

Main Street

A Gift for Gatherings

BRANCH HOME

A Modern Day General Store

The French doors of Branch Home open to a warm, welcoming space, where natural light filters in through the large windows and front door, filling the shop from its hardwood floors to the high, lofted barn-like ceiling and beams.

By Sara Catherine Lichon
Photography by Stacey Roessler



Behind the earthy front counter of Branch Home, Co-owner Caroline Fennessy Campion and shopkeeper, Sujin Beckerman, were wrapping a custom order, while co-owner, Jill Turpin, was catching up with a customer who introduced herself as the daughter of a regular Branch Home shopper. "She's in the car, but she wanted me to come in quickly to see the new space," she told Jill. "Yes, I recognize the resemblance, uncanny!" Jill exclaimed.

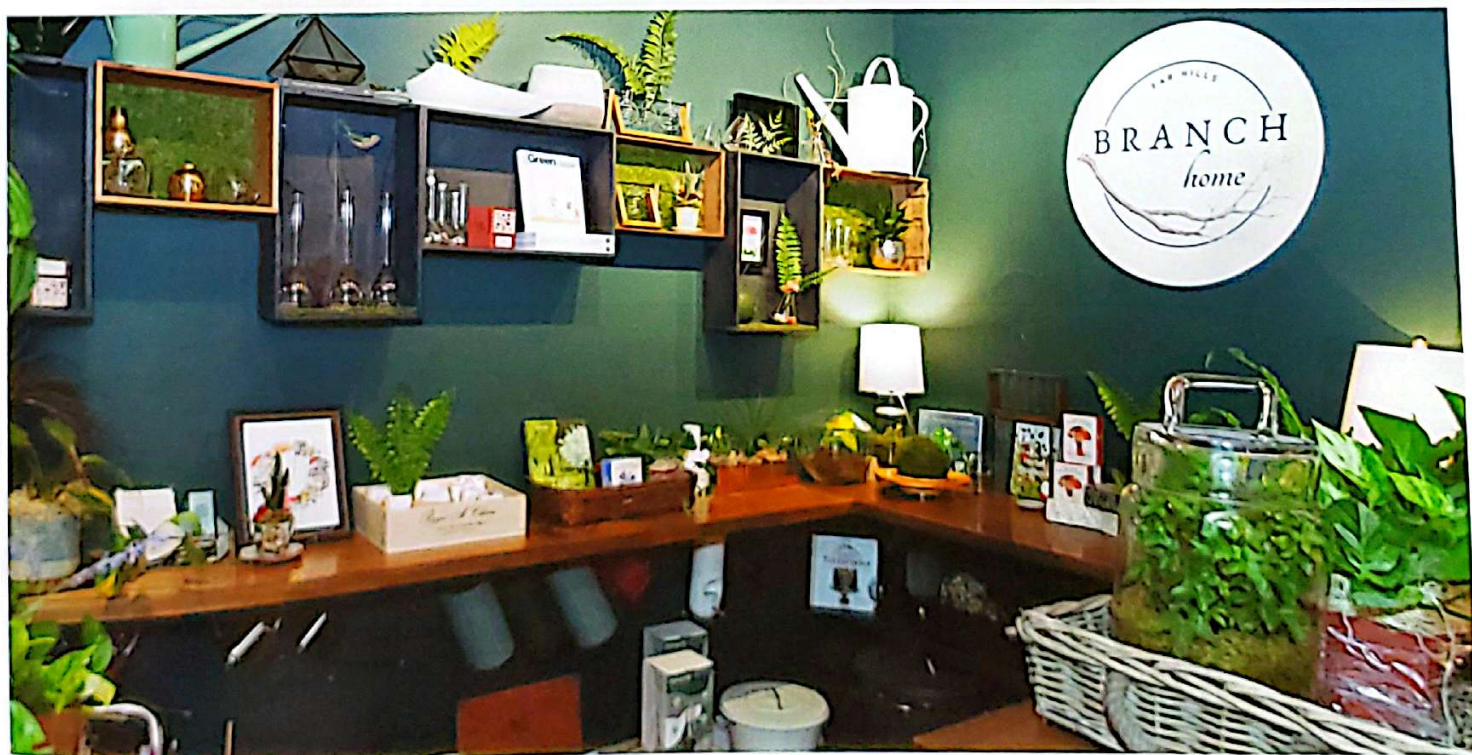
Regulars like this are part of the recipe that helps Branch Home thrive. The shop has become a meeting place for customers, many who come week after week, sometimes to buy their usual items, other times just to say hi. "There's a lot of just dropping in, too, it's not necessarily shopping," Caroline laughed. "Or we have the hardcore people who know that the bread comes on Friday, and they get certain foods that they know comes on certain days."

The scene feels more like a gathering of friends than a store, which is exactly what Jill and Caroline pictured when opening in 2021. Gathering is the foundation of everything Branch Home does and was opened shortly after the pandemic's lonely periods of isolation, when Caroline and Jill were longing for a space that served as both a place for people to congregate and a hub for all their favorite products, which includes wares for every room of your home. And whether it's their carefully curated products, imaginative workshops, or custom creations, gathering for a warm and joyous celebration with loved ones is at the root of it all.

There's inspiration and new discoveries around every corner at Branch Home, from jewelry and locally-crafted ceramics to cock-



Opposite page above - Caroline Campion (left) and Jill Turpin (right) of Branch Home. Opposite page below - Customers enjoy shopping and gathering at Branch Home, in Far Hills, NJ.



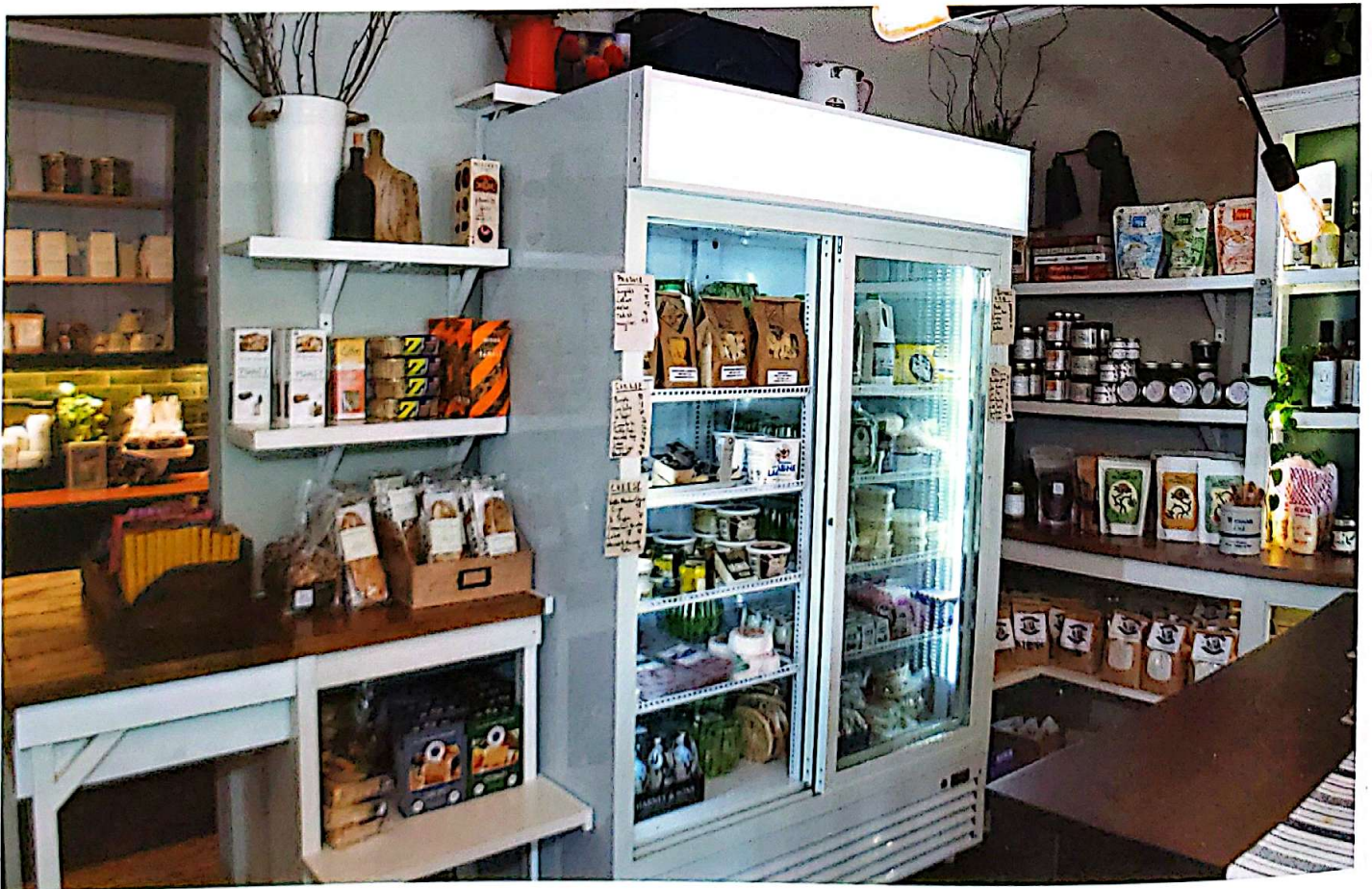


tail mixes and fresh-baked bread. For lovers of country chic aesthetic looking for an immersive shopping experience, this Far Hills emporium is a dream-come-true.

Standing in what used to be the shop's original storefront, a house-like setting that's also illuminated with natural light, customers can peer through rustic window panes at Branch Homes' recent expansion into a space next door. There's a wooden counter with coffee makers, underneath shelves stocked with an endless assortment of tea and Black River Roasters coffee. A fully stocked pantry surrounds a table with barstool seats for communing, with all the staples from locally grown Community Grains to Valley Shepherd Cheese and Liv Breads. Everything is lovingly placed as if decorating a home, painting a picture of what one could do in their own space. "We try and make vignettes and scenes," explains Caroline. "I think people like to see [things and think], oh, I've never thought of putting that linen with that candle, with a little fern sticking out of a bud vase. I could go home and do that."

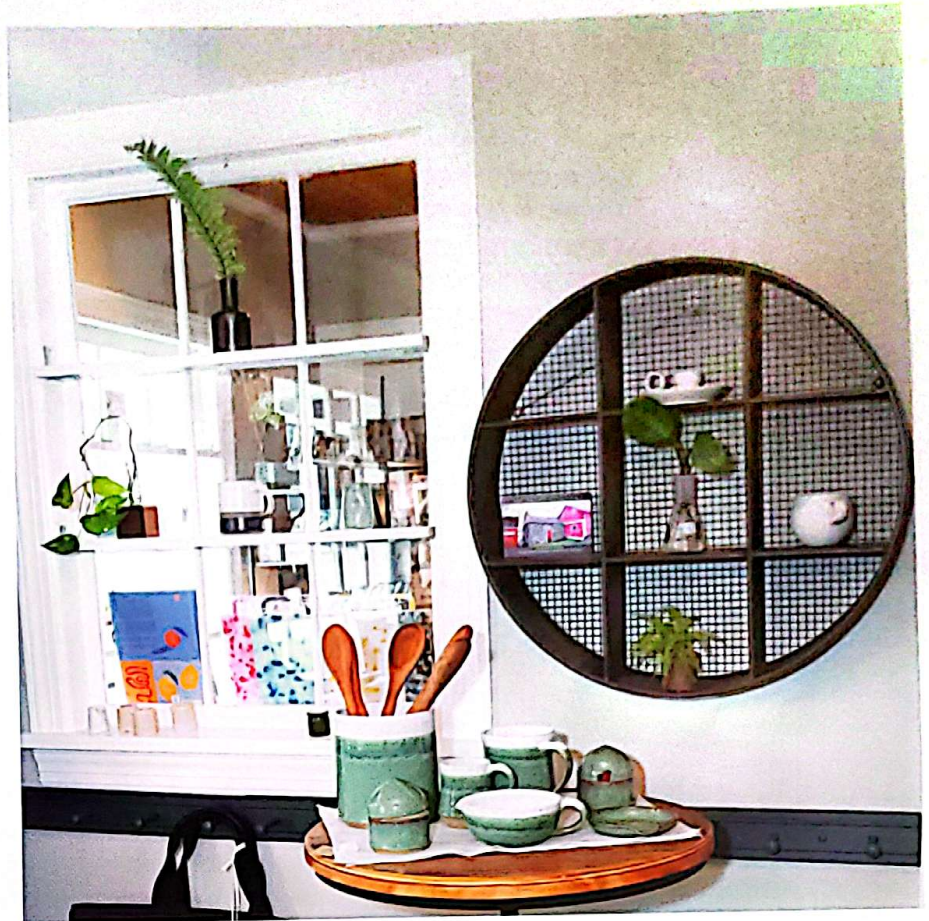
A community has grown around the shop, and Jill and Caroline have seen their customers grow through their stages of life. Customers have gone from dating, to engagements, to having their first child, and have shared stories of grief and support. "We have a lot of grandparents who talk to us about their grandkids," Caroline remarks. "We're seeing this cycle of life."

"We put our heart on our sleeves because that's just how we are," adds Jill. "There are things we've learned about our customers and things they've taught."



The Branch Home duo also support the local community in return, most of their wares being curated from local artisans, farms and businesses, and many elements of their shop being crafted by local makers. "We seek out the coolest, truest, most often handmade... stuff that people can't find anywhere else," says Jill. "And we are lucky enough to be surrounded by some very, very talented people and some amazing food," Caroline adds.

Branch Home sells seasonal vegetables from surrounding farms; pesto and butters from River Lea House Farm; marmalade by Morris Plains native and chef, Judy Mancini; ceramics by Michelle Hill; and jewelry from mother-daughter team Summer Love Designs. Many elements of the shop have been crafted by local makers, such as the shelves, built and designed by Tim Ryan of North Branch Carpentry. Erin Frigerio's vivid, eye-popping photography of plants and birds adorn the walls, and a mural of a tree painted by artist Daniella Fischetti draws customers' eyes to the children's corner of toys and books. The shop's logo itself, a branch with different flowers depending on the season, was designed by Alana van Renssalaer. "We couldn't have done it without so many people, we had



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friends, family giving us their talents, their time, and I don't know how you do it otherwise," reminisces Caroline.

The talent, warmth, and friendly aura of Branch Home shines at the holidays, where shoppers will find charming seasonal decor, can pick out unique gifts for all of their loved ones, and buy ingredients and table wares for their holiday festivities all in one stop. But if you're not sure where to start, Caroline, Jill, and their friendly knowledgeable shopkeepers, will help you select the perfect ingredients, accent pieces, or party themes.

"Customers will say, 'I'm hosting and I don't know what I should do,'" said Caroline, "and they can come in here if they need an idea for setting a table." "We like to take the pressure off of people. We sell so many cheese boards because people want to focus on the main meal," says Jill. "Throwing a party is hard enough. To be able to come and pick up a gorgeous cheese board or pick up a whole tablescape...we do these for Christmas and for Thanksgiving, or anytime. And for Thanksgiving, sometimes they're in gourds, and sometimes they're in glass. It's the extras that really put people over the edge during the holidays."

For one customer, Jill and Caroline arranged a grazing board that was equal parts decorative centerpiece and edible appetizers. "It was a foodscape of things, which is very fun to do because you can really incorporate into the actual tablescape the fruits and vegetables and nuts. It's edible but also beautiful," says Caroline. You can also bring in your own items for Branch Home to use. One customer recently brought in a 1940s vase, asking Jill to fill it with a flower arrangement. Jill often arranges with flowers from her own garden or foraged in the wild.

If you'd prefer to take inspiration from Branch Home but execute it yourself, Branch Home will encourage and guide you. "Everyone is so nervous about messing it up or not making it look as nice," Caroline says. "But, it's just like playing. It's all about playing with it and enjoying the process, because if you don't enjoy the process, what's the point? Just try and do it, you could totally do it." To spark confidence, Branch Home frequently hosts workshops, such as their Kokedama workshop, where attendees learned the Japanese art of growing plants in balls of soil and moss.

The Branch Home team can also help with picking out gifts and arranging them in a beautiful gift basket if desired. When a customer looks lost, "we ask them the leading questions," explains Jill. "Okay, it's a gift. What kind of things do they like? Are they homey? And then, at the end of the day, we just got the perfect gift for this person, because we know how to ask the right questions. We can always do something that's cool and different and make it personable. It doesn't just feel like a gift that you got at the mall. It feels like something you really looked for, and you really thought about the person."

And that's the beauty of the holidays — it's not so much about the gift itself, but the intention behind it, the joy of showing your appreciation for your loved ones and enjoying quality time with them. Jill and Caroline understand that deeply. Once, Jill helped a customer looking for a gift for her podiatrist's wife, who had just had surgery. Together, Jill and the customer put together the perfect get-well-soon gift. "Even though [picking out a gift] could take ten minutes, we're small enough that people can come in and say, 'okay, this is what I have to work with and I'm going to find something great, and if I can't, then I know that someone's going to help me be able to find it,'" explains Jill. "It's just a total joy to help people."

Branch Home is located at 21 US Highway 202, Far Hills, NJ 07931. Check out their website, branchhomeshop.com, and Instagram, [@branchhome](https://www.instagram.com/branchhome) for more holiday inspiration!

