

# LIVING AMONG THE HORSES

DISCOVER THE EQUESTRIAN LIFESTYLE IN WELLINGTON, FLORIDA,  
CENTERED ON THE WINTER EQUESTRIAN FESTIVAL.

By Jacqueline Kuron

For many in the equestrian circle, Wellington, Florida, becomes home for the 12-week-long Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF), which occurs every year from January to April. Held at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center (PBIEC), the venue is the heart of a community that's united by a love of horses.

As the sport's largest and longest-running equestrian festival, WEF has slowly turned Wellington into an equestrian-lifestyle destination. During the three-month festival, riders of all ages and skill levels—from children, juniors, adults and amateurs to Olympic-caliber—compete in the hunter, jumper and equitation disciplines.

For serious equestrians who devote three months out of every year to competing at WEF, it's no wonder many have put down permanent roots in the area. The Gochman family, David, Becky and their two daughters Sophie and Mimi, have been coming to Wellington for WEF for the past 12 years. They started out renting, then bought a house, and in 2012 strengthened their ties to Wellington when they purchased Baxter Hill, a 12-acre farm in Grand Prix Village,

which is home base for their horses.

"I've noticed people enjoy settling down and making Wellington part of their lifestyle. They tend to stay even when their



**BACK IN THE SADDLE** For the third consecutive year, Douglas Elliman is a title sponsor and exclusive real estate agency partner at WEF.

kids are off to college. Some continue with horses, some don't," Becky Gochman says. "Someone once said to me that they have a house here because they know their kids will always want to come back."

It's a rather idyllic setting to come back to at that. With the gorgeous weather and abundance of farms, the natural landscape is something to appreciate. WEF provides the opportunity to reconnect with the visceral through this age-old sport. Whether you're watching the horses or riding the horses, you're spending time outdoors in the fresh air. Locals take golf carts to the showgrounds, and children ride bikes to the barns. Neighbors host game nights at their homes. There's an overwhelming sense of community among those who come from around the world to South Florida for WEF.

The Winter Equestrian Festival isn't just for horse people either. The local community is encouraged to participate as spectators with free admission to all events throughout the season and additional entertainment such as live music, carousel rides, food and shopping on the showgrounds.

To further involve the community in the festival, the Gochmans spearheaded a new food and retail area called Farm Stand. Seeing a need for healthier food options at the showgrounds, they decided to be proactive. With the support of WEF and



**STEP RIGHT UP** Take a coffee break at Pumphouse Coffee Roasters truck at Farm Stand. Photo by Piper Jones Photography

Mark Bellissimo, CEO of Equestrian Sport Productions, Farm Stand is open for the 2018 season. Taking an overall wellness approach, Farm Stand also offers shopping at sustainable lifestyle boutique The One Well, yoga, massage, acupuncture and chiropractic services provided by local vendors.

"It's been a lot of fun to create an area where people can chill out, relax and recharge themselves away from the busyness of the Winter Equestrian Festival," Becky Gochman says. "Every year we try to do something to make things a little bit better, and this year has been a big year for that goal."

In addition to the sense of community and local involvement, the breadth of competition offered at WEF makes it unique among horse shows. Young pony riders, international Grand Prix champions and the best horses from around the world converge on the same grounds. For three months out of the year, the Winter Equestrian Festival is an epicenter of equestrian sport and lifestyle.



**VIEWING PARTY** Spectators watch a class on the historic Derby Field at PBIEC. Photo by Meg Banks

## TAKE A BREAK FROM THE COMPETITION

### WHERE TO RELAX AND RECHARGE

Step away from the Winter Equestrian Festival showgrounds to the shade of Cypress trees and visit Farm Stand, a new wellness-focused food and retail area. Local vendors offer everything from organic coffee to yoga.

#### MERAKI JUICE KITCHEN

An outpost of the local favorite, Meraki Juice Kitchen serves certified organic, plant-based cuisine, coffee and juices.

#### PUMPHOUSE COFFEE ROASTERS

For your caffeine fix, grab a cup o' joe from local roasters the LeClainche brothers made with high-quality beans and special roasting techniques.

#### TESS & CO.

The focus at Tess & Co. is on clean eating. The menu includes breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinks with organic and gluten-free ingredients.

#### THE ONE WELL

At this clothing, body and home goods boutique curated by Kerry Jones, you'll find global brands whose products are handmade, use natural ingredients and have a focus on sustainability.

#### ECP MASSAGE

Get your kinks worked out with a customized massage session with Elizabeth. Call 561.213.9091 to make an appointment.

#### ACUPUNCTURE AND WELLNESS OF THE PALM BEACHES

For additional holistic health services such as acupuncture, herbal medicine and color light therapy, visit the professionals from Acupuncture and Wellness of the Palm Beaches. Call 561.425.5440 to make an appointment.

#### PRINCIPLED CHIROPRACTIC CENTER

Let Dr. Andrew Briggs realign your spine with his corrective strategies. Walk-ins are welcome. Hours are Thursdays 9:30am–12:30pm, Fridays 2:00pm–6:00pm and Sundays by appointment only. 561.791.2225

#### MOKSHA YOGA STUDIO

Join classes led by instructors from this Wellington-based yoga studio serving the community since 2007. Classes are offered on Fridays and Saturdays from 11:00am to 1:00pm.

#### LOX FARMS

Rooted in Loxahatchee, Florida, Lox Farms has set up a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) pickup location for those who'd like to join their program and buy local, seasonal produce directly from a farmer.