

A Vermont insider shares her secrets

Katia Hetter, CNN • Updated 15th August 2018

Burlington, Vermont (CNN) — It's her laugh.

Almost every time Andrea Todd starts to talk, she's usually talking about something that makes her happy.

And then she laughs -- and laughs and laughs.

Whether she's picking apples during the fall harvest, grabbing her bathing suit for a quick dip at Shelburne Beach or riding her bike in all four seasons -- yes, when it's snowing -- Andrea Todd is always ready to have a good time.

And laughing about it. Not at you. She's always laughing with you.

Like many Vermonters, she has a couple of day jobs, including her own tutoring business and landscape gardening. But it's her happy soul and waves of laughter that will sweep you up and take you along for the ride.

A recipe for joy



Andrea Todd loves Vermont

CNN

Her recipe for so much joy and laughter?

"I gravitate toward positive things and people," she says. "I'm seeking out the things that feel good to me and also the things having a positive impact on the world around me."

If she can't find it, "I will make it. I'm engaged with the community, and if I'm unsatisfied with how things are going, I will seek ways to make it better."

She's known locally for her community engagement and her joy, which is why she can't go anywhere in Burlington without knowing someone and making them laugh, to boot.

That's why [CNN Travel](#) dubbed her Burlington's unofficial ambassador of fun. And it's why we asked her to take us along for the ride, sharing her version of a perfect day in her favorite city, which of course included food and drink, biking, swimming and friends at every turn.

Let's start with breakfast



Breakfast at Penny Cluse

CNN

As far as Andrea is concerned, "there is only one place" to eat the most important meal of the day.

Waitress Anastasia Evans greets her as she walks into Penny Cluse, which has long waits on the weekend even when people arrive before the 8 a.m. opening time. They've known each other since they took a college art class together at the University of Vermont.

We promise that Charles and Holly Cluse's spot is worth the wait. (It's named after their dog, Penny.)

"The place is so great, not just because the herb gravy and biscuits are awesome, and the fruit plate is delicious, or the bucket of spuds," she says.

"I've had friends who have worked there, and they stay for a long time because they are treated well and the place is just run professionally, but not

ostentatiously."

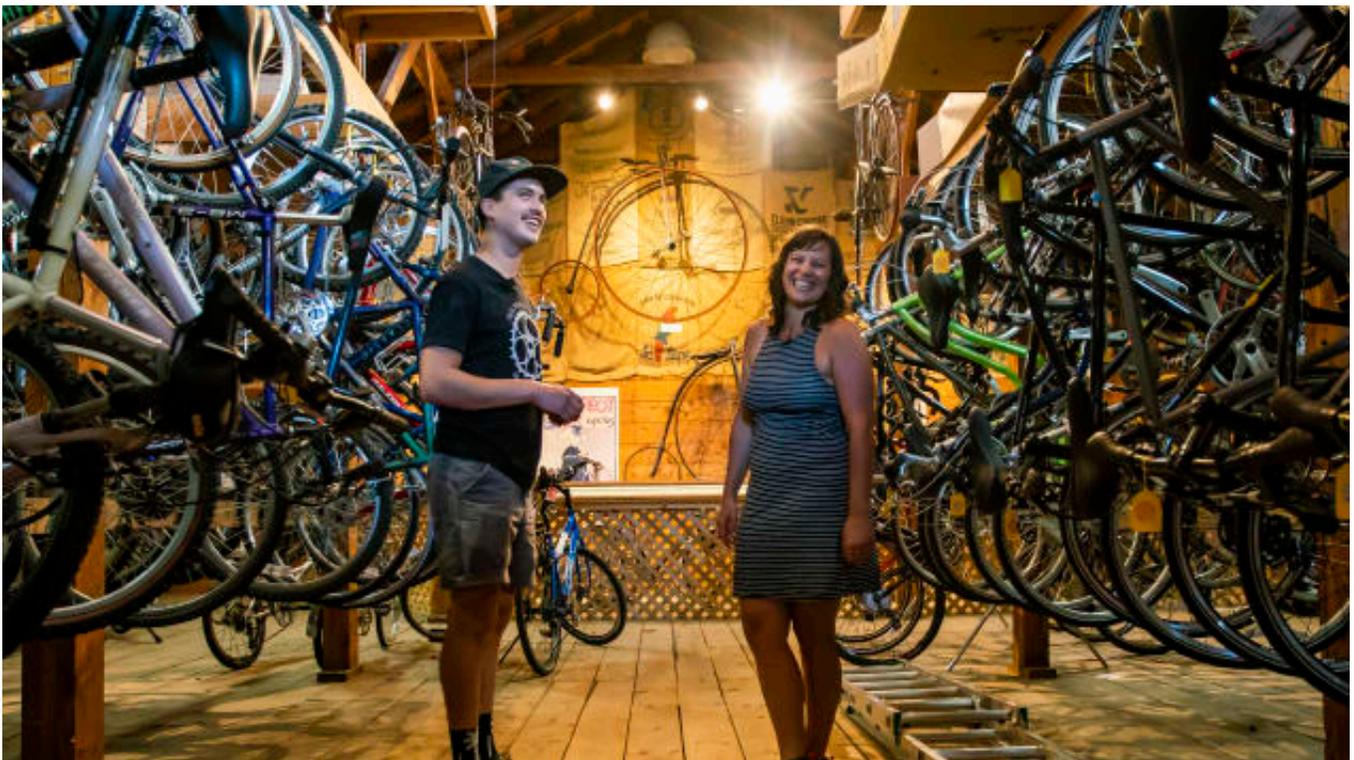
The food is good, and the people make it even better. The "staff fill my belly with yummy meals, but (they) fill my heart with goodness."

Not one for lines? Head next door to Lucky Next Door, which is also owned by the Cluses. It's a great place to grab lunch, or if you simply can't stand the wait at Penny Cluse.

Andrea tip: Check out [Abby Manock's](#) murals in the bathrooms.

[Penny Cluse](#), 169 Cherry Street, Burlington, VT, 05402; +1 (802) 651--8834

Off to the bike shop



Old Spokes Home

CNN

Next Todd heads to Old Spokes Home, a nonprofit bike shop with new and refurbished bikes for sale.

Mechanics here have rebuilt her bike train at least eight times. (She takes care

of their flower bed outside.)

Bicycles are a way of life for Todd, who rides her bike year-round, even using studded tires in the deep snows of frigid Vermont winters.

"It started as an experiment, what could I do for a year without a car, and I loved it so much because I was outside all the time," she says. "I'm probably Old Spokes Home's number one fan."

The core mission of Old Spokes Home gibes with Todd's politics: to create opportunity through bikes.

"That's either through giving them employment opportunities here at the shop, or helping them get a bike that they can afford and keep it on the road for them year round if they need it," says Dan Hock, one of the shop's bike mechanics.

The all-season rider gets special attention. "Andrea obviously rides year-round, so let's build her something that's actually bomb proof and designed to get through the winter in Vermont, which is pretty important," says Hock. "So, we put this together with internal gears in the back, so everything is concealed and protected from corrosion and weather."

Andrea tip: Head upstairs to check out the collection of bikes dating back to the 1860s and going through the 1930s, thanks to previous bike shop owner Glen Eames.

[Old Spokes Home](#), 322 North Winooski Ave., Burlington, Vermont 05401; +1 (802) 863-4475

Let's pick some apples



Shelburne Orchards

CNN

A knock on a wooden door leads Andrea to Shelburne Orchards, about 10 miles outside of Burlington.

Here Nick Cowles and his daughter, Moriah, welcome visitors to pick McIntosh, Cortland, Honey Crisp apples and more -- actually more than 50 varieties altogether -- and shop at the orchard store starting September 1 through late October or when the apples are all picked.

Visitors can also pick eight varieties of peaches from mid-August through early September but that's by invitation only (sign up on the website for an invite).

As Nick walks behind the apple doughnut stand, he slices a doughnut and scoops some vanilla ice cream into it, and voilà! The newest item on the menu could be the apple cider ice cream doughnut sandwich.

And there's the apple brandy.

Nick walks to a hobbit-like door in the side of a hill near the doughnut stand, where he's aging brandy in barrels after making it in beautiful handmade Portuguese copper stills for the past eight years.

The first teaser release of just 100 bottles was in 2011. Guests can now sip apple brandy at the new tasting room, which opened earlier this year, from mid-August through the end of October.

"It's \$100 a bottle, and it's probably the best way that we sell apples, and it's all I can do not to turn the whole orchard into a distillery because I love the brandy so much," says Nick.

"Go through the door," Todd says, pointing to the door to the hobbit-like brandy cave built into the side of a small hill on the property.

That's when the laughter starts again. "Remember, when one door closes, another door opens," someone says. "Actually, that door just closes and opens." More laughter.

"Somewhere another one might be opening." So much more laughter. "You can pretty much count on that. Somewhere. Somewhere, some door is opening."

Andrea tip: Talk to Moriah Cowles about her custom [Orchard Steel knives](#). [Shelburne Orchards](#), 216 Orchard Rd, Shelburne, VT 05482; +1 (802) 985-2753

More apples please



Todd and friend Megan Rubman at Citizen Cider

CNN

It's no surprise that Todd walks into Citizen Cider and immediately spots Lars Whitman from her bowling team, along his wife, Susan, and their two kids.

Citizen Cider, which was launched in 2010 by Justin Heilenbach, Bryan Holmes and Kris Nelson, makes the flagship Unified Press and other hard ciders The Dirty Mayor, Wit's Up and The Lake Hopper.

"There's a great connection with the Vermont agriculture, as they craft the cider with local ingredients and orchards," says Todd. "They craft ciders in a way that creates complex flavors -- some are dry, some are hoppy, some are barrel aged," she says.

Even in winter, the lighting makes it warm and there are long wooden tables to share with friends or strangers, so it's a great place to go solo or with a large or small group. "Good food served here, too -- from corn dogs to avocado tacos," she says.

"I like to stop here after yoga and sit at the beautiful bar."

Andrea tip: Check out their special cider on tap. They always have something creative that they're testing in small batches.

[Citizen Cider](#), 316 Pine St #114, Burlington, VT 05401; +1 (802) 448-3278

The best of Burlington dining

Hands down, Hen of the Wood is the most amazing fine dining eating experience in Burlington, says Todd, who might meet friends there for a drink or book dinner there for special occasions.

With dishes such as Hen of the Wood mushroom toast and duck breast, chef Eric Warnstedt "provides delicious and creative dishes, and impeccable service," she says.

To make her list, it also has to feel welcoming, which of course it does.

"I love going here because whether you're just sitting by the fire for a snack or having a four-course meal, it is easy going," she says.

Andrea tip: You can eat a fancy four-course meal there (and love it), but the bartender also welcomes people to enjoy appetizers and a drink at the bar.

[Hen of the Wood](#) (Burlington location), 55 Cherry Street; Burlington VT; +1 (802) 540-0534

Finish with a night cap

The funky troika of owner Lee Anderson's Radio Bean, Duino Duende and Light Club Lamp Shop are all connected on North Winooski Avenue, and they each provide a different environment for fun.

A mecca for creatives, Radio Bean has small stage that attracts local and traveling music at night. The Lamp Shop is dripping with vintage lamps and booths, tables and sofas for lounging and connecting with friends over a

cocktail or glass of wine or a snack from the menu. Duino Duende's menu offers a local take on street food from around the world.

"Lee Anderson created three amazing businesses right next door to each other right in Burlington," she says.

"Each one kind of reflects an incredible creativity and desire to bring people to share in that creativity in a way that's not pretentious. It's super honest and really pure. It's pretty great."

Just like Andrea Todd.

Andrea tip: Try the Volcano Fries at Duino Duende while listening to music next door.

[Radio Bean](#), [Duino Duende](#) and [Light Club Lamp Shop](#), 8-12 North Winooski Avenue, Burlington, VT, 05401; +1 (802) 660-9346