

TOP RESTAURANTS FOR A CHRISTMAS EVE FEAST

Hudson Valley

WONDER WOMEN

20 INSPIRING
BUSINESS LEADERS



make one of over 60 flavors. According to Stewart's, its ice cream has less air than most supermarket brands, resulting in a richer, creamier product.

Stewart's also makes juices, teas, and cold coffee drinks called "Refreshers;" their own sodas in six flavors from root beer to classic cola; grab-and-go foods such as chili, meatballs, mac 'n' cheese, and chicken salad; chocolate and candies; loaves of bread; and baked muffins, donuts, and apple fritters. All of the above are produced at Stewart's Shops'



kitchen in the Greenfield manufacturing center, which recently tripled in size to meet demand from customers.

By overseeing products from creation to sale, the company can ensure it is putting out quality goods. Take the ice cream as an example: the shops only carry Stewart's brand because they know how it was made, what temperature it was stored at in the facility, and that it was brought to the shops on a temperature-controlled truck. While it may require some extra care and money, the quality of the product speaks for itself, often

receiving high scores at both state-wide and nationwide competitions.

This year, Stewart's brought home the New York State Fair's "Best Milk in New York State" award for the third consecutive year, plus blue ribbons for its chocolate milk and other flavored milks. Additional awards were given to Stewart's strawberry milk, mint cookie crumble ice cream, mango dragon fruit sherbet, French vanilla half and half, and more at the 2024 World Dairy Expo.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Not only is Stewart's a family business (currently led by Gary Dake, a

some instances, it means supporting local events—earlier this year, area shops donated supplies and helped scoop ice cream at the Lagrangeville elementary school's field day.

It may also mean donating money to local organizations—Stewart's Shops and the Dake family have an annual giving goal of \$9 million, which is partly accomplished through the Holiday Match program. From Thanksgiving to Christmas Day, Stewart's collects donations from their stores and matches the total customer contributions. Since it was founded in 1986, the program has raised over \$38

Stewart's makes 75 percent of all the items sold in its shops including over 60 flavors of their award-winning ice cream.

member of the third generation of Dakes to run the company), but it's also employee owned. Through Stewart's profit-sharing Employee Stock Ownership Program, shop partners own around 40 percent of the business—a number that will increase as the Dakes begin to sell more shares to Stewart's employees. Thanks to this program, 199 retirees and current employees are millionaires.

Beyond its commitment to employees, Stewart's is driven by its dedication to community—"We Are Closer to You" is the company motto. Per Kiesow, "We take great pride in giving back, and we're able to do so because our communities treat us so well. They see the strength of a family business and the character on which it's run." For the company, giving back takes several forms. In

million for non-profits—more than \$2 million was raised in 2023 alone, with \$746,447 going to Arts Mid-Hudson, Friends of the Newburgh Free Library, the Albany County Historical Association, Habitat for Humanity of Dutchess County, and more.

If you stop by a shop this season, you can help contribute to this year's Holiday Match, stock up on Stewart's house-made products, and say hello to a friendly face behind the counter. "We take pride in how close we are to our communities," Kiesow says. "It's heartwarming to hear our shop managers talk about their store and how intimately they know their customers, and it's impressive how, in many ways, Stewart's is woven into the fabric of some of these communities. It might sound cheesy, but it's true."



SHARING THE BOUNTY

According to Hudson-based food rescue and harvesting organization FeedHV, it's estimated that at least one in 10 individuals in the Hudson Valley suffers from food insecurity, meaning they do not have access to enough quality food to meet their needs. All One One All (AOOA), a nonprofit farm and education center in Goshen, is trying to fix this. In April 2023, AOOA created "Fresh Food for All," an initiative that supplies organic produce and pasture-raised eggs to local food banks. In its first year, the program donated 1,300 pounds of produce and 250 dozen eggs to food banks across the Hudson Valley. AOOA aims to quadruple its giving in 2024, with a long-term goal of eventually contributing 50 percent of the farm's annual yield. Want to help? For more information and to donate to AOOA, visit alloneoneall.org.

—Charlotte Del Vecchio