

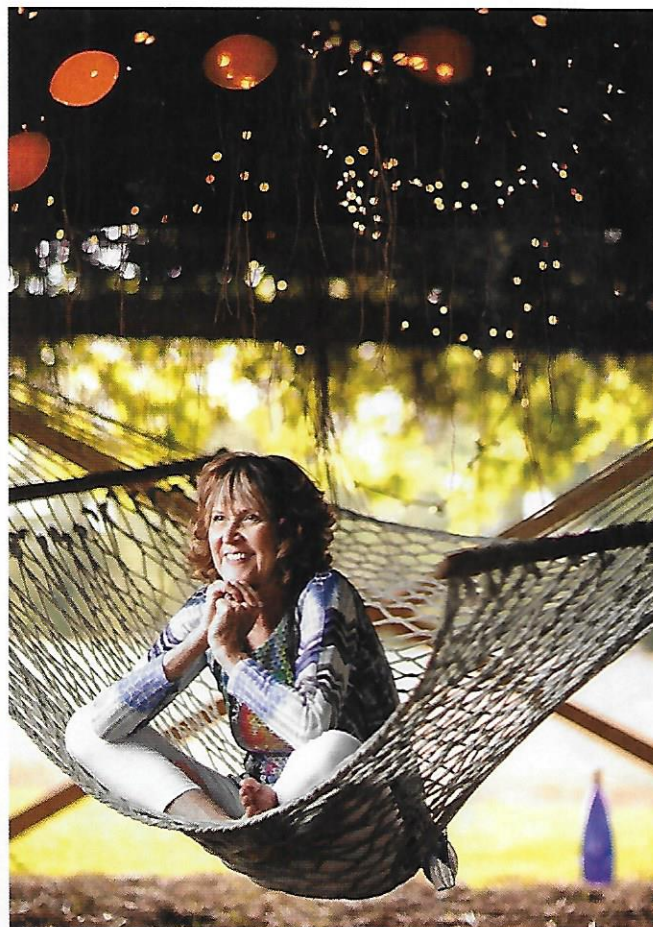
HOTELS & INNS

Big Mill Bed & Breakfast

Born and raised on this quiet farm in Martin County, innkeeper Chloe Tuttle makes her childhood house feel like home for her guests, too.

WRITTEN BY IZA WOJCIECHOWSKA

The barn that Chloe Tuttle's father built now houses three guest rooms that, like the innkeeper, are big on Southern charm.



On a rural road outside Williamston, Big Mill Bed & Breakfast sits wrapped in white fairy lights at the edge of a large pond. A chalkboard is propped on the porch, where innkeeper Chloe Tuttle has written a cheery "Welcome to Big Mill!" along with the names of everyone checking in that evening. Inside, Tuttle is bustling in the bright kitchen among recipe books and jars of granola.

"Sit down, sit down!" she says, pulling out chairs from the small table and offering drinks. It feels like walking right into someone's home. And it's no wonder — Tuttle's parents bought this farm in 1922, and Tuttle was born and raised in the same house where her guests now stay. Her father built the barn behind the house in 1935 with trees he cut down himself, floated down the creek, and dragged to the farm with a mule.

Tuttle talks enthusiastically about

her memories of this place: learning to make quilts from her mother; hearing her father describe clearing forests with just a mule and sticks of dynamite; swimming in the pond, which allegedly swallowed all her shoes; learning to ride bikes with her nephew on the highway up the road.

After leaving the farm for college and traveling the world, Tuttle returned to Big Mill 20 years ago to transform her home into one she could share with

others. The inn now includes five large rooms and suites — two in the main house and three in the renovated barn — and two vintage Airstream trailers.

Each room in the barn has its own story: What is now the Mule Room Suite once housed the family's four mules — Mary, Red, Rock, and Kit — who worked the soy, peanut, corn, and tobacco fields; the Corn Crib Room stored the mules' feed; and the Packhouse Suite held tractors and tobacco. You'd never know this history by looking at the bright and airy rooms, which Tuttle has outfitted with imported tiles and furnished with comfortable beds and couches.

Still, the rooms are full of farmhouse charm. Some have retained their original hardwood floors and ceiling beams, and the breezeway in the barn is stocked with old-fashioned farm tools. Tuttle hosts small weddings here, and brides kiss their grooms amid the antique saws, augers, and looping horses that Tuttle's family once used to clear forests, cure

tobacco, and plow fields. Outside, a romantic grapevine arbor is decorated with hammocks and fairy lights, with a view of the pond on one side and fields on the other, all surrounded by country calm.

ON ONE HAND, BIG MILL IS A SLICE OF the simple life, where everything seems to come easy and big-city troubles are out of mind. On the other, it's evident that Tuttle puts a tremendous amount of work into making sure everything is perfect. Proud of her "NVIRONUT" license plate, she strives to keep Big Mill eco-friendly. Water is drawn from the inn's well, tomatoes and greens are grown in a "rain gutter garden," everything gets recycled or reused, and laundry dries on clotheslines strung between old sheds.

Tuttle spends her evenings making breakfast for her guests: baking her own specialty breads and quiches, making her own granola, and whipping up jams from scratch with blueberries and

figs grown on the farm. She delivers each guest's breakfast that night, to be enjoyed the next day at their leisure.

"People come here to get away from big cities and be somewhere quaint; they don't want to hear any horns blowing," Tuttle says. "And what's amazing is that people love the heritage, even when it's not their own heritage." **Os**

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