



Handmade In Berea

This Kentucky couple produces quality wares as they give visitors lessons in the shaping of clay.

The first thing that happens as I arrive at Tater Knob Pottery is that I hear bells. Not a tinkling sound or the peals that come from a church bell choir but a ding-donging tone—a serious, come-to-dinner, baritone bong that demands immediate attention.

“Welcome to Tater Knob Pottery,” says a smiling Sarah Culbreth, the bell ringer. “These are some of the things we make here,” she says of the hanging pottery instruments. “Come in, and see everything else.”

There is a lot to see. The front part of the studio holds already-finished items for sale, which include the aforementioned bells as well as dinnerware, pitchers, pieplates, serving bowls, and hurricane lamps.

Sarah and Jeff Enge, who both graduated from nearby Berea College, take great pride in their craft.

“You don’t just go away with the product,” says Sarah. “We let you know where it comes from.” A local riverbank provides the lead-free clay, which is perfect for use as dinnerware and is microwave-, oven-, and dishwasher-safe.

Sarah begins making one of their most famous pieces, the spoonbread baker. Spoonbread—a regional dish served at the Boone Tavern Hotel Restaurant in Berea—is made of souffléed cornbread and is eaten with a spoon. “Each one we sell comes with a recipe,” says Sarah.

And every visit to Tater Knob comes with an impromptu lesson in pottery-making. “We educate whoever walks in the door,” Sarah says as she continues the rhythmic activity at her wheel. She tells visitors that kids from ages 2 to 82 can make pottery and gives a brief description

of the process, which takes seven days from start to finish. She also explains that the kiln heats up to 2,185 degrees.

While Sarah shapes the clay, Jeff and their son, David, work nearby. It’s a family endeavor: They have been in the pottery business for 25 years. An Alanis Morissette CD plays softly in the background as Sarah finishes the piece.

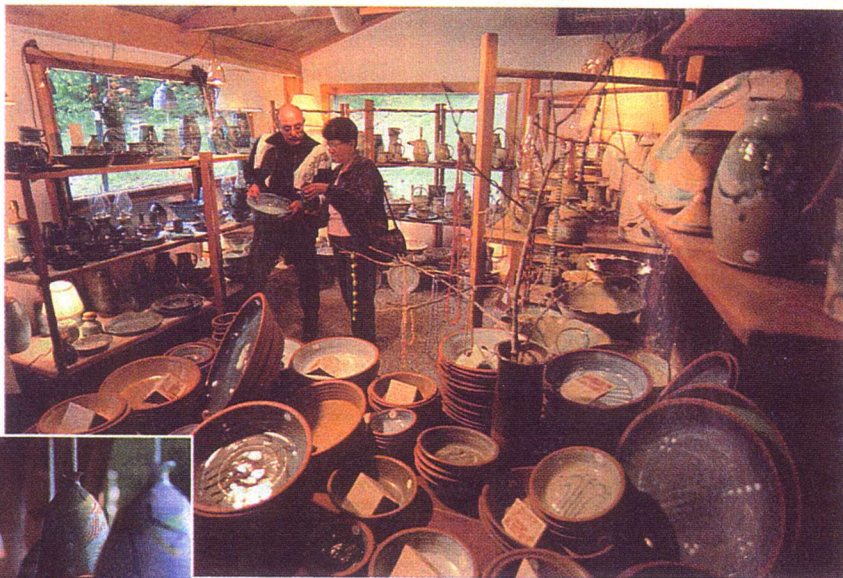
I wander out of the workshop to the front where all the pretty things wait for lucky customers. A large spoonbread baker, which looks like a compact pieplate, sells for \$32. A coffee mug goes for \$15. I admire a pitcher for \$42, but eventually I once more seek out the bells.

Sarah laughs and says, “Lots of people have a hard time resisting the bells.” I choose a small one (\$68). “But you really need a spoonbread baker too,” she adds. I agree happily.

“And if you get home and decide you want to get something else, just check us out on the Internet, or give us a call,” Sarah says. “We’ll fix you right up.”

Just like the bells, that sounds good to me. WANDA MCKINNEY

Tater Knob Pottery: 260 Wolf Gap Road, Berea, KY 40403; (859) 986-2167 or www.taterknob.com. **Hours:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday. **Directions:** From downtown Berea, take State 21 East to U.S. 421; turn left. Travel 1 mile; then turn right on State 594. Stay on State 594 for 3½ miles; then turn left on Wolf Gap Road. Go ½ mile farther to Tater Knob Pottery. ♦



PHOTOGRAPHS: ADAM BARNES



top: Sarah Culbreth, Jeff Enge, and their son, David, live and work on their 30-acre Tater Knob Farm outside Berea. **above:** Use this lead-free stoneware for microwaving or baking. **left:** Form your own bell choir with these beauties. A knotted rope inside functions as the clapper.



Jeff puts the finishing touches on a vase before it makes a visit to the kiln.