

BARN TO PARTY

MUSICIAN AND DESIGNER COOPER BOONE TRANSFORMED AN OLD PENNSYLVANIA BARN INTO THE PERFECT PLACE TO MAKE BOTH MUSIC AND MEMORIES WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

WRITTEN BY JENNIFER KOPF PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID TSAY STYLING BY LISA LEE

IT WAS A WRONG TURN that initially led Cooper Boone to the right spot. "When I happened upon this place, I thought, 'I have been dreaming about this property since I was a child!'" says Cooper. While he loved the picturesque white farmhouse, it was the Pennsylvania Dutch bank barn out back that got his attention. There was only one problem: it wasn't on the market. But after years of drive-bys, he got a (literal) sign, and it said "For Sale." He snapped up the place and immediately went to work on the barn, which needed more than a little TLC. "She was a hot mess," Cooper laughs. "There was a hole in the roof, the floor was all rotted, and it had faded to a dingy brown." After 17 years, endless coats of red paint, new electrical and plumbing, and load after load of reclaimed materials, the structure went from a disaster to the perfect party place, bar(n) none.



Host Your Own Barn Party

Located in Shohola, Pennsylvania, this festive space is available to rent for weddings and special events (coopersfarmhouse.com). You can even rent the adjacent farmhouse and make a weekend of it.



Cottage Red
Benjamin Moore

SET THE STAGE

Cooper divided the wide-open, 1,100-square-foot barn into "rooms" for functions like cooking, dining, and gathering. The goal: to create a comfortable, inviting party setting layered with vintage charm. "I'm a big believer that a space should allow people to let their hair down and be themselves," says Cooper. "I like to have areas for people to gather as a group but also to sneak away for quieter conversation."



Cooper (right) and partner Mark Veecher

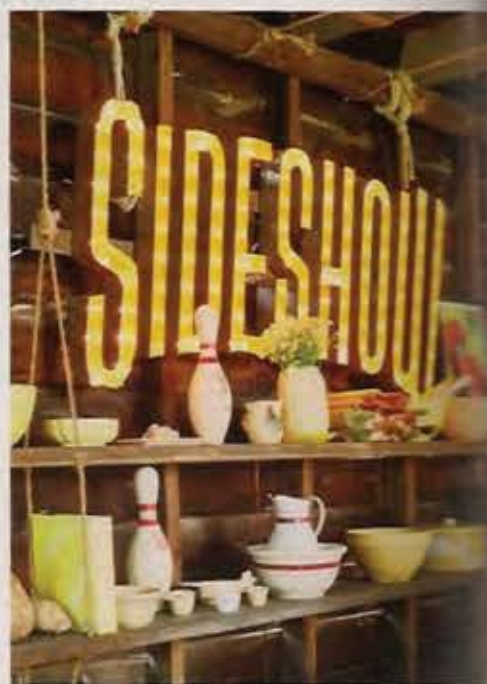


LOFT LOUNGE ^

Overhead, in the hay loft, an intimate seating arrangement provides a cozy spot for conversation. The vintage rattan settee boasts old military blankets-turned-cushions, while a "wall" of vintage factory racks provides a lot of display space for an ever-evolving mix of Craigslist and cleaned-up junking finds.

KITCHEN >

Along the barn's kitchen wall, Cooper repurposed 1-foot-wide boards looped with jute rope into a rustic shelving unit. His collection of yellowware bowls, interspersed with quirky "bits and bobs" (including a sign that gives a nod to his latest album), adds a pop of color. "A grouping offers much more visual impact," advises Cooper.



LIVING ROOM

The "more-the-merrier" philosophy of the barn is reinforced by built-in benches designed to seat a crowd. As a rule, Cooper is drawn to things that are both beautiful and functional, like the blue safe he found dumped at the curb. "I literally draped my body over it while Mark got the truck!" he says. An eclectic mix of vintage finds—from county fair ribbons to bowling pins—come together for a fun vignette.

MOO-VABLE ART
Corrugated metal gets an artistic upgrade with a giant hand-painted butcher chart. The wall retracts and provides access to the back patio.



UPCYCLED FURNITURE
Cooper found an old factory gear at Brimfield (brimfieldantiquemarket.com), turned it on its side, and topped it with sheep fencing for a cool cocktail table.

SET THE TABLE

"The barn is all about friends gathering and enjoying delicious food together, and the table is the center of it all," says Cooper. In order to accommodate a large dinner party, he pushes two 10-foot tables together. There's room for plenty of guests, but the narrow width keeps the conversation flowing. From there, he employs his top eight no-fail tabletop tricks that work for every occasion.

Menu Chalkboard
"It's a cheap way to showcase a menu."
Chalkboard Easel, \$45; luckyclovertrading.com

< Grouped Arrangements
"Keep your flowers on the down low [12 inches or lower] so you don't block conversation."
Amber Apothecary Bottle, \$42; birchlane.com

^ Upholstery Webbing Runner "It adds a touch of color but doesn't distract from the table."
Burlap Webbing, \$16 for 10 yards; touchofeurope.net

Cafeteriaware
"I use these for all of our parties. It's nostalgic, beautiful, and hardy!"
Green Band Dinner Plate, \$19; fisheseddy.com

^ Casual-Meets-Formal Glassware
"It's not a barn party without mason jars, but elegant glassware makes it more festive."
Anney DOF Glass, \$12; anthropologie.com

Gingham Napkins >
"Red gingham is iconic, but use it sparingly so it doesn't get too kitschy."
Napkins, \$20 for four; pier1.com

Tag Placecards
"A thought-through seated table is important. The tags give an old general-store feel."
Pool Hang Tags, \$10 for 20; papersource.com

NO-SCRATCH SEATING
"Burlap cloth tied with rope (and adorned with vintage kitchen utensils) keeps hay bales comfy for guests. It's the little extras that make people smile," Cooper says.

^ Hay Bale Benches
"There's always room to squeeze in one more!"
Faux Hay Bale, from \$79; grandroad.com

THE ULTIMATE NIGHT-LIGHT
"The industrial light fixture was a baby crib in a former life. Cooper flipped it and had it reconfigured and strung with individual bulbs to create his own personal twist on barn lighting."

PARTY FOWL!

CUSTOMIZABLE TABLES
Order one (or two!) of Cooper's Truman tables (from \$900; 42home.com).

SET THE MOOD

Pre-party, Cooper leaves very little to chance. "I assign specific food dishes to people and will even give out recipe ideas. I also ask everyone to bring their dish in something white to keep it cohesive," he says. He sets up a serve-yourself bar, mood lighting, and crowd-pleasing tunes, so that when guests arrive, he can devote the rest of the night to having fun.

String Lights, \$25; worldmarket.com



The Signature Cocktail

The Johnny Guitar
Muddle 1 1/2 oz. **Most Righteous Bourbon**, 1 1/4 oz. **Catskill Berry Simple Syrup** (recipe below), and 2 fresh **blackberries** in the bottom of a cocktail shaker. Add 3/4 oz. fresh **lemon juice**, 1/4 oz. **Barrow's Intense Ginger Liqueur**, and ice; shake vigorously. Strain over fresh ice. Garnish with **fresh basil**. *Makes 1 serving*



The Buffet...

The kitchen island doubles as an ideal food station and gathering place for a guest list that includes friends both old and new. "I'll even ask people to bring along a friend I've never met before," he says.



The Music...

Good tunes make a party great, so what could be finer than having a host who moonlights as a country artist? After dessert, the back galvanized wall slides open and Cooper and bandmates Kevin McComb and Kristin Hackett take to the patio-turned-stage and get guests on their feet with a few songs from their latest album, *Sideshow*. Hear it at cooperboone.com.



The Lights...

No frightening fluorescents here. Cooper advises having all the lights on dimmers so they can be easily adjusted as the night progresses.

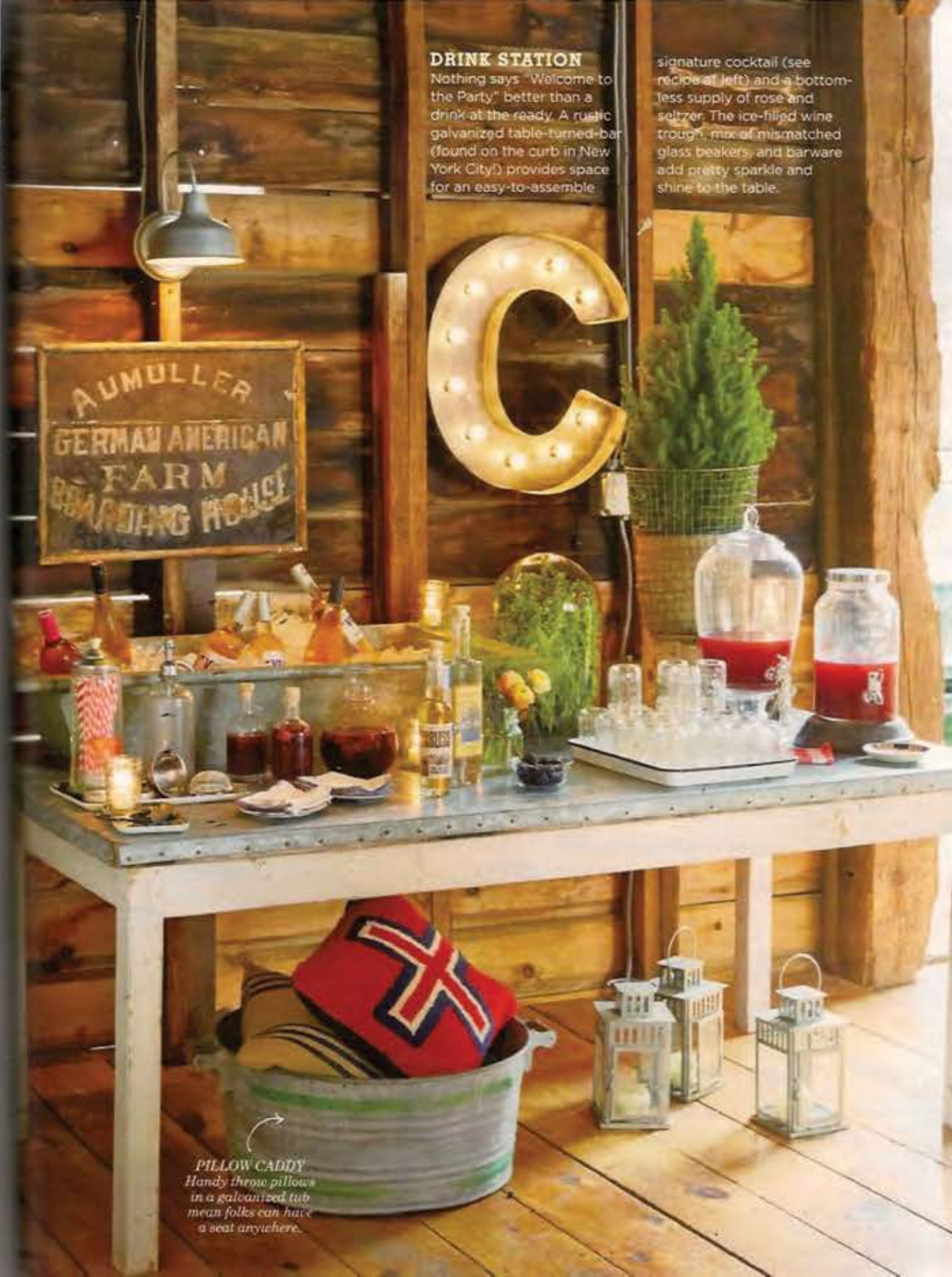
Catskill Berry Simple Syrup
Combine 2 cups **strawberries** (hulled and halved) and 2 cups **Catskill Distillers Peace Vodka** (or other sweet, buttery vodka) in a pitcher, let sit, at room temperature, for 3 days. Transfer strawberries and vodka, 30 **blackberries**, 1 cup **Demerara sugar**, 1 cup **light brown sugar**, and 1 cup water to a medium pot. Bring to a heavy boil; remove from heat. Cool to room temperature, strain. (Can be made up to 30 days ahead; store in the refrigerator.) *Makes 4 cups*

Recipe created by Rick Dolinsky & Catskill Distilling Company

DRINK STATION

Nothing says "Welcome to the Party" better than a drink at the ready. A rustic galvanized table-turned-bar (found on the curb in New York City!) provides space for an easy-to-assemble

signature cocktail (see recipe at left) and a bottomless supply of rose and seltzer. The ice-filled wine trough, mix of mismatched glass beakers, and barware add pretty sparkle and shine to the table.



PILLOW CADDY
Handy throw pillows in a galvanized tub mean folks can have a seat anywhere.

THE PLAYLIST

Cooper keeps the party going with toe-tapping tunes that inspire impromptu dance parties.

"Sweet Southern Comfort"
Buddy Jewell
"All Summer Long"
Kid Rock
"Shake It Off"
Taylor Swift
"Friends in Low Places"
Garth Brooks

"You Ain't Down Home"
Julie Roberts
"How Do You Like Me Now?!"
Toby Keith
"I'll Fly Away"
Alison Krauss

"Hell on Heels"
Pistol Annies
"You And Me"
Leslie Ellis
"Dirt Road Dancing"
Cooper Boone
"Peace in This House"
Angela Kaset

