



Farming, food and leisure are the three cornerstones of Heaven Farm, where you will find all three in abundance, including the newly refurbished Butler's Pantry. Sara Whatley reports

# A Little Slice of Heaven

**T**he Butler family farm – or Heaven Farm as we all know and love it – has been a working farm for over 300 years and the Butler family have farmed it since the 1950s. It comprises 100 acres of beautiful parkland with ancient bluebell woods, and the very pretty farm buildings themselves. Chickens run freely, the cows are out to pasture and a stunning vista of rolling Sussex countryside surrounds the farm.

In 1987 after the great storm, John and Margaret Butler decided to open their nature walk, which is still enjoyed by many visitors today, and in 1989 their daughter Ruth started the tearooms.

Over the years many other exciting activities have been added to the farm, making it a truly great destination for all the family to enjoy today.

When I met Rachael Butler recently, she was positively bubbling over with excitement about the radical transformation the tearooms are undergoing. After serving visitors for over 30 years Rachael has taken them over and has rebranded to The Butler's Pantry, Farm Kitchen and Bar. She has also brought in a former Michelin Star Chef to create dishes that

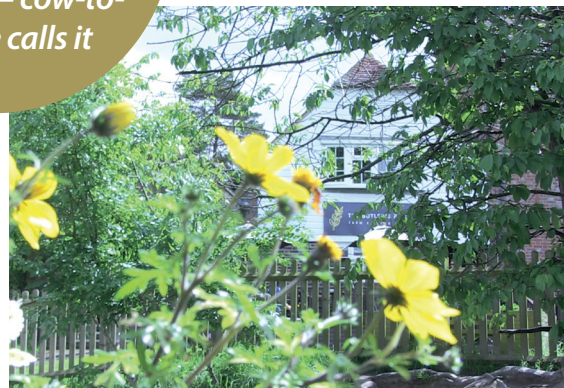
are inspired by their philosophy of only using local, seasonal produce from Sussex.

The pretty beamed tearoom will serve a delicious array of local and seasonal breakfasts, light lunches and afternoon teas, and on the other side of the counter is the new Sussex Barn Restaurant; a dynamic space for evening Supper Clubs, Sunday lunches, cooking demonstrations, summer barbecues and more – their ideas are endless!

"Everything we serve will truly be local Sussex produce; grown, bred and produced on Sussex land. The ethos behind all the food here is sustainability. "This means only truly seasonal as well. No avocados on our menu!" laughed Rachael.

The idea is to also adopt a 'nose-to-tail' approach and concentrate on the high quality of the produce, to create delicious dishes that reflect the excellence of the ingredients.

*Grant is proud that the milk in their ice cream is 100% traceable – cow-to-cone he calls it*



The Butler's Pantry menu will change according to season but expect lunchtime delights such as toasted ciabatta sandwiches with tempting fillings such as Chelwood Gate roast belly of pork with sage and onion stuffing, and apple puree or how about Golden Cross goats cheese, roasted Sussex peppers and onions with Butler's Pantry basil pesto? Other enticing options on the menu include rillettes of salmon, shaved fennel salad, pickled cucumber, salmon keta and dill dressing or a Sussex ploughman's board of Sussex cheeses.

The Sussex Barn Restaurant is launching with a 7-course Tasting Menu on Saturday 8 June. A tantalising offering of delectable pleasures including seared Rye Bay scallop, fricassée of South Coast mussels,

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cockles and samphire, emice of Sussex leeks, followed by locally reared lamb, pink fur potatoes, Sussex asparagus, minted hollandaise and rich lamb jus.

As a farming girl and a practicing Veterinary Surgeon, Rachael is passionate about the welfare of animals. "We want to support local farmers as much as we can with this venture, or they will be gone. British welfare standards are much higher than European ones," explained Rachael. As such they are excited to be using exclusively Sussex produce on their menu; expect to see eggs from Ditchling, pork and sausages from Chelwood Gate, all their vegetables and fruit from Sussex growers, as well as their other meats, cheese and drinks.

Rachael and her brother Grant Butler are third generation Butlers to

run Heaven Farm. Grant is the former dairy farmer here and looks after the leisure side of the business. "Great granddad did the milk round in the village," he said. "In 2019 I started Latchetts Farm, making our delicious gelato from our dairy herd." Grant is proud that the milk in their ice cream is 100% traceable – cow-to-cone he calls it.

Grant also looks after the other leisure activities on the farm. There is the Doves Play Barn, a lovely indoor play centre for babies, toddlers and younger children made out of sustainable wood, which is naturally shaped to compliment the surrounding woodlands. And just next door is Doves Inflatables; 4000 square feet of inflatable fun that everyone of all ages is sure to love! There are seating areas in both play barns and a café to serve both as well, well needed for refuelling the kids and a welcome break for parents and carers too.

Back outside you will find the The Cow Putt, an 18-hole farm themed adventure golf course. Big kids and little kids will enjoy negotiating the cows, tractor ruts and the water raft as they tot up their score card.

And of course there is the Woodland Walk. Meander down the winding paths through the lush trees, going past ponds and streams, badger sets and foxes' earths. Be sure to visit the wallabies hopping around too!

Seasonal attractions are very popular as well at Heaven Farm, such as their pick your own pumpkin from their huge pumpkin patch in October, and their maize maze and sunflower field in the summer. Fishing is also available at the next door sister site at 'Latchetts Lakes', and in 2025 Grant said they are hoping to introduce High Ropes. "We will have a two level course, great for learning with parents and building up confidence," he said.

And if you never want to leave Heaven Farm, then don't! Pitch up a tent in their campsite and enjoy the whole thing again tomorrow, and the day after. ●

**Heaven Farm & Butler's Pantry**  
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