

## WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

## Pottery Trail

Written by: **Sara Mullins**

Potter Kirke Martin of M4 Studios

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The art form known as pottery is one of the oldest human inventions, intimately connected with nature and food. Sometime before the Neolithic period, humans figured out how to transform a type of natural soil material we know as clay into useful objects. When wet, clay becomes malleable and can be shaped as desired, and then fired at a high temperature to harden. Pottery can take many forms, ranging from rustic earthenware to stoneware to ceramics to fine porcelain. This ancient art form's enduring popularity can

be attributed to its versatility in form, function and beauty. Potters love making it and people love using it.

One such potter is Kirke Martin, a Tennessee native who settled in Washington County around 20 years ago, attracted by the area's rich agricultural history and cultural vitality. About a year ago, he noticed that several theme-based tourism projects—the Valley Craft Studio Tour, Ice Cream Trail, and Grapes and Grains Trail—had taken off in Washington County. He knew a lot of potters and creative



**Pottery Trail potters (l to r): Denise Joyal, Kilnjoy Ceramics; Pamela Hall, Twin Moons Pottery; Bill van Gilder, van Gilder Pottery; Alison Severance, Highfield Pottery; Dirk Martin, Foxcross Pottery; Kirke Martin, M4 Studios; and Mark Poole, Orchard View Pottery. Not pictured: Tameria Martinez, Clay; Stephen Wright, Wright Hand Studio; and Hunt Prothro.**

**Mark Poole's Orchard View Pottery studio, atop an orchard in Smithsburg, MD.**

people living in the area, many of whom had been drawn to the area for the same reasons as he had. He also took note of the area's abundant and varied attractions. So he decided to propose a Pottery Trail to Visit Hagerstown, an initiative of the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"I received strong support and great momentum from the Visitors Bureau in promoting and implementing this project," Kirke said. He spread the word himself and noticed that word-of-mouth from other participants helped, too. The Pottery Trail plan evoked a positive response from local potters and the public.

The Pottery Trail, located along the South Mountain Corridor, offers visitors an opportunity to take a unique road trip. "It's the first such trail in Maryland," Kirke said. "People can visit the studios of 10 professional ceramic artists making pottery in our local area. There are a lot of artists in Washington County. The more we link up with each other and show a variety of work, the better the result for everyone. Each potter creates unique pieces, some functional and some sculptural, representing a huge range of glazes, finishes and firing processes. Each potter works

in a distinctive, individual manner, yet all 10 cooperate to make the Pottery Trail successful.

The following is a list of the 10 potters and a brief description and sampling of their work from their web sites.

### **#1 Foxcross Pottery,**

Sharpsburg MD – In 1972, Del Martin started this studio overlooking the Potomac River and now operated by his son Dirk. Guests can enjoy a charming, rustic shopping experience and high-quality ceramic art.



**#2 M4 Studios and Gallery**, Keedysville, MD – Visitors will find Kirke Martin’s Pottery, Kesra Hoffman’s Landscape Paintings and woodworking by Alan Clingan. The outdoor studio offers a roadside shopping experience, open daily from dawn to dusk. Kirke offers a range of functional and sculptural wood-fired ceramics.



**#3 Hunt Prothro**, Rohrersville, MD – Hunt displays his ceramic art in a modernist gallery within his 19th century farmhouse and works in an adjacent studio. He has taught at Sidwell Friends School and has work on display at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.



**#4 van Gilder Pottery**, Gapland, MD – This gallery is located in a restored barn atop South Mountain, adjacent to the Appalachian Trail. Featured work includes pottery and contemporary crafts – handmade stoneware, fine jewelry, woodenwares, glass and more.



**#5 Tameria Martinez Clay**, Boonsboro, MD – Tameria works in her clay studio and fires her wood-fueled train kiln. Her work includes porcelain and stoneware vessels, both functional and decorative, thrown on the potter’s wheel. Exploration of crystallization, ash and fluid glazes are her focus for decorative expression.



**#6 Kiljoy Ceramics**, Smithsburg, MD – Denise Joyal offers decorative and functional art for the table and for life. She is the Adjunct Professor of Ceramics at Wilson College with a Master of Fine Arts in Ceramic Arts and Master’s Certificate in Ceramic Arts from Hood College. She uses atmospheric firing to create surfaces displaying the intensity of sunlight and shadow.



**#7 Orchard View Pottery**, Smithsburg, MD – Mark Poole specializes in Raku and stoneware pottery in a studio atop a Smithsburg orchard. Raku dates back to the 1550s, begun as a low-firing process created for ceremonial tea ware used by Zen Buddhist Masters.



**#8 Highfield Pottery**, Cascade, MD – Allison creates wheel-thrown pottery on her old kick wheel and fires it in a wood burning kiln that she built. Her work is meant to be used. Establishing an intimate connection between her hands and the hands of the user plays a vital role in why she makes pots. She hopes her pots don't live in the cupboard.



**#9 Wright Hand Studio**, Hagerstown, MD – Clay artist Stephen Wright produces and sells his internationally recognized line of professional ceramic hand percussion instruments and his line of stoneware pottery. He owns and operates THE WRIGHT HAND DRUM COMPANY, where he designs his instruments and makes each one by hand, with his specially formulated and fired clay. He also teaches and performs percussion.



**#10 Twin Moons Pottery**, Hagerstown, MD – Pam Hall's art is created in porcelain and stoneware clay. She does art pottery and functional ware, all meant to be used and enjoyed. She offers studio private and group classes from May – November.



To learn more about the Pottery Tour and its artisans, go to [www.visithagerstown.org](http://www.visithagerstown.org)



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