



**here:** Stop in for a coffee or some homemade breakfast or lunch. **inset:** The original Mercantile building was built in 1862.

## MODERN COUNTRY

GRAYBARNS MERCANTILE AND CAS STUDIO BRING A **CHIC TWIST** TO SILVERMINE

BY JULEE KAPLAN



PHOTOS BY MORGAN YAGER

Chances are, if you lived in the Silvermine area in the 1860s, the general store across from the Silvermine Inn was your local commissary. You would often gather there for coffee and a chat, grab some bread and perhaps a pack of cigarettes. It was the place where you could arrange for milk delivery, pick up fresh produce and a local paper. Eventually, the shop sold antiques before it closed down and became abandoned for many years. Today, the space is back as a beautifully designed modern country store. Now owned and operated by The Glazer Group, the **GRAYBARNS MERCANTILE** was designed and brought to life by Nikki Glazer, co-owner and director of the family-owned

brand. The idea, she says, was to restore the building and create a space where people can come back to again and again. Opened since September, Mercantile offers a range of coffee drinks using Intellegentcia beans, treats from SoNo Baking Company and some grab-and-go breakfast, lunch and dinner options. Stop in for coffee and avocado toast or leave with an organic rotisserie chicken (with sides). Pick up a floral arrangement or some in-season produce. As an ode to the past, Glazer says she made sure to add simple touches to remind us of the market's classic American past—they might not sell cigarettes any longer, but you can pick up a box of candy cigarettes for 75 cents. You'll also see an old record player in the front

of the shop with a wide selection of ready-to-play vinyl.

"When restoring the space, I wanted to bring in things that were classically American, things that remind us of a better time," Glazer says.

In addition, Mercantile is set up to be a workshop—there was a wreath-making class before the holidays and Glazer even heads up a class on how to make super soft chunky-knit blankets.

"I love creating things as a way to check out and de-stress," Glazer explains. "Using my hands to create—it's such a satisfying way to keep me grounded."

Glazer sells her hand-knit blankets at the shop for \$250 each; you can also buy a Frette



A vintage record player and GrayGoods pillows complement the entrance to Mercantile.



A piece from CAS Studio's Faded collection.



**above:** Casey Friese in her studio **right:** A work table in the studio was designed with the GrayBarn's aesthetic in mind. **below:** CAS Studio at the GrayBarns Mercantile



robe (the same robes are in the rooms at the Inn across the street). Shop for aprons, totes, ceramics, pillows, candles and soaps for sale as well. The GrayBarns brand, GrayGoods, is always evolving, Glazer said, in order to add more curated products that are ethically produced and complementary to the brand's aesthetic. In spring, Glazer said she's planning more workshops and will begin a catering business. Mercantile, she says, is also available for private events.

Also new to Mercantile is Casey Friese, a former business executive turned local artist, who rents a gallery space at Mercantile under her CAS Studio brand name. The California native's stunning large-scale photography is influenced by her own global experiences and keen eye for creating truly livable, soothing limited-edition pieces. Friese and Glazer met just after Mercantile's opening and hit it off right away.

"The Guild of Artists was founded in Silvermine and art is such an important piece



of history here," Glazer says. "So, it's nice to have an artist right here on-site."

"Creativity always happens over coffee," Friese added. "And it's so inspiring to have my studio here."

Her work, which ranges from \$275 for a smaller unframed print to \$5,200 for a 72x54 meticulously framed photo, is crafted on museum-grade paper that has been tested and guaranteed to last over 200 years. Many of her photos capture serene dessert and beach landscapes, edited in a way to create pure serenity when hung in a home or gallery. Her mission, she says, is to photograph the entire United States coastline, eventually.

"Photographing it all is an absolute dream of mine," Friese said. "It's definitely my bucket list."

Her current collections, Faded and Day As Night, are currently available for purchase at the studio. CAS Studio is open Tuesday through Sunday 11 a.m. — 3 p.m. or by appointment.

INTERIOR PHOTO BY MORGAN YAGER, BEACH AND TABLE PHOTOS BY CAS FRIESE, PORTRAIT AND OUTSIDE STUDIO PHOTOS BY NIKKI GLAZER



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# RAISE YOUR PADDLE

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL YEARS, DARIEN HOSTS **THE NATIONAL PLATFORM TENNIS TOURNAMENT**

BY MALIA MCKINNON FRAME

Living in Fairfield County, chances are you either play—or know someone who plays—platform tennis, more commonly known as paddle. The sport was created in 1928 in Scarsdale by two friends who wanted to enjoy a racquet sport during the winter months. Paddle tennis has exploded over the past several years, particularly in our neck of the woods. “What started as more of a northern winter sport is now played year-round



above: Platform tennis players on the courts below: Darien's Tiernan Cavanna, president of the APTA

and has moved south as well,” explains Tiernan Cavanna, a Darien resident, avid paddle player and president of the American Platform Tennis Association (APTA).

For the first time since 2016, the APTA National Championships will be hosted by the Country Club of Darien, March 5 to 8. “It’s going to be exciting to bring the very best players in the sport to Darien and surrounding Connecticut towns, but there will also be room for league players so there’s opportunity for everyone,” says Cavanna. The tournament will be able to accommodate a large number of players (over 200 men’s and women’s teams) because Fairfield County is an area with one of the highest concentrations of courts in the country.

“Paddle is addictive because you can improve as you get older,” she says. “It’s strategic, you’re always learning, and the sport is social and collegial. It’s a great atmosphere and a fun group of people.” Cavanna herself has been involved in the paddle world since she started playing 12 years ago, has been a leader in the local women’s league and helped run the 2016 Nationals Tournament. She is not only the first female president of the APTA, but also one of this year’s cochairs for

the Nationals Tournament.

“In our area, we’re lucky to have some of the top male and female players and pros in the country competing for the national title,” she says, noting that last year’s men’s and women’s winners were all pros in Fairfield County. Despite the level of competition, she emphasizes the camaraderie for all players. “The fact that I’m so involved in both the APTA and the National Championships, and yet I’m primarily a league player and not a pro shows the accessibility of the sport as well as this tournament.”

Each team that registers for the tournament is guaranteed three matches and may attend any of the weekend’s events. The tournament kicks off with a Thursday night check-in party at the Country Club of Darien, and Friday there are matches throughout the day and a buffet lunch. Matches continue all day Saturday with a barbecue lunch during the quarterfinals, and Sunday will host the men’s and women’s finals. In addition to great paddle, there will be a hospitality tent, food trucks and physical therapists onsite. Spectators are also welcome, free of charge.

To register, or for more information, visit [platformtennis.org](http://platformtennis.org).

PHOTOS BY KATHARINE CALDERWOOD AT CALDERWOOD DIGITAL

## PADDLE BY THE NUMBERS

1928  
Paddle was invented in Scarsdale, NY

19,000  
APTA members

3,200  
League players in our area

256  
Number of teams the APTA can accommodate at the tournament

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