to start doing ready-to-eat poké bowls soon," he added.

If you're wondering about the giant freezer, "it holds a treasure trove of fish," Hulsey explained. After two days, anything not sold is frozen and offered at a discount. This practice maintains their high standard of quality, reduces waste and keeps their prices reasonable. "You can pick up fresh fish for dinner tonight and get some frozen for dinner tomorrow." Don't mind if I do.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINE KIRK

Nº 151

TIGHT-KNIT COMMUNITY

I've found that Milton is a city where you can easily make friends. Mary Mayer readily recommends **Urban Farmhouse** to her customers. Also, she shares a retail space with trendy boutique **Hello Lovely**, frequently making owner Kris McCorstin a guinea pig in her cheese and jam tastings. When I mentioned that I was going to visit **The Friends Barn**, Mayer listed off some volunteers I could speak with, and McCorstin remembered that she has a bag of books she's been meaning to go donate.

The Friends Barn was built across from the Milton Public Library in 2015 by a team of inspired residents and volunteers. The non-profit organization **Friends of the Milton Library** raises funds to support the library and its community services and programs. One way of fundraising is through The Barn, which houses a collection of donated, gently read books for sale.

Upon arrival, I was delighted to see the sign out front that said "Fill a Bag for $10." I had no problem with this challenge, filling mine with several historical-fiction novels, a collection of essays on Chaucer and a book on travel writing. Coincidentally, Bourdain was propped up in a corner staring at me from the cover of Kitchen Confidential, so into the bag it went as well.

The books are neatly categorized, and the selection is diverse. I saw everything from biographies and non-fiction novels to cookbooks and travel guides on the shelves. The Friends volunteers take turns running the book sale, as well as organizing the shelves, managing donations and maintaining The Barn. Book sales are held every Wednesday and the second Saturday of each month for extended hours. With such a fabulous amount of donations, the stock is ever changing. I make a note to return, next time with a bag of books to add to the collection.

Nº 152

NEIGHBORHOOD SPIRIT

The world of software is an ever-changing business with many shades of grey. Milton resident David Essary engages in that world every day, so buying a wine and spirits store presents other challenges. But next to the Shell station on Birmingham Highway and the four-way stop with Hickory Flat Road is his store, **Barnyard Spirits**.

"The closest store is 7.5 miles from us. We consider ourselves the village or community store for Milton, at least for the western half, which has more farms and neighborhoods than commercial businesses," Essary said. "It has been great to connect with neighbors and people that we hadn't met previously."

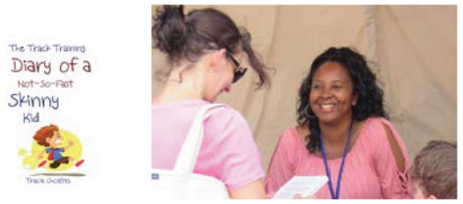
Saving neighbors a trip to national retail chains in high-traffic areas is part of a solid business model. Another aspect is stocking shelves with spirits distilled locally or within the region, and wines that simply aren't available at the local grocery stores.

"The reason my wife and I bought this store is to meet more of our neighbors and to become more involved with community and charitable events. We felt there was a need for a store that would carry unique, esoteric and exclusive wines that aren't carried in the supermarket," Essary said. "We have developed a similar philosophy with some of our spirits, asking our suppliers to bring us products from regional or local distilleries. We have had great feedback from the community about that program, particularly with brands like Southern Vodka from Thirteenth Colony Distilleries in Americus." Barnyard's customers have taken to the quality and appealing price of that vodka.

Later this month, Essary



The Track Training Diary of a Not-So-Fast Skinny Kid
www.traciechoates.com



Special price for a limited time $10.00

All Kids 8-12 love this Funny Novel but Moms can't help laughing out-loud as well, as it reminds them of their own son's. Kids love it because it's not preachy.
www.facebook.com/notsofastskinnykid



David Essary

will unveil a wine club for Milton and Crabapple residents that will offer exclusive brands and no monthly or annual fees. Customers will taste four wines per month and can pre-order as few or as many bottles as they wish of each.

"This is a way to give all of us that live in Milton and nearby an opportunity to meet our neighbors and get to know each other better in a relaxed, casual setting," he said.

№153

WORD OF MOUTH

Surely it's been more than 200 minutes by now. But so many recommendations have steered me successfully thus far, so there are a few more stops I can't miss.

Urban Farmhouse is a haven for people with unique, rustic style. This restored 19th century farmhouse is the perfect setting for the home décor collection curated by interior designer Kim Hirsch, and every display from wall to wall is eye-catching. She also offers design services if you want to get it straight from the source. Of course, you'll find plenty of local art and jewelry throughout the brilliant stagings.

The aforementioned **Hello Lovely** is adorably sandwiched between Cheeses & Mary and Blencoe & Co. Photo Studio. They carry a handpicked selection of stylish ensembles as well as artfully crafted jewelry from local artisans. Owners Kris McCorstin and Barbara Mahoney originally met as expats in Belgium, where they opened a small store together. Meeting up years later back in the States, they joined forces again, much to our luck. You'll find the perfect outfit here, or two (or three!), and you'll have such lovely guides along the way.

All this shopping is bound to stir up an appetite, so I finished my quest at the local watering hole I've heard so much about. **The Olde Blind Dog Irish Pub** is a popular spot to grab a drink and get your Irish fix. I devoured the bangers and mash, which did not disappoint, and browsed the large selection of craft beers, landing on an IPA from Wicked Weed Brewing (Asheville, N.C.). The people at the long high-top community table behind me were clearly enjoying themselves, laughing and occasionally making boisterous comments about the high school team, the Milton Eagles. I feel like a local already.

cheesesandmary.com
whitetailcycles.com
mcbrayerassociates.bhhsgeorgia.com
foxcroftfarm.net
willspark.com
cityofmiltonga.us
scottsdalefarms.com
miltonscuisine.com
kathleenscatch.com
miltonlibraryfriends.org
barnyardspirits.com
crabapplemarketga.com
hellolovelyatl.com
oldeblinddog.com

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID ESSARY