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She Specializes In Field-To-Teapot Herbal Teas

Katydid Hill Farms of Sinking Spring, Pa., grows and sells organic herbal tea blends.

"There are two origin stories here," says Katelyn Melvin, the farm's founder. "How I started a farm and the origin of Katydid Hill, which began when I met Ben."

As a child, Melvin caught the green spark and planted her first herb garden in her parents' backyard. When she reached young adulthood, Melvin worked on vegetable farms while studying herbs on the side.

"Finally, I got the gumption to lease-to-own a small farm in Orwigsburg," she says. "I grew everything at first, from cut flowers to ingredients for elixirs, then began homing in on a few key crops."

She met partner Ben Wissinger a few years later, when several goats got on the wrong side of their fence. After Ben took a job on her farm, the pair fell in love. Melvin moved her operation to Ben's family farm with the vision of growing herbs for tea.

"We wanted the farm to be sustainable not just in the way we were growing organically but also sustainable for us as small farmers and everyone who works with us."

The decision to focus on herbs was easy. "I always felt drawn to herbs," Melvin says. "The relationship between plants and people across time and cultures is fascinating. Herbs evoke so much emotion and memory, and I wanted to focus on super high-quality herbs for our regional markets."

She notes that herbal tea bags can be lacking. Most are filled with old, over-dried plant material that may not match the label.

"I love being able to connect people with a gorgeously fragrant and truly medicinal herbal tea," Melvin says. "Herbal teas foster connection—the growers with the tea drinkers, and, of course, making a pot of tea to share is such a simple, loving and intimate act of connection with others."

Today, Katydid Hill Farm is USDA-certified organic. The property spans 40 acres of organic farmland, including six acres of herb fields, processing facilities and a retail store—enough to keep Katelyn and Ben busy with their four employees.

Herbs are less demanding than agronomic crops for pest control and fertility, as they are affected only occasionally by fungi

such as rust and powdery mildew. This makes the farm's biggest challenge its commitment to growing 100% of the herbs used in its teas.

"Having a vertically integrated business is what makes our tea so special and high-quality," Melvin says. "We have our core group of tea blends, and if we have crop failure due to weather or other factors, we just have to be out of that tea until the next harvest. It's stressful being out of some of our most popular blends just because it rained a lot last May and the chamomile yields were down. But we try to maintain enough diversity to have resilience, even as we keep our farm systems simple."

Still, the joy of seeing a customer's face light up while drinking her tea makes the hard days worthwhile.

For Melvin, chamomile is an underrated herb.

"A fresh cup of chamomile tea is worlds away from a tea bag from the store—think about the difference between a rock-hard, half-green tomato in January and a sun-ripened heirloom from your garden in August."

Chamomile flowers offer a fresh alternative to most chamomile teas on the market. She incorporates chamomile into many blends, along with the farm's other herbs, including peppermint, spearmint, apple mint, calendula, tulsi and lavender.

"I'm always coming up with a new blend. The flavor from the plants' delicate essential oils is the medicine. We strive to keep them intact throughout the growing, harvesting, drying and packaging process. When you taste that bold flavor of our blends, you know that the herbs are supporting your digestion, your immune system, and more, as well as giving you that nice, soothing sip."

Melvin credits much of Katydid Hill Farm's success to finding her community early.

"Talk to your neighbors, reach out to mentors, and build community. I felt a lot like a one-woman show at times in the early days, but it truly never would've happened without the support of friends, family, co-workers, and my neighbors. Farming is hard, and it can be isolating, and I don't think it was ever meant to be something that's done alone."

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Carrying On A Family Farm Legacy, One Loaf At A Time

A chance encounter in 2013 between a farm girl from the Midwest and an ocean-loving man in Hawaii has evolved into Full Circle Farm, a young, growing Minnesota farm-to-market business. Now, 13 years after their meeting, Jenny Bredeken and Roscoe Fowler are married with two children and live in Central Minnesota, the 5th generation on her grandfather's farm. Jenny, the farm girl, and Roscoe, the Hawaiian who loves sailing, are raising hard red wheat and rye and milling them into specialty flour, the key ingredient in "Roscoe's Sourdough." They're also making steady inroads with several other products.

"It's been an amazing journey," says Bredeken. "When we met in Honolulu, I was working as a registered nurse, and he was in construction. I soon learned he was also a self-taught baker. A few years later, he was making fabulous sourdough bread and giving it away to friends. People said he should be selling it, and those encouraging words helped launch Roscoe's Sourdough."

Some of that excellent bread was made from grains grown in mainland Minnesota, which brought strong revenue at weekend markets in Honolulu. Bredeken says that although success like that has been tougher to come by in rural central Minnesota, "we're driven by our belief in the value of small grains and excellent quality products delivered to our customers."

Their sourdough journey traces back to a 2014 trip to her family farm by Bredeken and Roscoe. As her grandfather was harvesting wheat, Roscoe scooped a container of grain directly from the combine, cleaned the chaff away in the wind, then ground it into flour with a countertop mill. He baked sourdough bread with the flour, water and salt, and then she presented the freshly baked bread to her grandpa.

"It's the first time he'd ever tasted bread from his own wheat crop," Bredeken says.

Later, Bredeken and Fowler shipped Minnesota wheat to Hawaii for use in Roscoe's Sourdough bread.

"Both of us took a leap of faith, quit our jobs, and became business partners in our micro bakery in 2019."

Fowler built a custom humidity and temperature-controlled grain box to keep the Minnesota-grown wheat from spoiling in Hawaii's climate.

"Milling fresh flour and using that in our breads opened our eyes to several ideas and possibilities," Bredeken says.

In 2020, Bredeken and Fowler split their time between their Honolulu business and trips to Minnesota, laying the groundwork for Full Circle Farm. In May 2023, they moved permanently to Minnesota and into her grandfather's house on a 35-acre farm. They seeded 8 acres of wheat and, after harvest, hauled half the grain to a seed company for cleaning. They stored the other half as commodity grain, hoping the price would rise to near \$14, as it had in 2022. Instead, the price dropped like a rock.

"Getting paid \$5.40 a bushel was a slap in the face, barely covering our cost of production," says Bredeken.

Fortunately, they were able to mill the remaining grain into flour, bake it into their



Roscoe Fowler and his wife, Jenny Bredeken, produce Roscoe's Sourdough bread, made from wheat and rye grown on their Central Minnesota farm.

Legacy Loaves, and make a decent profit.

That experience, Bredeken says, convinced them to commit all their grain to producing high-quality milled flour and exceptional baked goods, and to sell directly to customers and stores. They're now supplying bread and flour to a dozen local stores and several online customers.

Planning for growth, Full Circle has partnered with Bakersfield Flour and Bread in Minneapolis to custom mill and sift, enabling them to bake at higher volumes. That also allows them to offer bread flour with a 70% extraction from Linkert hard red spring wheat. They're also planning a micro bakery at their farm.

"At the beginning of 2026, we can also say, officially, that 'we grew this bread' because our sourdough loaves are now made exclusively with farm-grown flour," Bredeken says.

The product line includes a European-inspired 100% whole-wheat Legacy Loaf and a 70% extraction Full Circle Sourdough made with freshly milled wheat and winter rye flour. Those flours, along with wheat berries, are also sold to a growing number of home bakers.

Looking beyond baking, Bredeken is passionate about growing cut flowers and inspires others to do the same. She's been a guest on the University of Minnesota Flower Farmer Series and now offers flower subscriptions and fragrant arrangements for events in her area.

All of their products are showcased and described on an easy-to-navigate website that Bredeken maintains. She values excellent customer service, writes a blog and a newsletter, shares recipes for baked goods, and posts updates on Instagram.

"The Full Circle Farm name implies many things for us," Bredeken says. "We see great value in transforming the grains we grow into high-quality fresh milled flour. It's free from fillers, preservatives and chemicals, then made into high-quality products. Our customers are understanding this value and spreading our name through 'word of mouth.' That's really benefiting our business," Bredeken says.

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