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MAGAZINE



The  
Food  
& Drink  
issue





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## HUNGRY? THIRSTY?

Well it appears that in this issue we will show you how to eat “real” food, how to farm that food (according to Karl Marx), what to consider when buying/selling/renting a restaurant, how to start your own granola empire, how to get drunk vis-a-vis making your own cocktails from ingredients that can be found in your garden as well as tempt you to try Peony vodka, and if you're feeling a little “heavy” from all of that indulgence and you decide to go out for a bike ride – well, we give you tips on where to stop for some sweet treats!

I'm very proud to say that this marks our fourth annual “Food & Drink” issue. Wow, I still can't believe that this is our fourth! But we initially decided to publish an entire issue devoted to our food and drink because, for one, we're at the height of growing season, and secondly, we all have food in common! So no matter where you hail from, no matter what your sex, race, or religion is, we all have in common that we eat and drink, and we all enjoy wonderful and delicious food! Additionally, we are so lucky to live in a bountiful region, because the vast number of farms, wineries, distilleries, ice cream purveyors, tea and coffee makers, granola companies, and so much more, dot our region! Have you ever thought about that, about the sheer number of food-related industries that call this area home? I'm getting hungry just thinking about it.

With all of that being said, after the success of our first “Food & Drink” issue we decided to do it again the following year, and again, and now for the fourth time. We feel that this theme is so applicable, ever-changing, and is of interest to everyone. So I hope that you enjoy our vast range of stories in this year's issue. As I mentioned above, we've got quite the line-up of stories this year. Christine of course examines a real estate market, and this time she dove into the niche real estate market of restaurants. Meanwhile, Dominique explores a new kind of grain and bread that's being made in Hawthorne Valley and being sold at a number of farmers markets. John shares the story of a local diner that is pretty rare due to its designation. Claire gives you some fun cocktail recipes that you can make this summer using natural ingredients from your garden. And as I mentioned above, Ian gives you a “Tour de Carb” if you're so inclined to jump on your bike to burn off some of those calories – while stopping at some hand-selected eateries for sweet treats (you need fuel, right?). Enjoy and stay healthy!

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



**JULY 2016**

There's nothing like ice cream on a hot summer's day!

The chair and ice cream sundae dish were purchased from Phil Terni back in the 1970s by the photographer's parents. Terni's had historically been the place to go for a fountain soda, milkshake, or ice cream sundae. “Phil told me about a year ago that he would take me on a trip down memory lane by firing up the old soda fountain – now wouldn't that be a sweet treat!”

Cover photo by  
Olivia Valentine Markonic

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### PUBLISHER, EDITOR, ADVERTISING, WRITING, PHOTOGRAPHY & OTHER DUTIES

**Thorunn Kristjansdottir** Publisher, Editor-in-Chief, Designer. **Pom Shillingford** Assistant proof-reader. **Ashley Kristjansson** and **Daniel Martucci** Directors of Advertising. Contributing Writers: **Allison Marchese** | **CB Wismar** | **Carol Ascher** | **Christine Bates** | **Claire Copley** | **Dominique De Vito** | **Ian Strever** | **John Torsiello** | **Mary B. O'Neill** | **Melissa Batchelor Warnke** | **Memo-ree Joelle** | **Sarah Ellen Rindsberg**. Contributing Photographers: **Lazlo Gyorsok** & **Olivia Markonic**

### ADVERTISING

**Ashley Kristjansson** and **Daniel Martucci** Call 518 592 1135 or email [info@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:info@mainstreetmag.com)

### CONTACT

**Office** 52 Main Street, Millerton, NY 12546 • **Mailing address** PO Box 165, Ancramdale, NY 12503  
**Phone** 518 592 1135 • **Email** [info@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:info@mainstreetmag.com) • **Website** [www.mainstreetmag.com](http://www.mainstreetmag.com)

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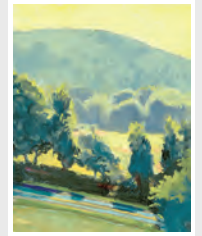
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# harper blanchet

A COLORFUL &  
ARTISTIC LIFE

By CB Wismar  
arts@mainstreetmag.com

In a world without Facebook and Classmates.com, in a time before the Internet has swept up most of society and makes each of us easily accessible, too often aware of what our high school acquaintances have selected from the dinner menu, there was a time when “I wonder whatever happened to...” could only be answered by showing up at the 25th high school class reunion and trying to match yearbook pho-

tos with our present, aging contemporaries.

## “Whatever happened to Harper Blanchet?”

He was the captain of the baseball team, the quarterback of the football team, point guard in basketball, class vice president, and a member of the student council. Harper Blanchet was a major force in high school.

Harper is well traveled – hitchhiking to the West Coast, living in artists’ colonies in New York, Connecticut, and Vermont, but through it all, he has come back to the place that resonates with his artist’s soul. Harper has ended up not far from the site of his many accomplishments, Housatonic Valley Regional High School. “Housy.” Harper is back in Falls Village.

As an accomplished photographer and artist, Harper has traveled the country, lived in cabins and cottages on many hilltops, photographed sunsets and waterfalls, done countless figure studies and portraits, helped deliver babies and helped stage rock concerts. Home, however, is in the center of Falls Village in the building that has variously been the Town Hall, a plumber’s shop, a grocery store, and a home accents store.

## His studio, gallery, and home

Twilight Studios and Blue Star Gallery are where Harper calls home ... literally. His compact living quarters at the back of the building allow ample space for his painting, photography, and a proposed gallery. With fervent intent, he hopes to stage his first solo show in either Fall 2016, or perhaps Spring 2017.

Harper’s life journey began in New Orleans, LA, where his father worked in the burgeoning petroleum industry. A remarkable scientist and amateur photographer, Henry Blanchet “cracked the code” on reducing the sulfur content of



Above top: *Number 225*. Above: *Number 376*. Left: Blanchet with, Sue, a friend, at the Hillside Cemetery in 1971. All imagery courtesy of Harper Blanchet.



diesel fuel and emerged with his own company.

He moved to New Jersey, then Sharon, Connecticut and kept his son Harper on the move and brought him to Northwest Connecticut in time for the formative years of high school.

His father's passion for photography influenced Harper from an early age, and as an enterprising young man, he created images of his friends and Harrington Park, New Jersey classmates with his first camera – a Kodak Star Fire 4. Learning to develop and print the film he shot, he sold those pictures to his friends for the princely sum of a nickel apiece. At age seven, Harper was both an artist and an entrepreneur.

When he arrived in Sharon, his camera of choice had moved from casual to formidable. With a Rollei-flex Twin Lens, he ventured out to explore the countryside, notably the incredible waterfalls that cascade down to the Housatonic River. He captured black and white images in historic cemeteries and the hills and forests beyond.

### College, and a life-changing experience

Although his high school career was filled with the sports cataloged above, he never stopped pursuing his art. As a result, when college beckoned, he was off to Southern Connecticut State in New Haven, where he found a supportive community of artists and musicians, and a full range of subjects for his

photography.

The 1960s were a tumultuous time, punctuated by a widely challenged war and the assassinations of Presidents, civil rights leaders, politicians, and protesters. Harper could not be part of the violence that was America's focus and applied for the draft classification of "Conscientious Objector." So designated, he spent two years in alternative service, working as an orderly back home at Sharon Hospital.

As punctuation of that period of his life, Harper participated in a group photography show organized by Martha Porter at what was then the S.C.A.F. Gallery. The Sharon Creative Arts Foundation was an artistic force in the area, led by experienced and adventurous "creatives" in their own right, people like artist, fashion designer, and photojournalist Martha Boschen Porter, newspaper editor Ann Hoskins, and internationally acclaimed author Judson Philips. The S.C.A.F. Gallery and the Sharon Playhouse were two beneficiaries of their work in the community.

In the early 1970s Harper continued following his photographic muse and kept body and soul together by learning carpentry and painting ... houses. It was not until some years later – in 1990 – that his fascination with paint and brushes and the impact of light on the painted surface led Harper to stretched canvas, finer brushes, acrylic paint, and an easel to convert his fascination with light, shadow, and color into richly colored paintings.

### Bright color – bold statements

His work is fully Abstractionist, combining bold application of vivid color with the relaxed discipline of carefully executed shapes and forms. There is an exercise of great control in Harper's work that, executed in vivid splashes of color, removes the potential for any of his pieces to become redundant.

As part of the unique personality that lives behind these paintings, Harper does not name his paintings. He numbers them. Although he is an avid journal keeper and a poet, the paintings must speak for them-



Above: Harper Blanchet painting in his studio. Below left: Blanchet's painting titled "Number 154."

selves from behind the designation of *Number 376*, a 2014 work ... or *Number 154*, a work dating from 1997. His medium is acrylic paint on large canvases – most either 30" x 40" or 40" x 60" – providing bold statements and inviting the viewer to be enveloped by his work.

### No easy communication

Although Harper relies on connections made on the internet to attract customers and move from interest to sale, he extends his enigmatic lifestyle to proudly owning no cell phone, no television set, and no computer. Those who respond to his work must wait for his visits to the library in order for him to access a computer and formulate a reply.

Although painting consumes much of his creative time, Harper continues to photograph the world around him, concentrating on the varying influence of light, whether it is figure photography (he has done hundreds of photos of friends in various stages of pregnancy and childbirth) or the natural landscape as light changes and the field of vision is illuminated or moves into shadow.

Kept securely in the file cabinets that neatly line his living quarters are more than 16,700 rolls of film (he does not use digital photography), with negatives preserved for

safe keeping.

By his own definition, Harper began a "semi-reclusive" lifestyle in the early 1970s. Certainly one of the events that influenced that choice was being caught up in an horrific 50 car accident on Interstate 95 in 1967. Although he walked away from the tragedy, four people died, and another 25 were seriously injured. He credits that moment for "changing my life," and the pursuit of photography and painting have been the result.

Like most artists, Harper dreams of the day when a patron will provide the support he needs to focus on his work and not be burdened with day-to-day matters. Until that day arrives, he will be found in Twilight Studios, studying the movement of light and bringing color and energy to canvas. ●

Harper Blanchet can be reached via his "land line" at (860) 824-9904 or through his website, [www.harperblanchet.com](http://www.harperblanchet.com).

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work to [arts@mainstreetmag.com](mailto:arts@mainstreetmag.com).








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## friendly faces: meet our neighbors, visitors and friends



**Nina Osofsky** originally hails from Ahrensburg, Germany – ja, sie kommt aus Deutschland! She has worked in the fine food industry for almost 20 years and today works at Ronnybrook Dairy Farm, which is her husband Peter's family business. She has a passion for dairy (especially Ronnybrook), and loves to be able to help keep this three-generation business successful! Outside of work, their seven year old daughter, Maya, keeps she and Peter busy with various sport activities. Nina also leads Maya's girl scout troop twice a month, where she's able to watch Maya and her friends grow up to become confident young women. Nina enjoys reading, going out with friends, and crocheting has become quite an addiction. "I am grateful to raise our daughter so close to her cousins. And watch our cows graze in the field when I look out the window ... it doesn't get much better than that!"



**Emilie Sommerhoff and Job Yacubian** (pictured with their son) have a restaurant and catering business based in Ancramdale, NY, called The Farmer's Wife. They are excited to be opening a second shop in Millbrook later this summer! The Farmer's Wife started in 2002, but the husband-and-wife duo took over the reins from Emilie's stepmother in 2010. A lot of people experience just their shop, but actually much of their work is done off-site. They really love the community of loyal customers who pass through their store. "It's humanizing (in a not-so-human world) when you can say hi and ask meaningful, familiar questions of three out of every four people that walk through the door," says Emilie. Both she and Job love it here; the views, the bounty, the proximity to NYC, the creative energy – everything.



**Amy Benack-Baden** just celebrated her second anniversary as the manager/chef at The Pine Plains Platter in Pine Plains, NY. On the rare occasions that she is not at the café, you can find Amy at the ball fields, the dance studio, or at school, keeping up with her two girls, **Chloe** and **Eliza**. "This has really become a family affair ... my girls are here every day and both my husband and my brother have become integral parts of this place." Amy has worked hard to make The Platter a popular eatery for locals, weekenders, and out-of-towners. She feels incredibly lucky to have so many local farms, distilleries, and other producers in the area to choose from and tries to use as many local purveyors as possible. Amy wanted to give thanks to the team that she has at the café, her family, and the Bannings.



**Alfons Sutter** (pictured with his dog, **Wally**) is the owner of Sutter Antiques in Hudson, NY. His first antiques store opened in London in 1976. "The hunt for unique and beautiful objects is a major drive for me." Alfons and his spouse and business partner, Frank Rosa, love the outdoors. Their free time is spent landscaping around their home, grilling for friends and family, and exploring the numerous hiking trails along the Taconic range. Alfons was born in Switzerland and moved to the Hudson Valley in 1989. Columbia County reminds him of the place where he grew up, "I love the open space, farmland and rolling hills. Baba Louie's is definitely my favorite restaurant in Hudson. Their Dawn's Delight salad and Queen Margarita pizza - a must."



**Kaitlyn Bemiss** has been a waitress at the Church Street Deli in Copake, NY for seven years. She loves her customers and oftentimes knows what they're going to order before they say anything. Her personal favorite items on the menu are the chicken Caesar salad and chicken Caesar salad wrap. Kaitlyn doesn't prepare meals at the deli, but sometimes makes the oatmeal cookies. Outside of work, she loves spending time with her family, boyfriend, dogs, and enjoying mother nature. She is thinking of going to college in the next year or so to pursue art. Until then, Kaitlyn brushes up on her cooking skills at home. "I make a mean steak and homemade potato salad! For dessert, I either make fruit salad or banana bread."



**Joe Comizio** is owner of Trattoria San Giorgio in Millbrook, NY. He was recently certified as an authentic Neapolitan pizza maker, and pizzas are definitely his forte! He has been cooking since 2009, before then he worked as a commodities broker, so this is quite the career change. He loves peoples' responses to his food and getting little kids that come up and say "thank you, this is the best pizza I've ever had." Joe is proud that everything is made in-house. "We put our heart and soul into everything we do." He invites everyone to give them a try [and if you don't, you're missing out]. When Joe isn't making a mouth-watering meal, he attends as many of his son's sporting events and spends as much time with his family as possible, "Chilling and relaxing – making memories."



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# 20% NUTS

BOLA GRANOLA IN  
GREAT BARRINGTON, MA



By Christine Bates  
christine@mainstreetmag.com

*Full disclosure, this writer has been eating BOLA granola for years at breakfast with milk or kefir, as a snack, and even as a dessert topping. Main Street's Food & Drink issue gave me the opportunity to track down Michele Miller, BOLA's creator, in her Great Barrington, MA facility and interview her at the end of the day among stacks of pumpkin seeds, almonds, and oats. We taste-tested a sample of SoCo Ice Cream's newest flavor with crushed BOLA bar and were occasionally interrupted by a call from a customer.*

## Why a granola business?

For years I served granola to friends based on an old recipe that I had tweaked – lots of toasted almonds – salty and sweet. Everyone liked it.

In 2007 there was the tremendous success of Bear Naked Granola, which was started by a couple of kids in Norwalk, CT, and sold to Kellogg company for millions. They did everything right and grew their granola business into a national brand with broad distribution.

I had said goodbye to the restaurant business, and was working as a flight attendant on corporate jets when I decided to start BOLA granola in 2008.

## What prepared you to start a granola business?

Since 1975 I've always had a business. Suche Bakers was first. Then I started the Old Inn on the Green in New Marlborough, MA with some friends. The Boiler Room Café lasted 10 years! I prefer to call myself a cook rather than a chef. I had no formal training; I just like to feed people. Making granola seemed much less complicated. I jumped in and learned by doing. And you always listen. You never know where a great idea will come from.

## How big is this business? Is it growing?

We are a small business. I have seven employees and we usually bake about 1,000 pounds of granola per day. Summer can be a little busier for us. Our business is growing steadily and organically. We update our business plan with new information and have a budget with goals. It's just a roadmap for us. We watch our numbers and margins very carefully.

## What's special about BOLA granola?

BOLA granola uses only the highest quality ingredients, mostly organic.

We are proud of our non-GMO and Gluten-free certifications. It was quite a process and took a lot of time and determination. Our granola is handmade in small batches. It really makes a difference. And it's always fresh. We keep a short shelf life so you know it hasn't been on the shelf for a year, which seems to be the standard with the competition.

## How do you determine the nutrition facts on the back of your package?

It's done through a computer program. You type in the quantities of your recipe – oats, almonds, brown sugar, pumpkin seeds, etc., and a formula calculates the calories, fat, sodium, carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins per serving. For example, one half cup of BOLA granola supplies 20% of your daily fiber. You can also have it tested in a lab.

The Federal Food & Drug Administration, the State Health Department, the Non-GMO Organization, and the Gluten-free Certification Group all inspect us. They can show up any time.

Continued on next page ...



Above top: Christine's breakfast, a bowl of BOLA granola. Directly above: Michele Miller has built a granola business based in Great Barrington from a recipe and a great name. Photo courtesy of BOLA granola.



## How have you built your business?

We have built our business one store at a time. Guido's was our first customer and we added from there. We are focused on quality grocery and food stores, primarily in the Northeast. We also have a few in Florida, California, and Seattle. Whole Foods carries our product in their stores from Maine to New Jersey. Initially we added each Whole Foods store one at a time. We are not interested in the big chain supermarkets or in producing private label.

We're also growing by introducing new products like granola bars, and selling unpackaged bulk granola in stores like Guido's and Whole Foods. That's very popular. One of my goals is to eliminate plastic packaging altogether.

We introduced the gluten-free version of BOLA three or four years ago and it is doing very well. In fact our new "Barely Sweet" BOLA granola with maple syrup is doing even better. Sugar, whether it's maple syrup or brown sugar, is still sugar and some of us like to limit or reduce sugar in our diets so we are pleased to offer the alternative.

And then there are direct customer sales over the Internet, which are increasingly important to us. People find out about us that live in Oklahoma or Wyoming and they can't buy it in their local store. Maybe friends or family gave them

a bag, maybe they moved from the Northeast. But they go online and stock up.

## How do you handle marketing?

We do not advertise and we've found that trade shows don't really advance our goals. Usually you just get people trying to sell you something. We engage in guerilla marketing from word-of-mouth to Facebook. We're also on Instagram, and we have our website and a newsletter.

## Where did the name BOLA come from?

Wish I could remember! Too much wine some night I imagine. A friend told me she suddenly understood the name when she asked her child if he would like a "bowl a granola."

I designed the logo and packaging myself when Photoshop was a lot easier to use.

## What is your goal?

I think we've achieved our goal of becoming the best-selling premium granola brand in the Northeast. My immediate goal right now, as I mentioned, is to replace plastic bags with compostable material.

## Do you always take customer calls?

Well of course! People call to ask about how to eat granola or to tell us that squirrels ate through the box of BOLA granola that UPS left on



Above: BOLA employees roast cookie sheets of BOLA granola in small batches. Photo courtesy of BOLA granola.

the porch! They enjoy the connection, they want to talk and we answer.

## What's the hardest thing about your business?

Business is business. It's a challenge that takes over. It's very intense and you have to make time to go for a walk. But it's fun and a great life.

## Do you have any advice for starting a food business?

I don't give advice. I would say "Open your eyes," this is tough.

## Has anyone called wanting to buy your business?

Not so far! We're just focused on building value.

## I just caught you before you head out of town. Where are you going for the next three weeks?

Tomorrow I'm off to the Cape for a while before the summer crowds, and then to a Lakota Sioux Reservation in South Dakota as a volunteer.

## Are there any business or community leaders you admire?

I admire all the entrepreneurs in the Berkshires who've made a commitment to this place.

## How would you describe your management style?

Let them do their job!

## What makes you a successful entrepreneur?

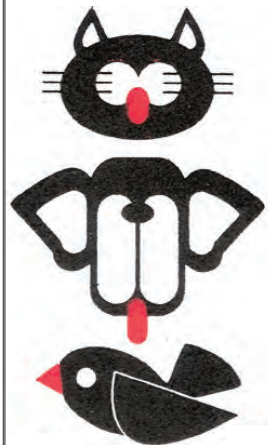
I don't give up. ●

*To learn more about BOLA granola, visit their website at [www.bolagranola.com](http://www.bolagranola.com).*



Above: At LaBonne's Market in Salisbury there is a wide variety of granola brands including BOLA. Photo by Christine Bates.





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# The next generation's health

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Discussing food and drinks runs quite parallel with discussing our health, now doesn't it? Last month I touched upon a topic that seems to be more and more prevalent in our cultural discussions these days, and one that Mary devoted a whole article to in this issue, about "real" food. I won't beat a dead horse and continue to discuss the subject – even though it is quite fascinating and I personally think that everyone should be aware of it. But instead I've decided to dive into a nutritional subject that I have now become quite familiar with: the nutrition of pregnant women.

At the time of this writing I am halfway through my first pregnancy, and let me just tell you that what I eat now has changed quite a bit in the last few months. Well, in all fairness, my first trimester did test me (and my very patient spouse) for smells and tastes were elevated (and that's putting it mildly). But once I got past that and was able to start eating "normally" again, I quickly realized that I had a new normal.

## Don't eat for two

Just because you're pregnant doesn't mean you're eating for two. Yes, that little bean in your belly is a recipient of- and participant in your meals, and is using a lot of your nutrients, vitamins, and resources (making you at times feel extremely drained). But I quickly realized that it's not about the quantity that I eat, but rather about the quality. My sister-in-law, who by the way is one of the most health-conscious people that I've ever met, put it this way: "Think of your growing baby as a garden; you're growing a human. So what do you want to put into that garden? Health and nutrition, or sugar, chemicals, and fake food?" That comment certainly simplifies things and puts it into perspective!

The doctors will tell you to take your prenatal vitamins and try to eat healthy, although one of the information packets that I took home had ice



cream and chocolate on the "OK to eat" list (because of the calcium and vitamins in them).

On the other hand, there were quite a few interesting items on the "do not eat" list such as deli meats, unpasteurized dairy products, and undercooked and or raw meats. Basically all of the things that pregnant women shouldn't eat have to do with bacteria, because everything that I now eat has to be thoroughly cleaned (the fruits and vegetables) and or thoroughly cooked – no sushi or medium-rare steaks for me.

The funny thing is that I have no desire to eat most of these things anyway. And I quickly realized, when I saw the light at the end of the first trimester tunnel, that I still had heightened senses and I could taste the chemicals and processed in foods if they weren't *real* food. This quickly aided me in going to an extreme level of healthy nutrition.

As I've often stated in this column, I never eat straight-up junk food, and I stay away from processed foods as much as I can, so I thought that I was eating pretty healthy before my pregnancy. But my unborn baby quickly showed me otherwise, because for the last few weeks I've mostly consumed fruits, vegetables, and dairy products. I make sure to eat some lean meats

(chicken and fish) a few times a week, but I just can't stop eating (organic) fruits, vegetables, whole milk and Greek yogurt! I guess baby knows best.

## Everyone is different

I'm not claiming to be any sort of expert on pregnancy or pregnancy nutrition now, but being directly responsible for an unborn baby's health and development makes you think twice about what you put past your lips. And on top of that, every woman's pregnancy is different. But what we all have in common is the responsibility of our unborn child's health and development, from the womb and throughout their life.

It used to be that cigarettes and alcohol were the "bad" things to do during pregnancy (and they definitely still are), but now we have additional things to worry about. This year pregnant women have to worry about the Zika virus, but besides such outside factors, we have to be so mindful about what we eat.

Do you think that some of the "bad" foods out there are helping to cause children to develop such ailments as ADHD and autism? The question is certainly enough to drive anyone a little paranoid, let alone a hormonal pregnant woman who's

in mama-bear mode! With such thoughts and possibilities lurking in my mind, I revert back to my sister-in-law's analogy of the garden.

But let me take this one step further; shouldn't we be so mindful about what we consume regardless of if we are pregnant or not, or if we are a man or woman, at any age? I think we should be. Under my current circumstances, I have been forced to reconsider everything about how and what I eat (which I think is wonderful) for one because I want the best for my unborn child, but also because my body is literally rejecting non-real foods – and they taste awful!

I'd like to conclude with a question that my seven-year-old stepson recently asked me. He asked why my husband and I always feed him "healthy and nutritious foods," but before I could answer him he immediately followed up with, "why then do they allow stores to sell all this junk food?" I told him that that was an excellent question and it baffles me too that some of the foods out there are classified as food and are sold to us. But I was happy that he asked these questions because it shows that the next generation is already thinking about- and posing important health-related questions. ●





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## THE BUSINESS OF RESTAURANT REAL ESTATE

*Finding, leasing, buying, & selling restaurants*

By Christine Bates  
christine@mainstreetmag.com

*The assignment from our Editor-in-Chief was to come up with a real estate article for Main Street's Food & Drink issue. So instead of writing about local sales trends or property issues like taxes or agricultural exemptions, we delved into the real estate market of buying and selling restaurants. We talked to real estate brokers and experienced hard-working entrepreneurs that operate restaurants about the real estate aspect of the restaurant business.*

"If anything is good for pounding humility into you permanently, it's the restaurant business."

— Anthony Bourdain

### Finding and building your own space

Americans eat out an average of 4.5 times a week and most diners at some point find themselves wondering about starting a restaurant business. It begins with the business plan/concept for the restaurant, according to Eleanor Nurzia, owner of 52 Main in Millerton, NY. An experienced restaurateur, Nurzia decided on lively Millerton for her next venture after building and operating the very successful Abruzzi in Pawling.

"The audience, the target customer comes first. I was looking for a place which would have a diversified clientele with artists and foodies, people who had travelled and been exposed to global food. A place where people passed through, but that could also be a gathering spot. A location with



Above: 52 Main in Millerton was a pharmacy before being transformed into a tapas restaurant and village meeting place, with live music on weekends. Photo by Cyprian York Sadlon. Below left: The former Simmons Way on Main Street in Millerton is being renovated and will open at the end of this summer with a fine dining restaurant. Photo by Christine Bates.

year-round foot traffic and sidewalk visibility. I looked at parking, the surroundings, the lighting, and the business community. When you write your plan, you need to have the right combination of number of seats, turnover, and ticket price. When I walked into this place on Main Street I knew immediately it would work. Your business plan dictates the space you select – you work your way back."

The landlord had already gutted the former pharmacy down to the studs to make it easier to assess the space – no demolition necessary. Nurzia calculated it would take four years to earn back the cost of leasehold improvements – build out the bar, dining area, and kitchen – and signed a lease. Although there is more security in purchasing a space, there is less risk and more flexibility in leasing, especially if you find a cooperative landlord.

Peter Hathaway made the decision to relocate and buy after years of renting space in Salisbury. He hopes that his café in a building he purchased on South Center Street in Millerton will be open by the time this issue hits newsstands. Hathaway knew he wanted to move to Millerton from Salisbury, in part, because the village has no bakery. He looked at spaces that were too big, too expensive, had

septic issues, and bad locations before investing on South Center Street. The small café with only nine seats inside (the number is dictated by the Dutchess County Health Department), will serve Italian coffee, soups and sandwiches, cookies, bread and pies – all to go or take to a small table and enjoy on the spot. In the back is a full commercial kitchen, which will also handle the catering side of the Hathaway Young business. There even will be a small grocery section of breakfast necessities – bacon, milk, juice, and yoghurt. The look will be slick and clean.

### Buying or leasing an existing restaurant

Peter Stefanopoulos, owner of The Boathouse in Lakeville and partner in ten Four Brothers restaurants, thought he was buying a building with an existing inn and restaurant with a chef tenant when he purchased Simmons Way in Millerton in October 2014 for the attractive price of \$675,000. He had fallen in love with the landmark property and wanted to preserve it, according to his daughter Eleni Stefanopoulos. When the existing restaurant ran into trouble he decided to take it over and rebuild. "We always own our real estate."

A larger, completely new kitchen

and remodeled Victorian inn with eleven bedrooms is underway. The restaurant team is working on a "mosaic cuisine" with a European theme and American techniques. It will be creative dining when it opens in August or September.

"Win" Morrison of Win Morrison Realty may be the realtor with the most experience selling restaurants on both sides of the Hudson River from Westchester to Albany. He's even willing to throw in his commission as a second mortgage as part of the down payment to help the buyer make a deal. "There's less money now and it's getting harder to sell restaurants." At the same time, "Everyone always knows they will do better than the former owner."

He advises buyers to "Make sure the actuals are the actuals and look at tax returns." Actual operating figures of existing restaurants are shared only with very serious buyers and for on-going businesses, confidentiality is key. He estimates that there are 25 to 50 restaurants for sale in the region including "some of the best." The problems he sees in selling restaurants are too few buyers and the unwillingness of banks to lend. His estimate

Continued on next page ...





of price range to buy an operating restaurant is the total net after all expenses of the last three to five years of operations. The term of a typical lease is three to five years with an option to renew and several months free rent to make leasehold improvements. Typically there's a key money deposit on restaurant equipment of \$10,000 to \$100,000 that is returned after the end of the lease.

Nurzia recommends that people buying an existing restaurant look at the sales tax filings to confirm revenues. There needs to be a tenant-friendly lease to assume, or excellent price to buy. Ideally a restaurant should have a solid customer base and a staff that's staying on and knows the customers. The condition of the equipment and the building should be investigated. An on-going restaurant business should sell for about one third the annual gross, estimated Nurzia. Her preference has always been to create a new space without the baggage of a previous operation.

### It takes a while to sell a restaurant

Usually family reasons make people sell restaurants they have owned and operated successfully, like The Bridge in Sheffield, and Pastorale in Salisbury, or like the owner of Martin's Café in Great Barrington. They are tired and ready for something new. But it takes time to find a new owner.

Helen Clough has been waiting a few years to find the right buyer for the Dutch Treat in Craryville. Clough, who had wanted to own the Dutch Treat since she was in high school, saved and borrowed enough money to buy the place in 1986. With homemade ice cream and pies and long days, the Dutch Treat supported her and her family. She sold it once but after six months the buyer gave it back. She's leased it a couple of times. "It didn't work for them. They thought it would be easy but they gave up," she said. "I purchased this on a shoestring and worked 13 hours a day for 13 years to pay off the mortgage early. I saved every dime. It was mighty tough. I'm not sad about selling the restaurant, but I will miss

the people."

The Bridge in Sheffield is an example of a successful operating restaurant with loyal year-round customers and trained staff with an "owner's mentality," according to broker Lance Vermeulen. Potential buyers of The Bridge will get the large 98 seat business, the staff, and the real estate, which is assessed at \$552,000, all for \$750,000. The broker feels that bank financing would be available given the strong financials. The current owners, who bought the operation in 2007, are planning on moving out of the area for family reasons. Similarly Martin's Café, a Great Barrington standard, is being sold because the owner, after 27 years, is ready to do something else. The price for all of the restaurant's assets has been reduced to \$350,000. The lease on the premises would be negotiated separately with the owner who is retaining ownership of the property. In both cases it would be possible for a new owner to avoid 13-hour work days.

Mom and pop luncheonettes seem to be increasingly difficult to sell. The iconic Martindale Diner on NY Route 23 finally sold after years on the market. Declining prices and long listing times suggest that competition from fast food franchises and gas stations going into the food business selling breakfast sandwiches and hot dogs are eating away at traditional sit-down restaurants. Similarly restaurants off the beaten path in rural locations, like the long shuttered Bottle Tree in Ancram, languish on the market. And restaurants that have ceased operating present a special challenge.

The best way to sell an existing restaurant is the way Nurzia sold Abrizzi. A supplier asked if she might be interested in selling at the right price. Without changing anything the restaurant was sold – and now it's on the market again.

Anyone interested in looking at restaurants for sale should check out loopnet.com, and the commercial section of realtors sites. •

## RESTAURANTS FOR SALE



### Pastorale, Salisbury CT

Operating very successfully since 2003 and closed at end of 2015, Pastorale Restaurant in Salisbury is on the market for \$495,000. For an additional \$50,000 the buyer gets all the furniture, kitchen equipment, and serving pieces. Contact Laurie Dunham of Best & Cavallaro. Photo courtesy of John Atchley.



### The Bridge Restaurant, Sheffield, MA

The current owner/operator couple is selling this Sheffield standard with 98 seats for personal reasons. The steady business and financials would support obtaining bank financing. Asking price is \$750,000 for real estate and ongoing business with experienced staff in place. Contact Lance Vermeulen at Lance Vermeulen Realty. Photo Peter Greenough.



### Dutch Treat, Craryville, NY

Family-owned for decades, this Route 23 coffee shop is known for its great home-baked pies. The operating restaurant and two upstairs apartments are listed at \$370,000. Contact Lindsey Lebrecht at Copake Lake Realty. Photo Copake Lake Realty.



### The Bottle Tree, Ancram, NY

Formerly a small white table cloth restaurant on Route 7 across from the Ancram Town Hall, The Bottle Tree has been for sale for a very long time. The listed asking price is \$220,000. Contact David Birch at Hudson Valley Commercial Real Estate. Photo Christine Bates.



### Martin's Restaurant, Great Barrington, MA

High quality American comfort food with steady clientele, and proprietary recipes has been reduced to \$350,000, for the business. Building lease is additional. Contact Rich Aldrich or Anthony Blair at Stonehouse Properties. Photo Stonehouse Properties.

### << Taghkanic Diner, Taghkanic, NY

Purchased by its current owner in 2008 for \$395,000, this 1954 diner at the crossroads of the Taconic Parkway and NYS Route 82 is on the market for \$475,000. Contact Victoria Hoyt at Win Morrison Realty. Photo Christine Bates.



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# Search for the Holy Grain



Above: Koen Van Der Meer's field of spelt, which is eventually turned into beautiful and amazing spelt bread (like pictured above) or other baked goodies. Pictures above courtesy of Koen Van Der Meer.

By Dominique De Vito  
info@mainstreetmag.com

"Bread deals with living things, with giving life, with growth, with the seed, the grain that nurtures. It's not coincidence that we say bread is the staff of life."

— Lionel Poilâne, 1945-2002 (French boulanger whose commitment to crafting quality bread earned him worldwide renown).

There's a primordial satisfaction in eating good bread. Really good bread. A baguette from a Boulangerie in France; a bagel from Zabar's or H&H in Manhattan; fresh-made Italian foccacia; and — if you're really lucky — bread that has just come out of the oven, warm and crusty on the outside, light and soft and steamy on the inside. Fresh-baked bread is a treat for every one of the senses, and can leave you feeling deliciously satisfied all over. If you agree, have I got news for you.

This is a story about breads born out of passion for people who are passionate about bread. I feel I qualify (being passionate about bread), and I have been lucky enough to eat breads from around the world. I search for special loaves the way a gambler looks for odds or a decorator for antiques — with an eye on a prize, something different yet delectable, something really *great*.

## Local loaves

Our area has many sources of consistently yummy and impressive breads, notably Hawthorne Valley Farm Store, Bonfiglio, Café Le Perch, Our Daily Bread, and Berkshire Bakery, to name a few. But there's more, for sure, and where

else to find a loaf or roll that meets these high bread-lover standards than at a farmer's market?

That's how I discovered Koen Van der Meer of SearchForTheHolyGrain(.com). He is a new vendor at the Copake Hillsdale Farmer's Market at the Roe Jan Park on Saturdays (as well as at other markets). What he's up to is not just bread that tastes good, but bread that truly feeds our bodies. He has a line of breads made with spelt grown in Harlemville and in which he uses a malt leaven he created from sprouted barley. What he's after is a non-degenerated grain that hasn't been compromised by cultivation and modern farming, with its use of chemicals and fertilizers. An anthroposophist by nature, Koen studied Rudolph Steiner's theories of biodynamic agriculture, which encouraged the growing of "pure" grasses for consumption all the way back in the 1920s — even before what we consider "modern" farming.

"Since the introduction of chemical fertilizers," Koen notes, "wheat production increased by eight to 12 fold. While the increase looked like a way to 'feed the world,'" he says, "what actually was happening was the degeneration of the nutritional value of the grain."

"Wheat and grains are rich in essential vitamins and minerals," he continues. "It's a scientific fact that the human brain increased in volume as early man started eating grains and making bread. 'Without zinc, you can't think,'" he chimes.

Koen is a treasure trove of information about how yeast and bacteria contribute to nutritionally sound bread, and what gluten's role is in how bread rises and forms. He has been baking for over 40 years,

Continued on next page ...



and he's worked in restaurants and bakeries around the world. He is distraught at the level of gluten sensitivities, and while he acknowledges that people with celiac should definitely avoid gluten, he believes that healthier grains with better gluten structure can be a way for many more people to include bread in their diets.

### From Holland to Harlemville

Originally from Holland, Koen found his way to the Philmont/Harlemville/Berkshires by way of a meeting in Germany with Bruno Follador, a Brazilian soil researcher. Inspired by the work of Bruno and Steffen Schneider at Hawthorne Valley, Koen planted his first four rows of spelt in Harlemville in 2012. They were just seven feet long. He now has 12 rows of carefully planted and tended spelt that are 180 feet long – about 1/3 of an acre!

Spelt is a relative of wheat so it can be used the way we use regular wheat flour, but because it is non-degenerated, it is much easier to digest and much more beneficial. Oh, and Koen is making some killer breads with it.

When I visited him at the Wednesday evening Upstreet Market at the top of Warren Street in Hudson, his offerings included not just loaves of light spelt, whole grain spelt, whole grain spelt with



Above, L-R: The ingredients of the spelt biscuits are written on a brown paper bag and wedged under the plate. Koen Van Der Meer boasting his raisin bread. Below left: Koen Van Der Meer's baked goods at the Upstreet Market.



raisins, and honey oat spelt, but also biscuits, cookies, and scones made with spelt. He had samples of the biscuits, so I couldn't resist. Dense and compact with a golden-brown crust, the texture of the biscuit was light and airy and utterly delicious. Some shoppers came along who also sampled (with some skepticism at first), and all of us were chewing and nodding and gushing with compliments on the subtle flavors.

The biscuits contained very finely chopped local greens, according to Koen, as well as some coriander and almond milk. The flavor was sublime. We were all very pleasantly surprised.

### The raisin bread

Koen made sure to show me the texture of the raisin bread, of which he is particularly proud. It's dense, too, but was also airy and moist. I took a loaf of that home and couldn't wait to try it. It's a thick, substantive bread, and I noticed that it filled me up quickly. The flavor was earthy and slightly malty, offset beautifully by the moist raisins, which were small, almost like currants.

I had a round of R&G's goat milk Camembert in the fridge, and I cut a small piece of that to eat with the bread. I thought about all the baguettes I've smeared with French Brie or Camembert. I loved them all, but the whole spelt raisin bread with the fresh goat's milk Camembert was, in comparison, like eating a cake made from scratch versus a store-bought birthday cake. Koen's bread is great.

up and running later this summer. He's excited about that.

He wants to establish an institute of sorts that he can oversee that sustains his mission of grain education and making breads with real life force that feed all parts of our being and help us live healthier lives for ourselves and our planet. Bread is good food. •

*Learn more about Koen at [searchforthe-holygrain.blogspot.com](http://searchforthe-holygrain.blogspot.com). Find him at the Copake Hillsdale Farmer's Market on Saturday mornings, the Upstreet Market in Hudson on Wednesday afternoons, the Philmont market on Sunday mornings, and his breads at the Berkshire Coop, the Chatham Coop, and the Kaaterskill Farm Natural Storehouse in Hudson.*



### What's his ultimate goal?

Koen feels that educating people about grain nutrition is part and parcel of baking and selling the breads and other baked goods. He is working on perfecting a spelt croissant (*magnifique!*). He'll be baking at the Philmont Community Supported Bakery, which should be





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# INCORPORATING REAL FOOD INTO YOUR REAL LIFE

# Keep it real

By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.  
info@mainstreetmag.com  
Photos by Lazlo Gyorsok

Food is integral to our survival. Yet, some evidence suggests that the food we consume is increasingly devoid of the nutrients, vitamins, and ingredients that promote our health, and full of ingredients that don't. Obesity, type-2 diabetes, and heart disease are only some of the maladies we cope with at an ever-decreasing age with an ever-increasing frequency.

Often, with our busy schedules, convenience and pre-prepared meals find their way onto our tables and into our mouths without too much reflection on how they impact our health.

For answers, we look to nutrition science and the medical community. But studies and advice conflict on a routine basis. And food manufacturers barrage us with marketing ploys and claims about their products. With our busy lives, we'd love to offload the research to arrive at an answer to how to eat, eat well, and eat for the health of our children, us, and our planet.

Fortunately, there is a simple concept that puts food, eating, and health in perspective. It's more recently been called "real food" but it's been around for a long, long time. Most of us have strayed from it amidst a forest of nutritional claims, counterclaims, food pyramids, a growth economy that provides us with infinite and often unnecessary choice, and clever marketing campaigns that evoke emotions surrounding food and eating.

## Real food defined

In 2006, Nina Planck, founder of London Farmers' Market, cookbook author and farmers' daughter, wrote the book on real food called *Real Food: What to Eat and Why*. This year



it's been updated and reissued for its 10th anniversary. For Planck, real food is both old – "foods we've been eating for a long time" and traditional – "the way we used to eat them." Real food is "fundamentally conservative," meaning that it doesn't need to change over time and it's more limited to what's in season and available locally.

More recently, author Michael Pollan has championed real food through his numerous books, which delve into the science behind nutrition, food science, and agriculture. His *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual* illustrated by Maira Kalman is a testament to good things coming in small accessible packages.

For me, it has become a touchstone book. When I become untethered from real food, I come back to his food rules to return me to my own food truth. He provides simple ways to reintroduce real food that worked for our ancestors. Pollan's guidance on what to eat can be reduced to seven words:

*Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.*

His food rules encapsulate a collective cultural wisdom about food and eating solicited from the likes of folklorists, nutritionists, and grandmas. Pollan calls these 83 rules "personal policies," which he classifies as "... useful tools. Instead of prescribing highly specific behaviors, they supply us with broad guidelines that should make everyday decision making easier and swifter. Adopt whichever ones stick and work best for you." His policies run from the general "Don't eat anything your great grandmother wouldn't recognize as real food" to the specific "Don't eat breakfast cereals that change the color of the milk." Good-bye Fruit Loops!

## Six Degrees of Bacon

My own definition of real food resembles a riff on the game that plays homage to actor Kevin Bacon. I call it Six Degrees of Bacon. If the food can't be traced back from my plate to its origins in the most natural soil or farm setting in six or less steps, then it isn't real food.

However you define it, returning to real food and incorporating it into your diet takes intention and some effort, but it's worth it, not just from a nutritional standpoint but from an emotional and spiritual one. I feel connected to the people and earth that's feeding me, my family, and my community.

## Get real

Real food advocates can be perceived, and sometimes with just cause, as clubby and elitist, and a source of judgment on those who haven't yet seen the light.

On its present scale, real food production can't feed everyone, can't reach everyone, and can't be afforded by everyone, illustrating pressing issues of food justice in our own country that need to be acknowledged and

Continued on next page ...



addressed. (In our local area, North East Community Center in Millerton, NY is doing substantive work in making real food more widely available to all members of the community through its weekly Farmers Market and its teen Farm and Food Education program).

To be sure, Planck and Pollan's prescription for eating real food can seem like a daunting and pie-in-the-sky ideal that requires time, knowledge, access, and money. In addition, to heed their advice, change our ingrained habits, and potentially go against the popular wisdom about nutrition can feel like a true act of will. On a practical level, even overhauling our fridge and pantry seems overwhelming.

Yet, as a philosopher I can appreciate ideals. They give us something to work toward, and in this case are a way to measure progress along a continuum from less real to more real food in our lives. The trick with ideals is to not use them as a tool for self-flagellation, but rather as a tool for motivation. Once we set the ideal as a hard and fast goal without reference to how we get there, the ideal seems empty and detached from our lives. We need the journey and the map to make the ideal meaningful.

So how can we get real about this journey to real food? Here's what's working for me and might help you too.

### Take stock

The first step is to educate yourself on what real food means and why it's important, then assess what it means for you in your life right now. For this I use a variation of what's called "appreciative inquiry." I look at what I'm specifically doing right, and not so much on what I'm not doing. This approach allows me to proceed from a place of strength and capacity, which is motivating, rather than from a place of mistakes that need to be corrected, which is paralyzing.

Right now, with three children and both my husband and I working, I came up with the following list. Your list will likely look very different from mine and might contain more or less strengths. The goal is to use real food wisdom as a guide, not an ultimatum. So, here's what I already do:

- Educate myself about the local farm economy and real food.
- Cook meals with as many real ingredients as possible.
- Eat as a family as often as possible – at a table – with no TV or smartphones.
- Limit my use of prepackaged foods.
- Employ an all-out soda ban.
- Shop locally where time and budget allow.
- Pack lunches for school, work, and trips as often as I can.
- Read food labels – when I remember my reading glasses.
- Limit my visits to fast food restaurants as an option of last resort.
- Maintain a small vegetable garden. (Shout-out to Salisbury Family Services Community Garden for help making this a reality for me and my family).

After you compile your detailed inventory, sit back and appreciate what you are already doing – even if it's only one thing. Our present food habits were built over a long period of time and enculturation. Undoing those habits will also take time, so be patient.

### Look for the increment

Next, set your own priorities and look for small specific changes you can make right now – not five years from now if you won the lottery and can afford to employ a chef in your home.

Changing a habit and sustaining that change requires small, incremental steps that you can keep up over time. When we try to cold turkey a change there's often backsliding and self-recrimination.

Looking at my own life and using Pollan's food rules I came up with the following habits I want to change and how I propose to do that within my budget and priorities:



- Stop buying flavored yogurt and smoothies. Instead I'll buy whole milk plain yogurt, frozen or fresh fruit, and local honey to make my own.
- Make my own hummus and pesto – two popular items in my house.
- Buy more local and organic grass-fed and pasture-raised meat. With two voraciously carnivorous sons I can't afford prime cuts of local beef and pork, but I can work less expensive cuts into my meals.
- Buy local eggs. I've established several local sources of pasture-raised eggs.
- Find cereal options that have less ingredients and less sugar – and don't turn the milk blue.
- Spend more time on the periphery of the grocery store where real food is more often located.

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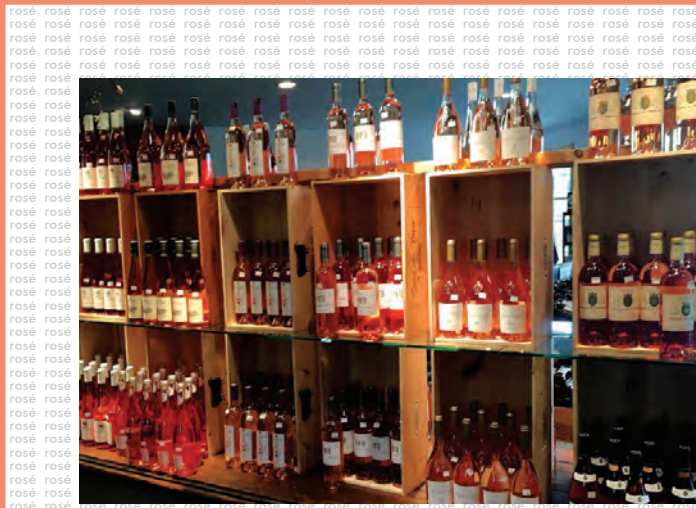


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- Have my children prepare one meal a week, at least for summer months (this one has been on my list a very, very long time but I'm not ready to give up on it yet).

These are habits I believe I can sustain, but when I can't I won't berate myself. I'll just get back on track.

#### Deal breakers and compromises

Now I look at habits and practices that I'm unwilling to change because they require more time and effort than I can give right now. For me the list looks like this:

- Bake from scratch. This is not going to happen for me any time soon – or maybe ever. I don't consider myself a baker and don't enjoy it all that much, but I will look for pre-packaged options that limit difficult-to-pronounce ingredients.
- Make pancakes from scratch. Again, not happening any time soon. It's just a bridge too far on a weekend morning, but when I use a mix I'll

be adding my local eggs and organic milk. I can also stir in flax or chia seeds and use real maple syrup.

- Preserve and jar fruits and veggies – or make jam. Definitely not happening. But I can make easy and quick pickles!
- Give up pre-packaged Ramen noodles and macaroni and cheese. My 13-year-old son will not allow this.
- Make my own cheese. Yikes! What would that be like? I can't even imagine it.
- Ban all fast food. Sometimes it can't be helped, and in those moments I try to be discerning about which restaurants we visit and what we order from them.
- Buy all organic and local food. Time and money don't permit this for me right now. But I do what I can and support local when I can. I believe in local food and those who provide it, but it's challenging enough getting to the supermarket each week before it closes, let alone scheduled farmers' markets on a weekly basis.

#### Get creative

Be your own trouble shooter when it comes to real food. You don't need to mortgage the house to increase the amount of real food in your life, and remember it's not an all or nothing affair – it's a continuum along which we move.

For example, I don't live near Whole Foods. I can't afford, nor do I want to afford its products on a regular basis anyway. Luckily, I don't have to. Supermarkets and food companies are increasingly heeding the call for transparency in food labelling and a move to less additives and processing.

Warehouse clubs also carry a wide range of healthful and organic products. Even Ikea sells high-quality organic food – along with its flat-pack furniture. They even make a wonderful breakfast muesli – another food I can't quite justify putting time into.

#### Cross-Pollanization

While it's unlikely that Planck and Pollan will dedicate a future book to me for my heroic real food efforts, they can't vilify me either. To the best

of my culinary ability, within my current time and fiscal constraints, I'm making a hand-on-heart effort to educate myself about real food and its connection to nutrition and health. I'm taking responsibility to create awareness of how to eat well, and moving myself and my family along the trajectory to a more healthful existence.

Like many others, when I can I'm voting with my plate regarding the food I buy and where I buy it. These intentional daily decisions and acts are noticed by my children. I hope that the significance of these choices is falling on fertile ground, so that in their futures they will expect better and do better in their own food lives.

In addition, since every purchase I make, Internet search I perform, email list I join, and post I "like" on Facebook is entered into some Big Data pool somewhere, food companies are taking notice of my buying and clicking patterns, which may influence the products they offer.

Getting real about real food is a process and it's personal. In an ideal world, perhaps we'd all return to our real food roots and money, time, and access would be no issue in that journey. But in the real world there are constraints that may hamper our efforts and progress.

I feel good about the direction I'm headed, and so should you. Just begin. Educate yourself. Appreciate what you may already be doing. Don't judge yourself about what you aren't. Reflect on what's possible. Pick some sustainable behaviors and practices to incorporate into your life, embrace them, and keep progressing.

Eating is fraught with enough judgment, second guessing, and emotion. Consuming real or more real food should taste and feel good. Rather than being a torturous ascetic goal, it should be a worthwhile journey, which is its own just dessert. •





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# Summer cocktails: SLURPING THROUGH SUMMER

By Claire Copley  
info@mainstreetmag.com

I think we can safely assume it's summer now. Although it's hard to be safe in any assumptions about the climate these days. But I know my garden is flourishing.

My herb garden has, in fact, become so lush that I have begun to wonder what on earth I will do with all those herbs. Mint is abundant, several bushes of oregano smell inviting, and my tarragon is back. Dill is spreading its soft feathery leaves, and the chives are flowering already. The annual problem with my herb garden is how to use it fast enough so nothing goes to seed before I get to it. The perfect time to pick and use herbs is just before they flower so my clock is ticking.

There are a million ways to use fresh herbs in the summer and a million more ways to dry and save them for later use. I could make gift sachets, herb wreaths, or stuffed pillows. I love chopping herbs into butter or olive oil, and freezing the mixture in ice cube trays so that I can use it in everyday cooking. Pondering all this I realized that I usually think of herbs in the context of eating. But what about drinking?

Herbal infusions are a great way to consume herbs. But what are they and how do we make them and use them? Herbs can be used to infuse their oils into a wide variety of liquids and those liquids can be stored and used to make all sorts of delicious and nurturing treats.

## Muddled?

One thing to know is that any herb infused drink will likely involve muddling. The muddler is nothing more than a bartender's pestle and they are very easy to use. To muddle herbs, you simply place the leaves to be muddled (isn't it a wonderful word?) in the bottom of a cocktail shaker or a sturdy bottomed glass and gently press down and give half a turn of the muddler. Usually you will need to do this 4-6 times and viola! Muddled herbs. The point is

not to tear or crush the leaves but rather just to release their fragrant oils.

Muddlers come in various shapes and sizes (and prices), but are widely available at kitchen stores (and yes, even Amazon). A muddler is shaped like a very small baseball bat. The broader end is used to gently crush the herbs. Wooden muddlers are the most popular because they are durable and light. The one drawback to wood is that you need to take extra care of it because it is an organic material: no dishwasher, no soaking.

In recent years there has been an explosion in muddler design and many are now made out of plastic, stainless steel, or a combination of materials. Most follow the basic design but many are now made with teeth on the smaller end and can be used to mash larger ingredients, extracting juice from berries, and even tenderizing meat. The main advantage of plastic or steel muddlers is that they can be washed in the dishwasher and thus are more sanitary. Don't use the teeth on the herbs though as you want to gently caress the essence out of them, not mash them.

## Flavored waters

This summer I have promised myself to drink more water. Herbs and fruits can turn water into a healthy or festive summer drink. Infusing water with the essence of fruits, herbs, and fresh vegetables helps you drink plenty of liquids without the downside of excess calories, sugars, and artificial flavorings. It's nutrition and hydration combined!

To make flavored waters you may select any combination of herbs, fruits, and vegetables. Fill a large jar with water and add the ingredients you have chosen. Use your muddler to crush fibrous ginger root, rosemary, and lemongrass, but just tear or lightly muddle leafy herbs like mint, basil, and cilantro.



Above: Cocktails in the garden. Photo by Olivia Valentine Markonic.

Fruits and veggies should be sliced, if possible. Let the water sit for a few hours to allow the flavors to infuse. The longer it sits, the more flavorful the water will be. Some fruits or herbs will infuse more quickly than others. Citrus is pretty instant. Herbs take a little longer. Berries take a few hours and will also release color into the water. You can strain the water if desired and add fresh ingredients before chilling. If you don't drink the water the same day, it's best to strain out the solid ingredients for storage. If your flavored water is for a party, add some edible flowers to brighten up the look. Nasturtiums, cornflowers, lavender, sage flowers, snapdragons, and roses are just a few of the many possibilities.

I have vowed to always have a jar of flavored water on my counter this summer as a healthy way to make sure I drink more water and keep my herb garden under control.

Here are some tried and true combinations:

- Cucumber, lemon, mint, and rosemary
- Strawberry, lemon, and basil
- Cantaloupe, honey, and mint
- Blueberry, pomegranate, and mint
- Blackberry, lime, cilantro, and mint
- Blackberry and sage
- Strawberry, lemon, and ginger
- Orange, blueberry, and basil

## Party time?

More and more often I see restaurants offering original cocktails that depend on fresh herbs for their distinctive flavor. I also began noticing that many creative bartenders were

Continued on next page ...



using artisanal bitters. Traditionally, bitters are concoctions made from herbs, fruits, bark, and roots that are usually steeped in 100% proof alcohol such as vodka. They are concentrated and have a strong pungent odor. Bitters are usually served by the dash or drop to add specific flavors to cocktails. Many of us remember an odd bottle of something called Angostura Bitters, but now there are so many more. Another broadly popular style of bitters used in cocktails is orange bitters, the flavor of which ranges from dryly aromatic to fruity, and is most commonly made from the rinds of Seville oranges and various spices.

In recent years people have begun brewing their own bitters. Books and websites abound that will fill you in on the history and science of bitters, and it is another creative way to use those herbs. In the past, many bitters were considered tonics, good for the digestion and overall health. Though I can't testify either way, why not?

### The simple syrup

Many herbal cocktail recipes begin with making a "simple syrup," flavored or unflavored. A simple syrup is made by adding sugar to boiling water in a 1:1 ratio. Adding the sugar to boiling water ensures that the sugar is completely and permanently dissolved. You bring the water to a boil, then add the sugar and stir or whisk to dissolve. When the sugar is completely dissolved, turn off the heat and add your flavorings and let the syrup cool for a couple of hours, before straining for use. Flavorings might include lemon peels, herbs, cinnamon, fruits, chile peppers, lavender, or anything edible that strikes your fancy. Some great herbs for syrups include mint, basil, rosemary, thyme, lemongrass, lavender, tarragon, or lemon verbena.

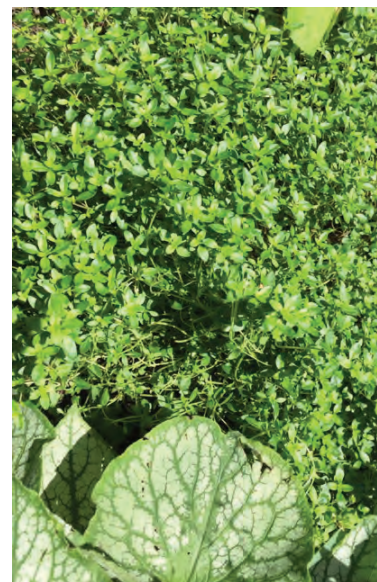
Simple syrups can be used in a variety of ways. They can sweeten teas and coffee, or flavored waters. They can be used in baking, or as



Above: Dill and cilantro in the garden.



Above: Generic spearmint is abundant.



Above: Thyme is keeping company with Claire's Brunnera macrophylla.

a sweetener for summer berries or fruit desserts. Use them to sweeten fresh cream for whipped cream. Once you make them, you will find a thousand ways to enjoy them.

### Herbs and the Cocktail

The origins of the word "cocktail" are lost to history, but the first definition we find in print comes from an 1806 newspaper from upstate New York. A cocktail is called "a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water, and bitters..." Over the course of the 19th and 20th century, the cocktail was refined, and has become "an iced drink of wine or distilled liquor mixed with flavoring ingredients." Today's chefs and bartenders have taken this definition to new heights, using fresh herbs and juices to create new and exciting tastes.

Basil is a nice addition to plenty of cocktails: add a torn leaf or two to your gin and tonic, or tap a little into the bottom of your mojito. You can make a basil syrup to have on hand to use in a wide variety of things, but I am particularly interested in what is called a Basil Lime Cooler. To make the syrup, use eight basil leaves per cup of water and sugar. Strain the syrup through a fine mesh strainer. The syrup will keep for at least a week in a sealed container in the refrigerator.

For the Basil Lime Cooler, combine one ounce of the basil-infused syrup per drink with ½ ounce of fresh lime juice, and an ounce and a half of vodka in a cocktail shaker

filled with ice. Add three or four fresh basil leaves, and shake vigorously. Strain the mixture into a cocktail glass and add two or three ounces of seltzer and a sprig of basil. Sounds good, right?

Similarly, a recipe for Basil-Vodka Gimlet calls for making a basil-lemon syrup which is made the same way but uses four cups of packed fresh basil sprigs, four cups of water, two cups of sugar and nine (four-by-one-inch) strips of lemon zest. Once the syrup is cooled, combine a cup of it with ¾ of a cup of vodka, ¾ cup of fresh lemon juice and one cup of ice cubes. Garnish with fresh basil sprigs (preferably lemon basil) and/or lemon zest strips. Given these quantities, I would have to add that this recipe is for a crowd.

Some recipes also suggest infusing the alcohol itself in advance of using it for cocktails, such as rosemary-infused gin or vodka. To do this, simply muddle two stalks of rosemary (or any other herb) and drop it in a bottle of your favorite gin or vodka and leave until the flavor has infused — one to five days.

To make a refreshing Rosemary Lavender cooler, use two ounces of rosemary-infused gin, ½ ounce of lemon juice, and ½ ounce of lavender-infused simple syrup. Shake the gin, lemon juice, and lavender syrup with ice, then strain into an ice-filled highball glass. Garnish with a rosemary stalk and top off with club soda.

And we can't forget mint. A

summer mint Julep is perfect! Again, a minted simple syrup is used (add ½ cup of lightly packed mint leaves for each cup of water and sugar). For one drink, fill a tall glass with crushed ice. Pour one tablespoon of minted simple syrup into the glass. (For a sweeter cocktail, add more syrup). Add four lightly muddled mint sprigs to the glass. Pour four tablespoons of bourbon into the glass. Stir, and garnish with a mint sprig, if desired.

A great idea is to put flavored simple syrups in nice jars and use them for gifts. Your syrups can be stored (sugar has historically been used as a preservative). As a rule of thumb, use the syrups as soon as possible, to preserve the freshness of the herbs or whatever flavoring you added.

Bitter tonics, brewed infusions and herbal teas have been used in beverages for centuries. Cocktails are a more recent addition to the beverage list, but no less inventive or satisfying. Ideally cocktails need to be balanced and refreshing. Perhaps they were originally thought to stimulate the appetite, but these days we enjoy them as gastronomic pleasures in themselves. Summer is the perfect time to experiment in mixology as herbal infusions promise new ways to get creative. The goal is simply a light, refreshing drink, perfect for a summer evening. Cheers! ●



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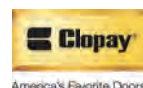
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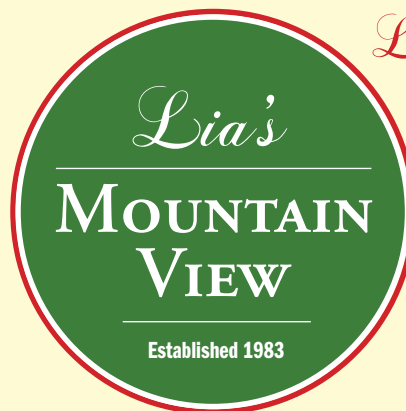
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# Beauty in a bottle: PEONY VODKA IS IN FULL BLOOM

By Dominique De Vito  
info@mainstreetmag.com

I met Leslie on a morning that was picture-postcard-perfect. It was early June. Storms had lashed rain the day before, but had cleared out overnight, leaving a turquoise sky through which big, puffy white clouds sailed on a light breeze and all the young summer greens of the grasses and trees were washed clean and were shining under a bright sun.

We met at Leslie's 18th century farmhouse just outside of Millerton, NY. From a patio with a view of hay fields stretching out in the distance, we settled in to talk about something as magical as the day itself, Leslie's recently launched Peony Vodka.

## Yes, Peony Vodka

From her piece of paradise in Dutchess County, Leslie Farhangi was inspired. Her journey brought her here from New York City where she was born, then studied to be a lawyer, then met her husband, John. Early in their relationship, they ventured out of the city to look at possible country homes. When they walked into the house that's now where Three Meadows Farm is headquartered and where they



Above: Leslie Farhangi in her peony garden. Below left: A bottle of Peony Vodka. Photos by Jonathan Doster, courtesy of Leslie Farhangi.

live, she said, they both knew it was where they wanted to be. That was over 25 years ago.

The farm includes a large barn, and with three active boys and a passion for horses and riding herself, she developed a boarding business that kept her busy. But she was itching to do more.

A few years ago she noticed how flavored vodkas started lining up on liquor store shelves, and she was curious. She started thinking about flavors, and what sets flavored spirits apart. She researched the medicinal and culinary uses of peonies, which are an edible flower whose petals are often parboiled in China and served as a delicacy with tea.

Leslie and a business partner, Tom Parrett, started working together to fashion a unique addition to the flavored vodka category. They spent a few years refining the product and the concept, putting a business plan together, and playing with flavors. They hooked up with a flavor expert from Dutchess

County, and began experimenting.

## Peony Vodka was born

"We wanted something that would be different," Leslie says, explaining how they arrived at the flavoring that imbues the Peony Vodka. "Slightly mysterious and unidentifiable," she smiles, adding, "something subtle; a whisper."

In the development stages, Leslie explained, there was a lot of blind tasting with different groups of people, all with the intention of refining that certain "something" that would come to define the vodka. From the beginning, she knew she wanted a very smooth vodka, too, one that could be equally enjoyed neat or mixed in a cocktail. The vodka is distilled five times and filtered through charcoal twice. The result is an exceptionally clear, pure, and ultra-smooth vodka.

Continued on next page ...





Leslie was excited to conduct a taste test with me, and I was an eager guinea pig. She took two bottles from the freezer. One was a classic, high-end vodka (unflavored), and the other was the Peony. She poured a splash of the premium vodka in a shot glass for me. I sniffed. It was strong; fiery. I sipped. It was clean, but there was a slight burn. Not unpleasant, but definitely there. Next, she poured a splash of the Peony in a clean shot glass. I raised it to my nose. No smell. Just clean. I commented on that, and she nodded, confirming that it was a characteristic of the vodka. When I sipped it, there was no burn. Instead, there was a lovely, lingering hint of flower and spice – a very subtle vanilla note laced with nectar. Amazingly smooth, great mouthfeel. I was astonished. It was unlike anything I'd ever tasted.

### Love at first sip

Love at first sip seems to be a common reaction to Peony Vodka. From a soft launch at Little Gates Wine & Spirits in Millerton this past February, Peony has found its way to distinguished functions at the New York Botanical Garden and the New York City Ballet, where guests have raved about it. Leslie has been very pleased with people's reactions.

Making cold calls to select buyers with great success, Leslie is slowly but surely infiltrating the market. Peony is still very "small batch," according to Leslie, with production at about 1,000 cases. She likes a slow and steady approach, with a keen focus on quality and brand. She was as diligent about defining the look of Peony Vodka as she was about the vodka itself. It's clean and classic and elegant. Each bottle's label has a beautiful pink-tinged

white peony in full bloom against a black background. When viewed through the bottle, the back of the label has a painted country scene on it. There are three different ones – a farm view, a garden party, and a hunt country scene, all reflective of the country life Leslie and her family cherish.

### Life-changing vodka

How has becoming the proprietress of a new brand of vodka here in the Hudson Valley affected her family? Her oldest son, Caleb, 21, will be a senior in college. "He's a big fan," she says, "a very outgoing guy who loves to talk about it." The others, Zack and Asa, aged 16 and 13, are "not so interested," she noted, but that's to be expected given their ages. Her husband, John, is a true believer, offering support on all levels (including farm and child care when Leslie needs to take her show on the road). "It's a team effort," she says with a smile.

As to the future, she says she has a strong, long-range vision for organic growth. Because of an unforeseen issue early on, she had to move the manufacturing of Peony out of New York State, but

she wants that to change so that the product is again made where it was born, at Three Meadows.

In an area that continues to bless and surprise those of us lucky enough to live here, the inspiration for and creation of Peony Vodka in Millerton is exciting and, somehow, just right. And when you acquire a bottle, first try it neat, and then make this favorite cocktail of Leslie's that she's named the Millbrook Breeze: two parts Peony Vodka, one part fresh-squeezed grapefruit juice,  $\frac{3}{4}$  part fresh-squeezed lime juice, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  part St. Germaine liqueur. Mix in a cocktail shaker with ice and then pour into a glass, or simply mix all parts in a glass and stir. Perfect. •

*Ask for Peony Vodka in your local wine and spirits shop. "Like" Peony on Facebook. Learn more on the website at [www.peonyvodka.com](http://www.peonyvodka.com).*



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JAMES AND IDELLA SHEPARD AND THE CORNWALL COUNTRY MARKET:

# The intersection of great food & great people

By CB Wismar  
info@mainstreetmag.com

For the purists among us, the actual location is the intersection of Routes 7 and 4 in Cornwall Bridge. If you're wondering how to find the spot, then drop those coordinates in your GPS.

But, when you turn into the parking lot at the Cornwall Country Market, you're going to find James and Idella Shepard warmly presiding over a Litchfield County gem. The food cases are filled with the wonders of Idella's recipes and the vibrant store is buoyed by James' easy way and welcoming smile. Weather permitting, the tables on the porch and the picnic tables under the shade trees will be comfortably filled with customers enjoying the savories and sandwiches that the Shepards have prepared, inside.

The location has been a landmark for years. Through various owners and various incarnations, the Cornwall Country Market has been Breen's General Merchandise Store, Monroe & O'dell's General Store, Monroe's General Store, Baird's General Store, and Cornwall General Store.

When James and Idella were looking for the perfect spot to combine their deep knowledge of food

and food service management with the entrepreneurial spirit that drives people to chart their own course and be their own bosses, it was James' step-father, Otto Kaletsch who proposed, over a family dinner, a rather outlandish idea. He would acquire and re-vamp the property in Cornwall if the Shepards wanted to concentrate on building a viable business.

## Building a store, building a brand

Renovations took a bit longer than expected – what was originally projected as a four week project took five months as more and more “surprises” were discovered in the renovation and rebuilding process. But, when the doors officially opened on November 1, 2013, the Cornwall Country Market was ready to welcome the community and the travelers and skiers and tourists and hikers who pass by.

“There's the Breakfast Club,” says James as he smiles and conjures up the faces who come through the door every morning for coffee, breakfast and conversation.

“For the first 30 minutes on the grille, I don't even have to look at the orders,” adds Idella. “We know



Above: Idella and James Shepard hard at work in their store. Below left: The front of the renovated Cornwall Country Market.

them by heart, so all we have to do is hear their voices and we know just what their order will be.”

“Oh, sure...” counters James. “There's the odd morning when someone wants bacon, not sausage ... but that's about it.”

Then there are the local tradesmen and women who come up the stairs into the inviting, cheerfully crowded store. “They come in for breakfast, and many of them are back at lunch,” says James. “I get a real kick out of watching them look at the blackboard to see what Idella has dreamed up as the specials of the day. Sometimes they're a little shy ... but when they try them, the rave reviews follow close behind.”

## Embracing their destiny

Idella has always been “a foodie.” From growing up in Portland, Oregon and working in area inns and food services, through a stint in Las Vegas to being a catering manager at Harvard Business School in Cambridge, she's carefully nurtured the tastes and sensitivities of an accomplished baker and chef.

James' background in hospital-ity management led him from

Boston University to the Portland Trail Blazers, the Portland, Oregon National Basketball Association franchise. Dealing with waves of fans and high-pressure deadlines became a way of life. He met Idella, they married, and settled in to what should have been a welcome life.

When the economy took a tumble, and jobs became rare commodities, James and Idella relocated to Boston, and while Idella worked at Harvard, James used his food service management mastery at “Lucky Strike” in the burgeoning marketplace around historic Fenway Park.

A hard-working couple raising a family and always looking off into the future to chase their dreams, they finally came to the conclusion that they were working their jobs, not building their future ... they were living in a neighborhood, not a community. It was the community atmosphere – the friendships and connections and laughter and good

Continued on next page ...





conversation and the personal independence that they were seeking – which is when the now famous dinner occurred.

“It was a real challenge,” remembers James. “We were ready to head back to Oregon ... but when Otto offered us the chance to build a business of our own it had real allure. So, they scrapped the cross-country travel plans and settled into the formidable task of building a new, vibrant business.

“There were some real challenges with the building,” recalls Idella, who now presides over a well-designed and equipped kitchen. And, what emanates from that kitchen is what attracts the “regulars” from Monday through Friday, and draws in weekenders and travellers on weekends.

### They built it ... and the people came

“We really do have two different audiences,” says James. “They come in looking for different things, and we try to make sure we’re well stocked and knowledgeable at the same time.”

Not only does the menu board reflect the imagination and scope of the food offerings, but the cases and shelves bear witness to a couple who has listened, learned, paid attention to requests, and values the surrounding community. Whether



Above: Idella's pies and slices of cheesecake look delicious! Below left: James ringing a customer up.

its local honey, maple syrup, eggs, meats, or the seasonal produce that is so distinctively New England, the Cornwall Country Market has it on hand. Local crafters get their spot, as well, with locally sourced caps, hot pads, and cutting boards prominently displayed.

“We’re in the Appalachian Trail Passport, so we get a good number of through-hikers starting in the spring and going right through the fall,” acknowledges James. “We try to make sure we have the things on hand they need to stock up along the trail.”

Ensuring that both hikers and regulars feel welcome, the market has plenty of electrical connections to re-charge a cell phone or a rechargeable battery-operated flashlight and that all-important Wi-fi connection.

### Where food is king

As well provisioned the store is that the Shepards have created, the crowning achievement for the first-time visitor or the daily regular is selecting the food. Idella's baking is pure artistry with individual portions of cheese cake, peach cobbler, whoopee pies, and Oreo truffle brownie sharing the spotlight with whole strawberry rhubarb and Dutch apple pies.

“Everything is made on the premises,” Idella says with justifiable pride. “From the meatballs for the grinders and barbecued chickens, macaroni and cheese, ribs and our quiche by special order to take home, down to the marinara sauce and the 1000 island dressing – these are our recipes.”

Is there a cookbook in the works? “Maybe, someday,” says Idella, wistfully. Until “someday,” the Cornwall Country Market is a 12-hour-a-day, seven-day-week enterprise that continues to charm its customers, build friends in the community and keep James and Idella Shepard engaged.

“When we opened our doors,” affirms James, “we had some very specific goals. We wanted our market to be clean, bright, friendly and

provide great food. We wanted to be a vital part of the community.”

At the intersection of Routes 4 and 7, at the intersection of great people and great food, sits the Cornwall Country Market. “Family Owned. Farm Fresh.”

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*To learn more about Idella and James and their Cornwall Country Market, visit them at 25 Kent Rd S, Cornwall Bridge, CT, or call (860) 619-8199, or visit them online at [www.cornwallcountrymarket.com](http://www.cornwallcountrymarket.com).*





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# COLONIAL COOK BOOKS:

A GLIMPSE INTO EARLY CULINARY LIFE

By Allison Guertin Marchese  
info@mainstreetmag.com

One of the best views into history and food is from a seat at the kitchen table. I know this only from experience. I was one of the lucky young girls in this country who learned how to cook from an Italian mother and grandmother and a French-Canadian father. Preparing food and eating together as a family was an important part of my life growing up and continues to connect me to my past.

While making Sunday dinner with Grandma Rose, I heard stories about “the old country” where olives were pressed, and plum tomatoes grew in the hot southern Italian sunshine. I learned how family recipes were passed on to my mother and how she gained her cooking experience by standing at her mother’s side at the stove, carefully watching, asking questions, and getting a feel for techniques like grating fine parmesan cheese, and the art of layering spices and ingredients to build flavors in sauces. Where else would one learn how to pick ripe fruit or how to regulate an open flame under a cast iron skillet if not in your grandmother’s kitchen?

## Learning about history

During these amazing times growing up, my grandmother told me stories about life during the Great Depression when food was scarce and they had to stretch a week’s worth of gro-



Photo source: iStockphoto.com contributor Svetlana Feodorova

ceries to feed her and her five sisters. I especially loved the stories about holidays, where special dishes and desserts were carefully made, but once a year, and the fancy foods created just for a traditional Italian wedding.

On a typical Sunday morning, I would wake up to find Grandma in our Connecticut kitchen, rolling out dough for pies on brown paper bags brushed with a light layer of fluffy white flour. I would help by blending big brown eggs for the cream we cooked into custard to fill our pastries. Every time we were in the kitchen, it was like traveling back in time and gaining a glimpse into the lives of my relative through food. It was totally delicious.

My father’s side of the family gave me a tour of the cold, endless Canadian winters that he and his family endured in the Laurentian Mountains just outside of Quebec. Dad was notorious for splashing maple syrup over just about every dish you can imagine. He demonstrated with quite a bit of humor, how just about anything could be dumped into a casserole

dish, covered with crushed cornflakes, and be considered dinner. He told me how in the good times all of my aunts and uncles and cousins would crowd around the dining room table, laughing and talking over one another. He also reminisced about the quiet meals during World War II, when my Grandmother Laura worried about my father and his brothers fighting overseas.

## Family traditions vs. cultural traditions

It wasn’t until I was in high school, having dinner at friends’ homes did I realize that dishes weren’t actually in French or Italian, but had English names! In my house shepherd’s pie was known as “beouf a cachette,” which translates into “hidden beef.” Essentially it’s a phrase from the Quebecois dialect.

On the other side of the table, Italian foods and ingredients were sung, rather than spoken. Mozzarella cheese on pizza was musically elongated... “Mooooo-zah-llell-ah.”

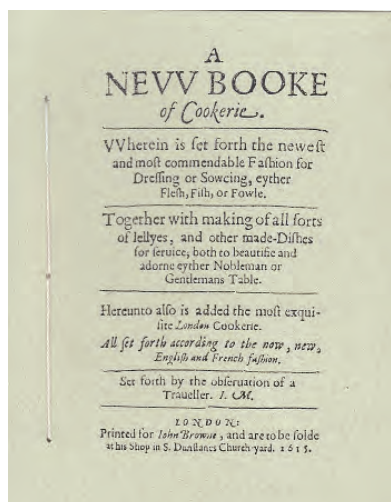
With this in my background, I was

not surprised to stumble upon a few rather famous early American cookbooks that tell the story of Colonial life through the eyes of the family chef.

Food in areas like Millerton, New York, in the 17th Century, played an important role. The reasons are many. The first settlers in the Town of Northeast and Millerton were from Connecticut. Food in this time period featured vegetables, berries, nuts, poultry and herbs. People planted small farms, kept orchards, and raised stock for meat. Along the rivers, Colonial settlers fished for shad. The cooking styles and the meals they ate reflected both Dutch and English influences.

One of the most fascinating examples of cooking in the Colonial period is found in John Murrell’s *A New Booke of Cookerie: London 1615*. In this cookbook, you learn how to

Continued on next page ...



Above: *A New Booke of Cookerie*: London 1615, by John Murrell.



“boyle a capon larded with lemons, on the French Fashion.” The recipe, excerpted in part here, goes something like this:

“Scald your capon, and take a little dusty oatmeale, to make it boils white. Then take two or three ladle-fuls of mutton broth, a fagot of sweet hearbes, two or three dates, cut in long pieces, a few parboiled currins, a little whole pepper, a piece of whole mace, and one nutmeg. Thicken with almonds. Season it with Uergis, sugar and a little sweet butter.”

### Gooseberry and Cherry Tarts

There is also a simple recipe for Gooseberry Tart:

“Pick the stakes of your gooseberries, and the pips in the toppes: put them in a good paste, with a little green ginger, sliced in slices; cast on good store of sugar and rosewater and close them in.”

Here’s a rather rough recipe for Cherry Tart:

“Bruyse a pound of Cherries, and stampe them, and boyle the stirrup with Sugar. Then take the stones out of two pound: bake them in a set coffin; juice them, and serve them hot in to the Boorde.”

Because these recipes were written in the 1600s, I can offer a more modern translation here for a few words. In Colonial cooking verbiage, the term “coffin” implies that the top crust of the pie could be removed, acting as a kind of a “lid.” “Paste” in this recipe refers to “pastry.”

### The first cookbooks

Generally thought of as the very first truly American cookbook is Amelia Simmon’s *American Cookery* published in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1796. In her book, she emphasizes the use of “Indian maize” or corn. It’s the first printed cookbook to offer recipes using cornmeal. Simmons’ book also makes suggestions for use of corn cobs for smoking bacon.

What better time to explore corn recipes than in July! When local corn is growing in the fields all around us

and should be right about “knee high” as the saying goes, by the 4th of July.

### Recipe for Johny Cake or Hoe Cake

“Scald 1 pint of milk and put in 3 pints of Indian meal, and half pint of flower – bake before the fire. Or scald with milk two-thirds of the Indian meal, or wet two-thirds with boiling water, add salt, molasses, and shortening, work up with cold water pretty stiff, and bake as above.”

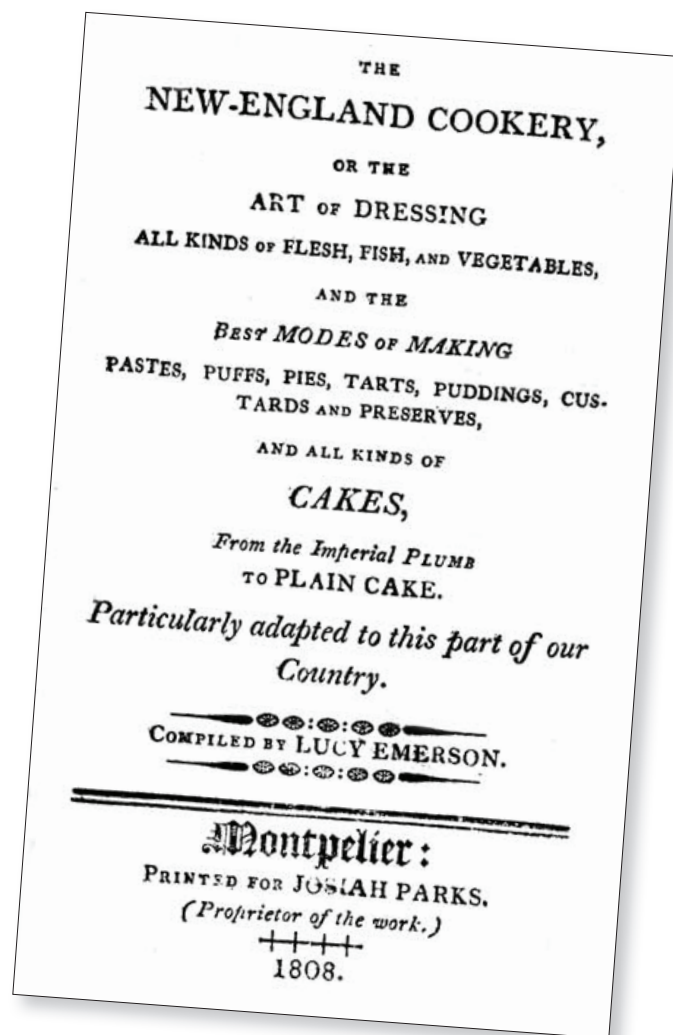
This particular early American cookbook is noted for ushering in one of the most important baking necessities in modern times ... baking powder. Prior to the late 1700s, bakers and home cooks relied on beating air and often eggs into baking mixtures, or sometimes yeast or spirits to create leavening. *American Cookery* introduced “pearlash” as a chemical leavening for dough. Pearlash, was a refined form of potash, which was potassium carbonate that came from wood ashes. Potash was the go-to kitchen item most everyone used until pearlash came along and expedited the baking process. In essence, this product was the precursor to today’s baking powder, a kitchen staple used around the world.

All first editions of this early cookbook are rare. And for food historians out there looking for antique copies, pirated editions seem to be more readily available under the name *New England Cookery*.

### Election Cake

Because we are in the midst of a run for The White House, I thought it fitting to include a famous early American recipe called: Election Cake. According to lore and a fair number of food historians, Election Cake originated in Hartford, Connecticut, in the 18th Century. The cake itself is described as a sweet, simple yeast bread sprinkled with dried fruit and baked with spices. Amelia Simmons gets most of the credit for having printed this early recipe, yet there’s a fair amount of debate that perhaps it predates her work.

The story around why this cake was served is fairly dramatic. In 1988, the famous *New York Times* food writer, Marian Burros, wrote about this



political sounding dessert. According to Marion’s research, elected officials commonly gathered at the state capitol for a formal counting of the election votes. Often the counting went on into the night meaning most of the visitors needed lodging. These cakes were made by housewives to serve out-of-town guests. This tradition dates back well before the American Revolution.

I was lucky to find an old recipe for Election Cake. “Old Hartford Election Cake (100 years old)

#### Recipe:

Five pounds dried and sifted flour.  
Two pounds of butter.  
Two pounds of sugar.  
Three gills of distillery yeast, or twice the quantity of home-brewed.  
Four eggs.  
A gill of wine and a gill of brandy.  
Half an ounce of nutmegs, and two pounds of fruit.  
A quart of milk.  
Rub the butter very fine into the flour, add half the sugar, then the yeast, then half the milk, hot in winter, and blood warm in summer, then the eggs well beaten, the wine, and the remainder of the milk. Beat it well, and let it stand to rise all night. Beat it well in

the morning, adding the brandy, the sugar, and the spice. Let it rise three or four hours, till very light. When you put the wood into the oven, put the cake in buttered pans, and put in the fruit as directed previously. If you wish it richer, add a pound of citron.”

#### References:

*Election cake excerpt – Miss Beecher’s Domestic Receipt-Book, Catharine E. Beecher, facsimile 1844 reprint [Dover Publications:Mineola NY] 2001 (p. 146)*  
[NOTE: Miss Beecher was born to a very prominent Hartford family. Her sister was Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.]  
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*Cooking in America, 1590-1840 By Trudy Eden (Greenwood Press, 2006)*



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# Food Commun(ist)

## KARL MARX & LOCAL FARMS

By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.  
info@mainstreetmag.com

In this part of world, local farms and home gardens are part of the fabric of our lives. Drive in any direction and you'll pass one. Go to many towns on a summer weekend and you'll find a farmers market or have a friend sharing a zucchini – or 20 – from their own garden. Eat at restaurants and they'll likely be offering locally-raised produce and meat.

These farms and gardens can be justified on an economic level because they provide livelihoods and sustenance for local residents and draw visitors to the area. They're important from an environmental and sustainability perspective because they use land more efficiently, produce less waste, yield more diverse crops, and work with the rhythms of the local land. In addition, on a nutritional level they offer us a healthier alternative to supermarket food and promote our consumption of real food (see article on page 25).

### Farmer Marx

These small farms and household gardens can also be supported on a philosophical level through the writings of Karl Marx. I know, Marx is the philosopher we love to hate. He touted communism, which has created oppressive regimes and economic stagnation (but those outcomes don't accurately represent Marxist communism).

Marx is also one of the most misunderstood philosophers as well because his theories have been so often misapplied and distorted. This article brackets and explores one particular aspect of Marx's philosophy: his definition and importance



Photo source istockphoto.com contributor gpointstudio

of labor. Marx's rich view of labor is well worth exploring on its own, even without calling for a communist revolution. It can provide us with another reason to support local farming and gardening in our area.

### Movements of history

Before we look at Marx's theory we need to understand its origins. While a philosopher's theory should be able to stand on its own, without reference to the circumstances of its birth, we can't completely divorce a theory from its origins. This is so true for Marx.

Living in England in the mid-1800s he witnessed the Industrial Revolution at full tilt. Mechanization of production and creation of jobs brought droves of rural workers and their families to the cities. While life in the country was no picnic, people mainly worked for themselves and provided for their own needs within the household or local village. In the cities, many

labored in factories in low-skill and low-wage jobs, lived in deplorable conditions, and whatever meagre social safety net that existed on the local level in their rural lives no longer could be found in concentrated urban centers.

Marx witnessed the savageries, along with the advances and efficiencies of an economic system transitioning to a capitalist model. He observed the effects that this change in the economic paradigm was having on wage laborers, their families, and their lives. What he saw was material and spiritual deprivation for many with little hope of creating a better life. It was these issues that led him to explore and critique the capitalist system.

Continued on next page ...



### Marxist labor

An essential building block of Marx's philosophy is his theory of labor. Marx defines labor as free productive activity, which doesn't necessarily equate to "work" as we know it. Rather, it's an activity that you freely engage in and involves interacting with the world around you. Marxist labor is both intensely personal and intensely social. Through effort and interaction with the physical world, individuals create and promote a deeper understanding of themselves and forge meaningful personal bonds with others.

Individuals are linked to the labor process and to the products they create. Part of that person is present in what is freely created, in effect it represents his or her essential qualities. Individuals are then free to share the product with others. This sharing gives labor a social aspect and deepens relationships with others in an immediate and personal way. For Marx, it is these qualities of free productive labor that give it its value. An object's worth or value is measured by the labor that went into it.

Free productive labor can be knitting, cooking, writing poetry, composing a song, coding a computer program, or farming. In those activities we are (or are not) many things – engrossed, frustrated, satisfied, or patient. We are becoming more alive to ourselves, we are creating ourselves at every moment we are engaged in the activity. The product of our labor: the scarf, the meal, the poem, the song, the program, or the vegetables – embody the laborer. When we share

what we have made the recipient sees that and a social connection is born. What defines free productive labor is not so much the activity as what it represents for self-knowledge through engagement with the world and an intimate social connection to others.

### Work is not always labor

One of Marx's most fundamental problems with capitalism and the emphasis on production and profit is how mechanization, division of labor, and reduced wages impact free productive labor. In those circumstances, labor can be transformed into alienated labor, where individuals are not learning, defining, and developing themselves, or connecting with others.

Our labor becomes foreign, or alien to us. Under these circumstances, we fail to develop in a meaningful human way, we create something we're not invested in, and lack a sense of connection to the user or recipient of what we have produced.

### Connections taking root

With Marx's definition of labor, and its relationship to human flourishing and social connections, we can immediately see the value of our small farms and gardens. What more direct way of interacting with the world around us can there be than raising food? We are learning about the earth, cultivating new life and caring for it, experiencing the vagaries of the natural world, and harvesting our crop, which bears the fingerprint of our labor.

When we go to the farmers market or buy from a farm store we are connecting with those who raised the food, and they are connecting with us. Labor becomes social and personal. Our labor fosters community, and the farm or garden is the linchpin. When we consume the bounty we think about the earth it came from, the hands that tended it, and the nourishment it provides for us and those we love.



Whatever you might think of Marx, his theory of labor is a human and humane one and reminds us of the connective tissue that binds us to each other and is represented in the earth's yield. For Marx, meaningful productive labor is a powerful component in our human development and we need to seek ways to encourage it in our lives. Small-scale farming and gardening, beyond its economic and environmental value, contribute to the human spirit. ●

Above: Locally grown asparagus. Photo by Olivia Valentine Markonic.





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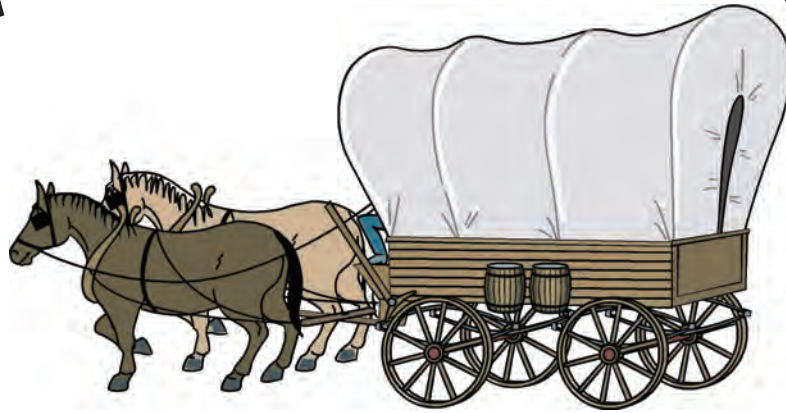


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# Tour de Carb

Above, L-R: The Southfield Store is the perfect mid-ride stop, stocked with all manner of treats to fuel the trip home. Photo: Jim Scherer. Worth every cent: the Million Dollar Cookie by J.P. Giffords in Kent. Outdoor seating at Salisbury's Sweet Williams Bakery means hikers and bikers can sweat and still enjoy their buttery scones. Photos: Ian Strever.

By Ian Strever  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Carbohydrates. Gluten. Sugars. Processing. If George Carlin were still alive in 2016, he would be obliged to add these four dirty words to his original seven (which, ironically, can be heard almost anywhere now). Hooligans etch them into the bathroom walls at Whole Foods. Fourth graders whisper them behind their books in math class.irate taxi drivers lace them into their tirades.

But behind closed doors, we all indulge in them from time to time. While our grocery lists may consist of organic kelp and sustainably harvested lima bean juice, we all slide that baguette onto the conveyor belt, thinking no one will notice. In this neck of the woods, that supermarket is Sharon Farm Market, and the bread is Jam's Crusty Baguette. If I were sentenced to life in prison with only water and bread, if this were the bread, I'd sign on in a heartbeat. Its texture is chewy yet soft, flaky yet substantial, and paired with salted butter, it is a meal unto itself.

## Biking between bakeries

This isn't France, though, and you can't very well pedal around town with a baguette sticking out of the basket on your bike. During some long rides around the area, however, I have discovered numerous delicacies to fuel me homeward, and some that are destinations in themselves. We don't have an overwhelming number of bakeries in this area, but the ones we do have churn out world-class

confections that affirm the theory that sugar can be addictive.

The first step is to get caffeinated, and no place does that better than Millerton's Irving Farm. In addition to a full breakfast menu, they brew a wide variety of blended and single-origin coffees using a range of roasting methods. Their House Blend is a reliable cup, but their African beans are singular, replete with sweet, floral notes that pair perfectly with the finest raspberry and chocolate croissants this side of the Seine.

If the Housatonic is more your *milieu*, however, Cornwall might make more sense as a starting point. The town has exactly one breakfast restaurant by my count, but The Wandering Moose's cinnamon French toast can also supply the necessary fuel to get moving. Best eaten on a brilliant Saturday morning on their riverside patio, the dense, soft slices pair well with sausage and their bottomless cup of coffee, ensuring that I am both ready to ride and soon to be in need of a restroom.

Once rolling, it may take some time to burn off that breakfast, so our *Tour de Carbs* begins to consider other factors in planning a mid-ride pitstop. How good are the baked goods? Will their espresso impress? Does the establishment peddle the kind of fare that makes it worth a fair pedal?

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Store's *plein air* seating provides enough shade and air circulation to avoid offending the other patrons while munching on their world-class...and I pause here, because I can't narrow it down to any one baked good. Croissants, brownies, cookies, you name it – or eat it – you can't go wrong. If you can arrange for a ride home, come back on Thursday nights in the summer for their Mexican menu, filled with Oaxacan dishes that capture the brilliance of summer both in taste and appearance.

## Where the Taconics meet the Berkshires

The area around Southfield and nearby Ashley Falls is laced with some of the finest cycling roads in the Berkshires, thanks to the meandering Housatonic River. Farms and gentle hills connect the Taconics with the Berkshires, spelling manageable climbs, arcing descents, and long stretches of flat riding along the state line. Rustic farmhouses and pastoral estates invoke Provence, complete with a mountainous backdrop. Circle the Twin Lakes, however, and the anglicized town of Salisbury offers respite in the form of Sweet Williams, an excellent bakery that can hold its own as a cafe, offering espresso drinks and brewed coffee. More than once I have stopped here before a hike to add a ginger apricot scone to my backpack as a reward at the top of the climb, and if I'm looking for something slightly more savory, their bacon

cheddar scone does nicely.

Traveling south by bike from this area is no mean feat, and every road toward Kent demands either significant amounts of climbing or time-consuming circumnavigation. Such an undertaking begs a confectionery reward of the first order, and I know of none greater than the suitably named Million Dollar Cookie at J.P. Giffords (opening also in Sharon this August). Despite the dozens of them that I have consumed, the best intel I have on its origins suggests an apocryphal birth, rising from the ashes of a previous, failed recipe. A little buttery, a little chocolaty, and a little coconutty, I imagine a mad scientist toiling over all the possible combinations of ingredients, emerging in a cloud of flour with this singular contribution to the world's understanding of cookies. Although Giffords insiders insist that a customer immediately offered a million dollars for the recipe, I am now working from the theory that they are so-named because I, myself, have spent a million dollars on them. They are not always perfect. There is a golden hour – and I haven't yet determined when that is – when they give way to a moderate chewing and dissolve on the tongue. If, as dieticians and doctors seem to suggest, there is a price to be paid for my infatuation with this brand of carbohydrate, I am gladly willing to pay it. That's what all the riding is for, anyway. ●



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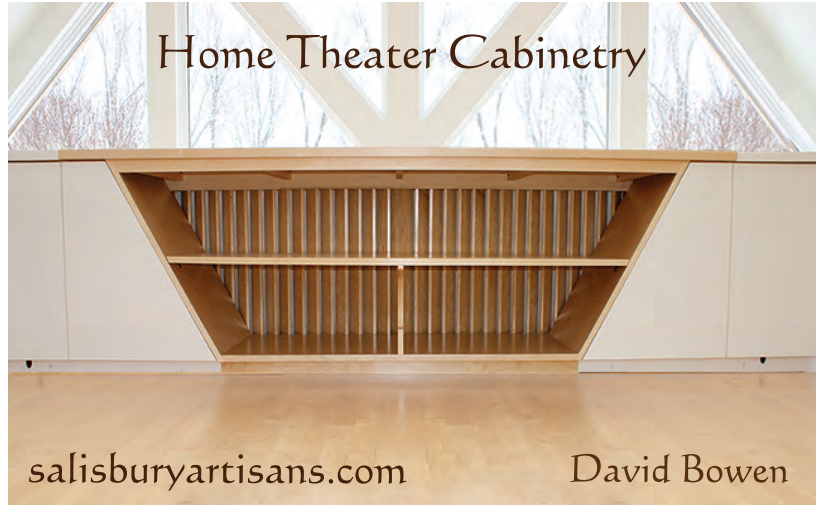
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# An historic eating landmark

By John Torsiello  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Celebrities, regulars, and interested tourists stop into one of Dutchess County's listings on the National Register of Historic Places with regularity. No, we aren't talking about a stunning 200-year-old mansion, a former home of a notable early American, or a 300-year-old church. It's a small diner located a few yards off busy Route 9 (or North Broadway Street) pretty much smack dab in the center of Red Hook.

The Historic Village Diner, as it is officially known, is a rather unpretentious eatery that serves up comfort food from sunup to well into the night seven days a week. The diner, which first opened in 1951, and has been located in three other places, is owned by Sam and Arleen Harkins, who purchased it some 33 years ago.

## The diner's journey

The Historic Village Diner traces its roots, or foundation, back to 1925 when Lou Dubois of Kingston, NY, bought a Silk City diner from the Paterson Vehicle Company. He installed the building first in an area along Route 9, just north of a section of Rhinebeck called Astor Flats. The Halfway Diner, as it was called by the original owner, was sold to Bert Coons in 1928, and



Above: Patrons get served at The Historic Village Diner in Red Hook. Below: Owner Sam Harkins.

he moved it to its current location. When the Taconic State Parkway was completed through northern Dutchess County, the diner was moved again, this time to where Route 199 intersected with the new highway in order to take advantage of changed traffic patterns.

In 1957, Coons moved the diner, called the Village Restaurant at the time, back to its present location. He rented it to other individuals and sold it in the 1960s, after adding onto it to make more seating (it currently can handle around 80 patrons).

The present diner, except for its addition, is a clear reflection of an era when diners were modeled closely after railroad dining cars, with chrome exteriors and curved walls. In 1988, the building became the first diner in New York, and only the fourth in the nation, to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its exterior in stainless steel, is curved at the corners and fluted, and painted with horizontal bands on the steel frame. Windows are rectangular and retractable, and placed high up the

wall. A screen door on the south side is centrally located. All these features mimic those of a rail dining car.

The interior further emulates a rail car, with tables in booths along the east and west walls with a single aisle between them. The ceiling is also vaulted. Much of the interior trim is original, such as a tiled floor and wainscoting in turquoise and black, cream-colored enameled walls, a laminated counter with 16 stools, and a back wall with ribbed metal covering for all the kitchen functions. A rear wing has some open dining space with freestanding tables and chairs, plus restrooms with their original doors. There's an original art deco wall clock that hangs inside the main dining area. When a kitchen fire caused smoke damage to much of the interior, the present owners fastidiously refinished key and historic elements of the eating area.

## A classic American diner

Diners in general have become iconic over the years, offering a wide range of foods, mostly American, a

casual atmosphere, a counter with stools, and late and sometimes all-night operating hours. The classic American diner is often characterized by an exterior layer of stainless steel – a feature unique to diner architecture.

## The history of diners

The first diner was reportedly created in 1872 by a man named Walter Scott. He decided to sell food out of a horse-pulled wagon to employees of the Providence (R.I.) Journal. Scott's diner can be considered the first diner with "walk up" windows that were located on each side of the wagon. Commercial production of lunch wagons began in Worcester, MA, in 1887 by Thomas Buckley. Buckley was successful and became known for his "White House Cafe" wagons.

Charles Palmer received the first patent (1891) for a diner. He built what were termed "fancy night

Continued on next page ...





cafes” or “night lunch wagons” in the Worcester area until 1901. In a traditional diner floor plan, a service counter dominates the interior, with a preparation area against the back wall and floor-mounted stools for the customers in front. Of course, larger models may have a row of booths against the front wall and at the ends. The decor has varied over time.

Diners of the 1920s to 1940s feature Art Deco, streamline modern elements, or copy the appearance of railroad dining cars, although there are only a few remaining that actually are refurbished rail cars. They featured porcelain enamel exteriors, some with the name written on the front, others with bands of enamel, others in flutes, and some had “barrel vault” rooflines. Tile floors were common. Diners of the 1950s tended to use stainless steel panels, porcelain enamel, glass blocks, terrazzo floors, Formica and neon sign trim.

### Americana

One of the lasting fascinations with diners is that they attract a wide spectrum of the population, and are usually small and cozy. They are considered quintessentially American, and have been the settings for books, movies, and inspiration for poets, writers, painters, photographers, and musicians.

The Historic Village Diner is a



Above: The outside of the Historic Village Diner. Below: The interior of the diner.

labor of love for the Harkins, their partner Melissa Wambach, and their staff. The Harkins, who live in Red Hook, do most of the cooking and one or the other is at the eatery every day. “What we pride ourselves on is the ambiance of the diner (its history being in no small way an attraction of patrons), the quality of the food, reasonable prices, and service,” says Sam Harkins. “We are open seven days a week, from 6 am to 10 pm, make our own chili, soups, and pastries, and use quality ingredients and meats in our dishes. Our daughter, Blythe, also makes what we call ‘diner dunkers,’ or donuts.”

Harkins says being listed on the National Register of Historic Places was a boon for his business, although it took months for the process to be complete. “We had to list every detail of the diner’s existence and it had to be checked by the NRHP. What you see is the original diner,” he adds, pointing to the counter and saying, “even where the counter’s edges have been worn down over the years by people resting their arms on them. One of the reasons we wanted to go through the process of listing it as historic is so that nobody can tear it down. Even making a small change to the building requires a great deal of red tape and scrutiny.”

### Becoming diner owners

That the Harkins purchased the diner was somewhat serendipitous. Sam Harkins was working a job that he was being well paid for but had become disenchanted with. “My mother-in-law was listing real estate and she told us about the diner,” he says. “We saw it on a Saturday, made an offer on Sunday, and bought it on Monday. It was time for us to work for ourselves after working for other people for so long.”

The cozy eatery serves up the usual diner fare, from meatloaf and eggs and bacon to the restaurant’s own specialty, the “Jitterbug,” a burger with fries piled on top and smothered in gravy. Hey, nobody said this is a health food store, although the diner offers vegetarian dishes and an ample salad bar with each meal. “I would put our homemade New England clam chowder up against any other restaurant,” says Sam Harkins.

And the prices? “We could get four or five dollars more an entrée if we were serving the meals on tablecloths. We put a great amount of work into making good, fresh meals at affordable prices,” most of which range of the \$12.95 to \$14.95 range. And the portions are huge.

The diner, which takes cash or check only as payment, has been

featured in numerous publications and was recently listed among the top 20 diners in the United States by *Country Living Magazine*. And, a website, [mrporter.com](http://mrporter.com), listed the Historic Village Diner as the second best diner in the world. “A couple visiting from Korea came into the diner to eat saying that they saw the restaurant written up on [mrporter.com](http://mrporter.com),” says Sam Harkins with a smile.

The diner is a place where such celebs as Mia Farrow, Joan Rivers, Arlo Guthrie, Irene Cara, and Susan Day have mingled easily with elderly couples and truck drivers enjoying breakfast and college kids from nearby Bard College downing a bowl of chili and a grilled cheese sandwich. “We had a ton of fun with Joan Rivers,” says Sam Harkins. “She was great.”

I mean, where else can you enjoy bottomless, fresh-ground coffee for a buck fifty and be surrounded by history ... and maybe catch a glimpse of a famous person? At Red Hook’s Historic Village Diner. ●

*To learn more about the Historic Village Diner, you can visit them at 7550 N Broadway in Red Hook, call them at (845) 758-6232, or visit them online at [www.historic-village-diner.com](http://www.historic-village-diner.com).*







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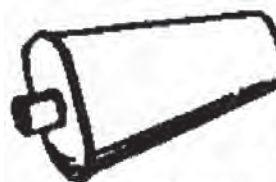
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## Isabel's Kitchen

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(518) 398-5020. [isabels-kitchen.com](http://isabels-kitchen.com)

"Restore. Renew. Revive" is their mantra. A vegan café which offers ready-to-go juices, tonics, smoothies, wraps, salads, and other plant-based meals, Isabel's Kitchen opened this past December in Pine Plains. They specialize in detox cleanses, offering a gourmet plant-based prepared menu for each day of the cleanse, which includes vegan meals and juices. Isabel's delivers their cleanses to Millbrook, Millerton, Sharon, and Lakeville. They have a refrigerator at the Lakeville Health Food Store and they deliver their meals there a few times a week. Their food and juices are made with fresh, organic ingredients and are 100% plant-based. Isabel loves helping people find their path to better health. It is so rewarding for her to see how, after a few days of eating unprocessed foods, people start to feel better. Aches and pains go away and they realize the power of "clean eating." Isabel is originally from Argentina and she loves living in the Hudson Valley. "It is so wonderful to work with the amazing produce grown in this beautiful region by local farmers who are passionate about what they do. I have enormous respect for them and feel so lucky to be able to cook with food grown within a few miles from my store. I hope to continue inspiring people to nourish their bodies and souls so that they can live a happy and mindful life, and inspire others to do the same."



## SoDelicious HomeMade Bakery

Using only pure, simple and delicious ingredients. 1 Kent Green Blvd., Kent, CT. (860) 592-0743. [sodelicioushomemade.com](http://sodelicioushomemade.com)

SoDelicious HomeMade is an "old fashioned" style bakery in Kent, CT. Everything they make is homemade from flour to finish, baked fresh in house with love everyday! Their bakery menu is extensive and varied. From pies to cakes, bagels to donuts, and everything in between. Nothing is more rewarding than their customers telling them that what they just ate was the best they have ever had. Or that it reminds them of something a loved one once made, which is at the heart of SoDelicious HomeMade. The bakery is becoming known for their customer service and ever-expanding menu including new additions like New York style water-boiled bagels, challah bread, and old-fashioned jelly doughnuts. They will be expanding again into baguettes, boules, and laminated doughs this summer. "There was always something special about being in my grandmother's kitchen, whether she was cooking, baking, or burning something, it always felt like home. The memory of how that kitchen smelled and the way it felt is how my bakery feels to me now, that's how I want it to feel to you, like home," says Stacey, the owner and proprietor of the bakery. Stacey and her dedicated staff look forward to seeing you soon!



## Baba Louie's

Hudson, NY: 517 Warren St. (518) 751-2155. Great Barrington, MA:  
286 Main St. (413) 528-8100. [babalouies.com](http://babalouies.com)

Baba Louie's planted its roots in 1996 and are proudly serving two locations. One is located in Great Barrington, MA and the other in Hudson, NY. Their customers and fans come from all over and are never disappointed. Baba Louie's is a full service family-style restaurant – specializing in sourdough pizzas, pastas, gluten-free choices, and daily specials. They use locally grown ingredients and all of their crusts/breads are house-made, topped with locally-made fresh mozzarella. Going forward they plan to keep it simple and fresh by continuing to work with local farmers and purveyors. Both locations have very talented chefs that keep the specials inventive and seasonal, and a team that keeps your favorites rolling perfect every time. They also have weekly farmers market specials throughout the summer on Saturdays, and really try hard to use locally made and sustainable agriculture. Their chefs personally go to the market, make selections of dairy, meats, and produce to create delicious seasonal pasta. Baba Louie's support smaller companies; searching out and working with smaller local businesses when possible. They have found that their products, like Baba Louie's, are personal and they work very hard to keep them consistent and perfect. "Making connections with customers and seeing them return again and again – to me, that says you're doing it right!"



## Place

Where furniture and artwork come together. 3 Main Street, Millerton, NY. [johngoudreault.com](http://johngoudreault.com) and [sonne-hernandez.com](http://sonne-hernandez.com)

Having the perfect piece of dining room furniture and complimentary artwork are a must in every household. Thanks to John Goudreault and Sonne Hernandez, there is a new *Place* in town where you can find both in one convenient location. The duo opened their doors in May and are excited to showcase their work. John designs and builds custom furniture and cabinets. Using only the finest hardwoods, time-honored joinery, and hand-rubbed finishes, he makes each piece to suit the individual needs of his clients. With an emphasis on structural and cosmetic detail, in styles from classic to modern, every creation exhibits the beauty evidenced in the finest tradition of hand-crafted American furniture. Sonne is currently focusing on photo-realism paintings, but has a skilled background with many other subject matters. You're likely to find her painting in the window of the studio, where she carefully takes care of every detail in each painting, all while you get to enjoy watching first hand. Sonne is looking forward to showing her work and other artists' work and creating monthly events that everyone will be invited to. Both John and Sonne deliver their work near and far and are looking forward to connecting with the community and making *Place* a fun place.



## INSURING YOUR WORLD

Summer is here with barbecue smoke in the air! All kinds of parties to attend, graduation, birthday, fund raising events, etc. To this end, if you are the host make sure that your event has the appropriate coverage and consider adding an umbrella policy to cover over your underlying homeowners liability policy for the service of food and drink. These policies can be purchased for as little as \$200 for a \$1 million policy! And when hiring caterers or help for your party, make sure that they have the appropriate liability coverage for the service of their food, as well as liquor legal liability should they be serving your guests alcohol. Another important coverage to require is workers compensation for their employees; many a homeowner has been sued for a trip and fall and by an employee of a caterer that did not have appropriate workers compensation coverage in place. Remember that the land owner is next in the line of responsibility should no coverage be in place by the employer of a worker, so be sure and insure!

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## Canning tips:

Canning is a great way to preserve a bountiful harvest, but can also be an arduous workload, particularly if you have a large garden and many different types of produce to can. Here are a few tips to get a head start on canning to lighten the workload without sacrificing either the quality or quantity of your canning.

- 1) Gather your equipment.** Be sure you have enough jars, lids, and rings on hand to cover any broken equipment that cannot be reused. Also check for a jar lifter and other appropriate tools you will need.
- 2) Clean equipment thoroughly.** Dust can gather on jars and lids and contaminate your canning or cause sealing problems. Clean all of your tools and place them in plastic tubs to keep them dust-free, and at the same time, check for any chips, cracks, or other subtle breakages.
- 3) Inventory older produce.** Check your canned inventory and note what excess produce you have; you may want to adjust your canning plans to avoid stockpiling food that may not be eaten. At the same time, rotate your stock to ensure older food is eaten first.
- 4) Stock up on ingredients.** Before canning season begins, stock up on general ingredients such as sugar, spices, and vinegar. Watch for sales, but don't wait until canning season to go shopping, when supplies will be limited and everyone needs the same ingredients.
- 5) Can early produce.** Many novice canners assume autumn is canning season, but if you wait for fall, you miss out on a lot of delicious options. Start canning early with spring fruit preserves such as strawberry jelly or blueberry jam. Even early veggies such as asparagus can be canned. The freshest produce is best for canning.

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## The benefits of compost

The growing season is here!! Have you thought about using compost to improve your garden soils? Making and using compost has many benefits for home gardeners and our natural environment.

Compost can be made at home by adding food scraps, yard wastes such as grass clippings and leaves, and newspapers to a backyard compost pile or bin. Under conditions of sufficient water, oxygen and warmth, bacteria and fungi break down these materials to create a rich, natural fertilizer.

The benefits of using compost are numerous. Through the activity of microbes, compost slowly releases nutrients over time. Soil amended with compost will become more crumbly and easily worked with garden tools. As a result, soil aeration, and soil nutrient and water retention improve. Young plant roots can more easily penetrate compost-amended soil as they grow, and have better access to water and nutrients. What's more, due to the slow-releasing nature of compost, it's very difficult to harm plants by over-fertilizing.

In addition, compost is environmentally friendly. Compost increases soil biodiversity and reduces pollution from soil erosion and runoff. Furthermore, composting is an important way to reduce inputs to landfills. According to the US Department of Agriculture, food waste is the largest component of disposed US solid waste, and "accounts for a significant portion of US methane emissions" (US Department of Agriculture, Release No. 0257.15). Households can divert a significant portion of food scraps and other organic materials from landfills by utilizing them to make compost.

To learn more about compost, contact your county Extension office for helpful information and resources, or reach out to McEnroe Organic Farm Education program at [Education@McEnroefarm.com](mailto:Education@McEnroefarm.com) with any questions.



Call: (518) 789 4191  
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## Please pass the yams!

For an immediate reward, there's nothing like a delectable treat (along with praise) to motivate and positively reinforce good behavior in our animal companions. It is important to compensate with treats that are healthy and delicious. Treats consistently given at home may not be as effective for training in environments such as obedience class or busy places such as dog parks and hiking trails. Offering a variety of different and tasty treats will come in handy in places where your dog may be easily distracted.

Vital Essentials (USA) and Orijen (Canada) are among the reputable companies who offer healthy, freeze-dried choices in treats. They are fresh, single-sourced animal protein treats (100% meat or fish) packed with locally sourced nutrients that dogs love! The choices are endless – beef nibs, chicken breast, turkey giblets, beef tripe, rabbit bites, or even wild Alaskan salmon, quail, bison, trout, and minnows! They are bite-sized and easily stored in a treat dispenser that can attach to the waist. Many of these flavors are available for our feline friends as well, and are free of additives and preservatives.

Looking for other treat ideas? Fill a Kong Toy with a healthy canned food such as Salmon & Chicken Pâté by Fromm and freeze it. While you occupy your dinner guest, your furry friend will be occupied with her frozen Kong treat. How about an alternative to rawhide or jerky treats that are safe with no artificial ingredients? Sam's Yams 100% USDA Sweet Potatoes are dried into a veggie rawhide-like chew. Finally, some cool treats for summer include probiotic-packed frozen yogurt treats for dogs by Yoghund of New England. Don't forget, treats shouldn't exceed any more than 10% of your furry friend's daily calorie intake. Bon Appétit!

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# WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

## ARIES (March 21–April 19)

A talent that you attribute to yourself will make it easier for you to increase your income. Enjoy yourself as much as possible.

## TAURUS (April 20–May 20)

You're on the road to conflict with authority figures. You've also become bored with day-to-day activities.

## GEMINI (May 21–June 20)

Be careful about misunderstandings between you and loved ones. If you realize how rich you are in family and friends, things will be better.

## CANCER (June 21–July 22)

You just don't understand people's behavior sometimes. Be on the lookout for positive thoughts heading your way.

## LEO (July 23–Aug. 22)

You want one thing, but circumstances call for another. Dive into something completely unnecessary and interesting.

## VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22)

Although your interest in your work is great, there's no need to be taking it home. But the truth is that you alone know what's right.

## LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 22)

Be proud of your work, even though others may not think much of it. Be careful not to tread on any toes though.

## SCORPIO (Oct. 23–Nov. 21)

Don't lose yourself in the details. Test your talents. And make sure that everything you do represents you 100%.

## SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21)

The Greeks believed that personal magic was a gift from the Gods. You can be lazy without being aimless, but that's not justifying you being lazy.

## CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19)

Do whatever comes to your mind that will increase your knowledge. Remember that worries are like a rocking chair.

## AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18)

Music is playing in your heart, and maybe it has something to do with the new friend in your life. Think about the details that matter.

## PISCES (Feb. 19–March 20)

Some projects can only be executed in collaboration with others. Get a grip on yourself and finish the assignments that are awaiting you!

# CHEF & FARMER BRUNCH

## CHEF AND FARMER BRUNCH CHALLENGE TO CROWN FARM TO TABLE CHAMPION

Farm-to-table cuisine has been around for a long time – millennia, if you really think about it. The Hudson Valley has always been at the forefront of the modern eat-local movement, and in Millerton, the homegrown Chef and Farmer Brunch has brought the finest chefs together with the freshest produce, all to raise money to help area children and families.

The sponsor of the Brunch, Millerton's North East Community Center, is kicking up their 6th annual event a notch this year with a new twist. On July 31st, The Chef and Farmer Brunch Challenge will feature a friendly and fun competition between chefs of the area's top restaurants. Using ingredients donated by local farms, the talented chefs will become contestants competing for the title of "Farm to Table Chef Champion."

The Brunch Challenge theme mirrors NECC's Meet the Challenge fundraising goal of \$100,000, which will enable the organization to continue meeting the challenge of providing programs for at-risk teens, meals for children, and support for working families, and the elderly.

"The Brunch was a natural extension of the Millerton Farmers Market, which we launched ten years ago," says NECC executive director Jenny Hansell. "We've always held cooking demonstrations with local chefs, and this was a way to include more people while raising awareness and funds for our programs," which include a Fresh Food Pantry serving four towns, a summer meals program for children, and a wide range of other social service and educational programs for all ages.

Farmer Brunch Challenge will happen at Hotchkiss School's Fairfield Farm in Lakeville, with spectacular views and a commercial kitchen for the chefs' use. Inside an adjacent tent, each participating chef will have their own station where they will prepare tastings of appetizers, entrees, and desserts.

A panel of local celebrity judges will determine the Farm to Table Chef Champion: Dafna Mizrahi, who won TV's *Chopped* competition and is the chef at Monte's Local Kitchen & Tap Room in Amenia; Dan Kish, Executive Chef of Panera Bread; Joan Osofsky of Hammertown Barn; and Dana Bowen, executive editor of *Everyday* with Rachel Ray and formerly executive editor of *Saveur Magazine*.

Competition categories include: Best Appetizer, Best Entree, Best Dessert, Best Table Presentation, and Farm to Table Chef Champion. In addition to the celebrity judges, attendees will have the chance to vote for the People's Choice Award.

The growing list of Brunch Challenge's chefs and fine wines, spirits and brews includes: 52 Main, Peony Vodka, McEnroe's Organic, Berkshire Distillery, Irving Farm, Black Rabbit, The Stagecoach, Pete Hathaway, Millbrook Winery, Stissing House, and When Pigs Fly.

In addition to the farm-fresh cuisine, The Chef and Farmer Brunch Challenge will feature live music by the Latin rhythm and jazz band The Biocentrics, dancing and lawn games, and live and silent auctions. Charter sponsors for the event are 52 Main, Grey House Publishing, Hammertown Barn, and Black Sheep Hill Farm. Other sponsorship levels are still being accepted.

**DATE/TIME:** July 31st, 11 am – 2 pm.

**LOCATION:** Hotchkiss Fairfield Farm, 406 Sharon Road, Lakeville CT.

**COST:** Individual ticket: \$65. Gold Ticket: \$250. Table of 8: \$1,000. Sponsor Gold Table: \$2,500. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [www.neccmillerton.org](http://www.neccmillerton.org).

## NECC's Chef & Farmer Brunch Challenge!

A friendly competition among chefs from the region's best restaurants, competing for the title

*Farm to Table Chef  
Champion*

featuring Celebrity judges & People's Choice Awards

to benefit the  
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Sunday, July 31  
11am-2pm

at Hotchkiss' Fairfield Farm  
406 Sharon Rd, Lakeville, CT

*Spectacular views, live music,  
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