

# Buxton's Store

Walking in feels like home. For Andy Buxton, it is home.



Three generations of Buxtons: Richard, Dick and Andy Buxton gather outside Andy's Orwell store.

There's an old adage that says, "you can't go home again." While that may be true for most people, Andy Buxton would argue otherwise.

The latest generation of Buxtons — Andy and his wife, Mary — are carrying on a tradition that started when Dick and Thelma Buxton began running Buxton's Store more than 50 years ago. Dick and Thelma, Andy's grandparents, started the family's journey when they bought an existing country store in town in

1967. For nearly 40 years, family members — and a steady stream of Orwellians — helped keep the shop buzzing until the couple decided to sell the longtime business in 2006.

Meanwhile, Andy Buxton embarked on a culinary career, spending the better part of 17 years at bars and restaurants in Middlebury, honing his hospitality and management skills.

"I kind of had it in the back of my mind that if one day the store became available, I'd be interested," he says. "Then in December of 2015, the owner at the time, Doug Edwards, he said to me, my wife, my two little girls — if we

were ever interested in buying the family store back, come talk to him. Two years later it all came to fruition."

For Andy Buxton, returning to the store was a literal homecoming. Andy's grandparents lived in the house above the shop, and now he would move his young family there. Some of Buxton's earliest memories are of family gatherings in the store and in that home upstairs.

"What's neat is that I spent the first 36 years of my life having holiday gatherings, Thanksgivings, Easters, Christmases, at my grandparents' house, which is now my house," Buxton says. "I grew up in this store having Christmas in what is now my living room."

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Not long after walking back through the door, he made a few changes. His grandparents and Doug Edwards maintained a hardware room that stocked essentials typically found in a general store, but Andy saw it as an area to expand food offerings. Drawing upon his culinary expertise, he began creating an expanded menu and building out other sections of the store.

"I wanted to focus more on things I was good at, which is food, customer service and given my restaurant experience, catering," Buxton says. "I changed the philosophy a little from less of a general store to more of a market feel."

He partnered with local purveyors, elevated the dining options, added a craft beer and wine section and a meat department. Then, Buxton's brought in the town's first-ever liquor agency.

"Our philosophy here is that the liquor store would be a great convenience for our community," Buxton says. "We enjoy being able

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## STORE SPOTLIGHT



Andy Buxton elevated the store's culinary offerings after taking over the operations.

to provide that service. We love our community and we love being able to help our community any way possible. Having a liquor store here in Orwell has been a great draw."

While there have been upgrades and a few changes, this Main Street destination remains all Buxton. Step in to the store, located right near the center of town, and you'll walk across the same wooden floors and see much of the same layout as you would have 50 years ago. Head straight in, past the modern grocery aisles, and guests find themselves in the deli and meat department. Duck into a small nook off to the side and discover the new takeout kitchen, complete with a Frylator, grill and sandwich tops. Take a hard left and step into the liquor agency, where long aisles of spirits — including a range of Vermont-produced liquor options — line the well-trod floors.

"It feels like stepping back in time," Buxton says.

Yet more importantly, the store retains the family's community commitment to this small Addison County town.

"Certainly, being a grandchild of local merchants, all the grandkids that lived here — we grew up in this store in one way or another," Buxton says. "We all worked the register, we all cut meat, we all stocked shelves; any time there was a big holiday weekend, my grandparents would ask us to help run a second register or bring groceries up from the basement to restock. It was always instilled in us to do everything we could as a family to make it succeed." 🍷

### Buxton's Store

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