



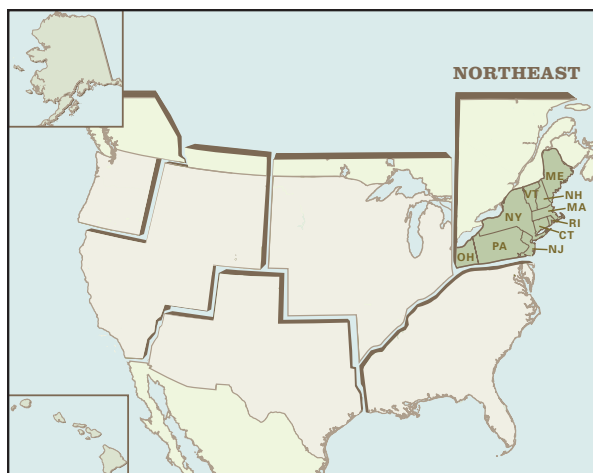
NORTHEAST

The growing season may be short and the topsoil thin and rocky in the Northeast region, but food histories and traditions here run long and deep.

While it goes without saying that the food traditions of any region begin in the landscape, it's especially interesting to consider the effects in the northern parts of the North American continent of those huge sheets of glacial ice that rampaged over the land during the Pleistocene Epoch. The retreating ice scraped out depressions in the bedrock that are now filled with magnificent lakes that provide generations of Northerners with good fishing. The glaciers also chipped away at the coast to create notably irregular, rocky shorelines. They dropped off piles of rubble (moraines) that are now such recognizable geologic structures as Long Island, Cape Cod, and various barrier islands. All of these contribute to the access that food gatherers have to the huge variety of seafood for which the Northeast is so famous.

While we may love our clams and lobsters, we are not as happy about the way the retreating glaciers scraped away our topsoil and left behind all those rocks and boulders,

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strewn like toys in a child's playpen over the exposed bedrock. The rocks were quite the curse when the new European colonist tried to clear his fields and till the thin soil to produce grains and row crops like he had in the Old World, where farmers had been at work for many generations before him. It's only in recent years, with the emergence of organic and biodynamic farming, that growers have learned the wisdom of the Native American farmers: They tilled the soil in small forest clearings, taking advantage of the fertility of decaying leaf litter, and then allowed the forest to return and rejuvenate the soil.

While the would-be farmer/colonists felt dismay with the growing conditions present in their new environs, many of them found a silver lining by raising livestock such as cows instead of crops. The result today is, for example, all that great Cheddar cheese, bearing the appellations of Vermont and New York. Cheddar is only the most notable product of the Northeast's long-lived dairy industry. The settlers found as well that rocky soil does little to deter fruit trees, and so apples are a major product throughout the region—leading to, of course, cider, hard cider, and applejack.

The immigrants brought a knowledge of brewing and distilling, along with a healthy thirst, and it didn't take long before they were producing distinctively New World versions of their favorite spirits using the things that grew best in the rocky ground—notably, apples, corn, and rye—as well as the molasses that came in with the slave trade. Wine production in the Northeast is quite the latecomer, but it's now a growing industry, and grapes are indeed native to the region.

To be perfectly fair, in this chapter we discuss a large area, north to south, and the glaciers did not assail

the southern parts of the territory. As a result, we have the “Garden State” of New Jersey, where an extensive and celebrated farming region was a cornucopia for the burgeoning Northeast population centers through several generations. Oddly enough, it was “progress” in the form of the new interstate highway system that brought down the bounty. Here is how *Edible Jersey* publisher Nancy Painter describes it:

One of the most traumatic moments in food production for our community occurred in the 1950s. Two major highways—the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike—were built, effectively cutting a wide, high-speed swath directly through the state's core from north to south. Not only did it result in the displacement and loss of countless farms, especially in the northern part of the state, but it also caused an explosion of suburbanization, as farmlands turned into cookie-cutter residential and commuter communities. New Jersey's food dynamic was monumentally altered, and the state's identity was diminished by the polarizing pull of New York City to its north and Philadelphia to its south.

In fact, fertile pockets exist throughout the Northeast. Most are river valleys that accumulated sediments for centuries before drawing people to their fertile flood plains. Examples are the Hudson Valley of New York, the Pioneer Valley of Massachusetts, and the long and winding Connecticut River Valley. Lesser-known spots, such as Long Island's East End and Toronto's Holland Marsh, are noted for productivity of great significance to their large, nearby urban populations, and production in such places often exceeds the local demand.

When Native Americans first trudged into the Northeast from what are presumed to have been western migration routes, they found the fertile Connecticut Valley much to their liking. Just as they did in other temperate spots all over the continent, the tribeswomen planted beans, corn, and squash—that sacred triumvirate known as the Three Sisters for the way they are cultivated together. These vegetables remain important in our North American diet.

The early native peoples, with their small numbers, did not need to rely solely on agriculture. In the Northeast there was an incredible abundance of wild foods. Game, large and small (yes, including turkeys), could be trapped, and a profusion of crabs, clams,



oysters, and lobsters could be scooped from the seashore. From the lakes, rivers, and oceans there were finfish, and the seas offered water mammals, prized for their pelts and precious fat. In the bogs and thickets the people found a wealth of wild berries: blueberries, cranberries, gooseberries, blackberries, elderberries, raspberries, and strawberries, as well as beach plums and grapes. From the ground they gathered various herbs and roots, and from the extensive forests they harvested beechnuts, butternuts, hickory nuts, and walnuts, as well as the sap that when boiled down became the New Englander's sweet delights, maple syrup and maple sugar.

Some of these native foods have remained quite significant to Northeastern food economies—think Maine lobsters, New Hampshire pumpkins, Massachusetts cranberries, and, of course, maple syrup—but there is also a lasting influence from native cooking in regional fare. When we bake corn bread or a pot of beans, roast a turkey, or hold a clambake on the beach, we are emulating Northeast Native American cuisine. Our storied and traditional Thanksgiving menu offers a prime example of foods that were available to the first settlers, but it's also important to consider the overlay of old-world cooking styles in parsing out those dishes. For instance, the Indians did not sweeten their cranberries, squash, or sweet potatoes; that penchant came from the European settlers.

The first immigrants, the English and Dutch, put an indelible stamp on what we think of as standard “American” fare, where boiled meat might be paired with little more than cabbage and potatoes. Fortunately, many immigrant groups that followed have added nuance and spice: Go to the tip of Cape Cod and you'll find a seafood stew that descendants of the original Portuguese settlers still enhance with their spicy *chouriço*. Stop into an Italian joint just about anywhere and you'll find dishes laced with garlic and Mediterranean herbs—ingredients that do not easily grow in the Northeast. In more recent times, as New York became a primary entry point for immigrants from all over the world, there has become no limit to the flavors you'll find in one of its neighborhoods' food offerings.

Traveling around the Northeast today, as you can do simply by perusing the essays that follow, you will find a highly educated and industrious society that is familiar with the advantages of cooperative effort. Farming as a community enterprise goes back to colonial settlements in the Northeast, when tools and oxen were shared and everyone got together to raise a farmer's new barn as a weekend effort. The meat from one man's slaughtered cow was shared while it was fresh, and excess produce was always traded with neighbors. So when the concept of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) came to America from Europe in the 1980s, it easily took root in Massachusetts, resonating with traditional notions of community-based industry. Likewise, the revival of local artisan food crafting was built on an image among Northeasterners of themselves as a society of craftspeople taking great pride in their work.

Like everywhere across our continent and in many parts of the developed world, the post–World War II lure of food production made easy through large-scale industrial practices diminished the perception of value to the Northeast's local agricultural landscape and “cottage” food industries. This came about just as the perceived need for more housing, highways, shopping centers, and office parks loomed, promoting a revaluing of land that gave rise to the harmful notion that food can (or even should) be produced at great distances from where it is consumed. The people you'll meet in these essays believe otherwise. Even in the crowded Northeast, the land can again support the needs of its residents for wholesome food. Sustainable production is key to that effort.

If, after reading these stories, you want to gain more firsthand knowledge of the past and future of sustainable food production, visit one of the Northeast's agricultural learning centers, such as Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture or Hawthorne Valley Farm, both north of New York City, or Shelburne Farms in northwestern Vermont. Better yet, just go to a local farmers' market and let your taste buds and the farmer offering samples at his stand tell you what we have to gain from supporting these efforts.

Allandale Farm

Boston's Last Working Farm

I had lived in Boston for over a decade when a friend asked me whether I'd ever visited Allandale Farm. I recall wondering why I had never heard about this place. Could there really be a farm in Boston? I realized, during my first visit, that I had discovered Boston's best-kept secret. Several years later when I had the pleasure of working at Allandale, my feelings about how very special a place Allandale is were confirmed.

Allandale Farm, located seven miles from downtown Boston, straddles the Boston and Brookline town lines and is nestled among houses, a private school,

and a hospital. The property has streams, hills, woodlands, greenhouses, residences, and the original stables. Considered large for a New England family farm, it is approximately 130 acres and, like most New England farms, the land is not flat. It has shallow-to-bedrock soil, making only 30 or so acres useful for growing crops.

William Fletcher Weld purchased the property in the mid-1800s, and since then five generations of his family have lived on it, farming and maintaining it and being sustained by it until well into the mid-1950s.



Food was grown, harvested, and stored for year-round consumption. Chickens were raised for their eggs and pigs for their meat. Orchards provided apples, pears, and plums. Ponds were dug to produce ice for the ice-houses. Stables were filled with horses, and workhorses plowed the fields. For a short period a small timber mill recycled the trees that fell on the property.

The property remained in the same family for over 200 years and was a well-run, relatively self-sufficient family estate. To this day it is one of the oldest privately held family farms in the United States.

Then, in the mid-1960s economic realities changed: Property taxes were rising rapidly, and the price of heating oil was skyrocketing. The family realized that in order to keep their property, the land needed to generate income. It could no longer remain a gentleman's farm. The next generation, James, Martina (Lee), Edward, and Robert, who were all in their twenties, stepped in and took control. Although none of them was trained in or planned for a future in farming, they had both the desire and determination to keep the land in the family.

When they started out, they learned a lot by trial and error. Corn was one of the first crops grown for the commercial venture. Edward Lawrence tells stories of coming home from work and heading to the fields to harvest the corn that would be sold the next day. They set up a stand by the roadside, and in the morning the corn would be laid out for sale. Business was conducted under the honor system—customers would leave money in a tin can. Corn proved to be the most successful and lucrative crop grown and sold up through the 1990s.

Other farming endeavors followed, none as successful as the corn. For example, a plan to grow Christmas trees failed when they found themselves replanting the small trees, not having realized that you needed to space them out at the outset. For many years land was leased out for farming, barely producing enough income to cover the expenses of the property.

In 1973, Massachusetts tax laws changed and Chapter 61A went into effect. Chapter 61A: Assessment and Taxation of Agricultural and Horticultural Land enabled small farms to be taxed at a lower rate than the residential rates they had been paying. This change in the tax law enabled Allandale and many other small family farms to remain intact rather than being forced to sell their land to developers.

With the family's realization that they could afford to keep the land, the farm was formally established and named Allandale Farm. As I learned only recently, the name does not have any familial significance. Its source is the name of the road where it is located. Making the legal commitment to maintain the land as a commercial farm meant that it was time to get serious about the use of the land. Coming home from work and picking corn for sale the next day would not longer suffice for running the farm; it was time to employ a full-time farmer.

Hiring a farmer to manage one's land is like dating to find a spouse. The farmer at Allandale needed to be a good grower and competent at managing a retail business as well as maintaining the balance of land use that had existed for generations. Over a period of ten years farmers came and went. The retail business expanded from a roadside stand to a small store that still works on the honor system.

During the 1970s, changes in the family's structure threatened to adversely affect the farm but fortunately didn't. The property was no longer the primary residence for the entire family. Two siblings moved away from Boston, leaving Edward and Lee to oversee the day-to-day operations. Despite not living on the site, they all agreed that they wanted the property to remain intact and, most important, agreed that they would not draw any personal income from the farm. As long as the farm was able to support itself, it would remain as is.

In the mid-1980s, Allandale Farm ended the "dating" process when the owners found a farmer who would ultimately prove to be the perfect match. John Lee had run the Codman Community Farm and owned his own farm in Lincoln. He was well respected in the local farming community. Raised in a farming family in Vermont, he was representative of the farmers of his generation—well educated, with more than an agricultural degree. When John heard about the job at Allandale, he jumped on it, only to learn that Edward had already been checking up on him. As it turned out, John discovered he was also a distant relative of the family. From the very beginning, the relationship worked. Although a one-year contract was drawn up, twenty-four years later John still manages the farm.

One of the first tasks undertaken was to develop a business plan for the farm incorporating new business ventures such as apple cider production, which John,



from his prior experience, knew would be successful. A cider mill was built, and Allandale's fresh cider was an immediate success. Cider continued to be a main commodity until 1998, when the laws changed, mandating that all commercially sold cider be pasteurized. The cost of buying the necessary equipment to meet these new regulations was prohibitive, so cider production ceased.

Expanding the farm stand was another project that John tackled early on. The building that exists today was built by connecting and rebuilding greenhouses that were dilapidated and in disrepair. Prior to his employment, the farm stand would close down after Halloween and open again for Christmas tree sales in December. With the new building, John expanded the season, opening in April with bedding plants and continuing straight through until Christmas, when the last tree was sold.

Through the mid-1990s the farm continued to grow slowly. All salaries, maintenance, improvements, and equipment purchases were paid for by the income generated from the land. The owners continued their original agreement not to take any income from the farm. The farm needed to be self-sufficient, and it was.

Over the years, John slowly continued to make changes in the methods of farming and the operations of the farm. He looked at what crops were the most productive as well as what his customers wanted. At the same time, he and his field crew considered ways to optimize the use of the land and what were the best practices in order to sustain the land. Organic farming practices were emerging, and Allandale embraced the movement. John and his crew wanted to ensure that the farm would remain a viable, sustainable entity to be passed on to future generations, much as it was given to them. Ultimately it was decided not to pursue organic certification but to continue practicing organic farming methods.

The change to organic farming had an impact on the types of crops that could be grown. Corn, a guaranteed, money-in-the-bank crop, could no longer be grown. Most customers desire that their corn be pristine, without worms, and in order to achieve this the crop must be sprayed, which goes against organic practices. John began buying corn from another local farm, along with apples and other fruits no longer grown on the farm. Over time, the self-serve farm stand was expanded to a full-service store; the varieties of crops

increased and the farm developed a loyal customer base. Many of the farm's loyal customers were the parents of students at the Apple Orchard School, founded on the property in 1972 by Lee Albright.

The Apple Orchard School is for children ages three to six years. Their Web site summarizes their philosophy: "We use the environment extensively for learning and development. The wild animals (geese, ducks, rabbits, hawks, etc.) and domestic animals (chickens, a goat, a donkey, and a miniature horse) along with the growing and harvesting of crops play a large role in our teaching. The children are encouraged to learn and grow in a farm environment, rich with opportunities for exploration and discovery. The teachers are able to expand upon the natural curiosity and excitement of 'teachable moments' ever present in such a unique learning atmosphere."

Exploring the land and knowing one's environment had always been important to John and some-

thing he believed needed to be reinstituted into a child's education. In 1995, with the farm running smoothly, Allandale started a summer program offering the experiences of the Apple Orchard to a greater number of children. Every summer, children ages four to ten may be seen exploring the woods, wading in ponds, and weeding the camp garden.

So what makes Allandale Farm such a special place? For me it is the amazement I feel every time I drive up Newton Street and see acres of green crops growing where there might be row houses or the pleasure I get when tomatoes are in season and I find thirty or more varieties arrayed on the tables waiting to be purchased.

As James, Edward, Lee, Robert, and John grow older, one might worry about the ability and the will for Allandale Farm to remain. Have they instilled in the next generation, twelve individuals versus four, the same love and respect for the land? Fortunately for Boston, the answer is yes.

ILENE BEZAHLER is the publisher and editor of Edible Boston. Prior to that, Ilene was fortunate to have worked at Allandale Farm and experienced the pleasures that the property brings to the family and community.

FARMER ~ EDIBLE CAPE COD (MASSACHUSETTS)

Coonamessett Days, Jamaican Nights

Gosh darn, the sky is falling . . . we are all doomed . . . news at 11.

This is the opening line of a typical newsletter from a nontypical farmer—perhaps a farmer with too much radon in his soil, perhaps not. More likely it's a farmer who just likes to give a good time. He continues . . .

The economy is collapsing and there is nowhere to turn for help—except Mars—but they're having a dry spell as well. Hopefully ours won't last as long. So what now? Do we tune in to CNN's Sunday Night Special "Surviving the Apocalypse"? Do we start hoarding essentials such as toilet paper, canned

food, and beer—and safe drinking water, such as beer? Golly gee whiz, where can you turn at this time of crisis?

The final answer to this question ends up being *Coonamessett Farm*. Ron Smolowitz is the man behind the mouse, as well as the plow, and the 2,000 plus recipients of such bizarre e-mail newsletters are the members of Cape Cod's beloved farm in East Falmouth, the farm that's prepared to save us all—or at least its members.

This Friday, the last Jamaican Grill Night of the season, celebrating Cape Cod's Cape Land and Sea Harvest weekend, is the opportunity to start the Fall



Visitors to Coonamesett Farm

right. Bring the family, bring beer. If the temperature is below 50 or rain is falling, bring rum. Summer is gone—don't dwell on the past. Start anew!

Jamaican Grill Night and rum? I come from a family tree blooming with farmers and on occasion have visited their farms, where the only grill to be had was on the front of a retired '58 Ford pickup, and the only Morgan was a horse—Captain Morgan was more the seafaring type. The farmers I know aren't typically into cranking Bob Marley and marinating jerk chicken, and if they *were* partaking in any similar activities, you could be sure that the party would be over by 7 P.M.; 5 A.M. cow milking comes on brutally fast.

What Ron Smolowitz has done with Coonamesett Farm is like what the Swiss Army did to a knife. You'll realize this the first time you step foot in its fields. First of all, on your way to the fields, you might first

wander through their store, where one can purchase anything from alpaca yarn and bolga baskets to locally made soaps and gourmet items. There is a laundry list of kids' farm-themed games and toys, locally made jewelry, hand creams and lotions, and, of course, the farm's own sauces and dressings.

Just off the store is the café, and although I've heard rave reviews over the years about its vegetarian chili, fresh wraps, omelets, and breakfast burritos, it's hard for me to eat in a café where the egg I'm salting probably came from the chicken who's glaring at me through the window. I realize that this is the kind of sustainable dining that foodies drive hours to experience . . . I just happen to find that creepy.

From the café you might walk outside and circle around barbecue smokers the size of hybrid cars. During the summer these smokers see more action than a Bruce Lee triple feature, and their greasy scars and



tattoos tell the calorie-filled tales of convivial gatherings under starry skies. The Jamaican Grill Nights of Coonamessett Farm are legendary on Cape Cod, and I've personally stood in the gravelly parking lot at dusk to witness hordes of carnivores slowly descend on the farm's tent like a scene out of a George Romero film. . . . All the while in the background, the steel drums sing out over the valley like a pied piper luring people away from the chockablock parking lots of the four-walled restaurants.

More recently the nightly celebrations at the farm have expanded with Vegetarian Buffet and Local Grill Nights, which include anything from artichoke creole and farm-fresh vegetable pot pie, to giving the smokers a serious workout with grilled leg of wild boar and pulled-pork BBQ. On any given evening the music of live fiddlers and guitarists swirls around the farm's twenty acres until the last splat of barbecue sauce hits the picnic table.

The tent also happens to house a dance floor, *and why not?* What good is a farm without a dance floor? The farm has hosted many weddings and rehearsal dinners and can create menus ranging from vegetarian to pig roasts and Cape Cod clambakes (wouldn't it be great if the bride's family were completely vegetarian and the groom's family was eagerly drooling over a pig on a spit? Great visual there.) Speaking of visuals, there are at least a half dozen backdrops throughout the farm that would be perfect for the ceremony.

Another newsletter awaits . . .

Anyone finding a 12-foot boa constrictor named Henry, lost on the farm last week, please notify farm staff. A small reward is offered for his return. Henry was reportedly last seen under some plants in one of the fields, but the reporter, last seen running out the farm gate, did not identify the location.

Apparently Farmer Ron is feeling overly enthusiastic about picking fruits and vegetables here and seems overwhelmed by the unfathomable possibility that someone in the world (*could it happen?*) wouldn't want to partake of the farm's natural bounty. And if such a person could actually exist, what could possibly be his reasoning? Hence "Henry the Boa" slithers out of Ron's imagination and into e-mail inboxes—leading to the panic of a few farm members, the morbid curiosity of Montessori Middle School volunteers, and the

head-scratching of Animal Control officers. The e-mail finishes . . .

Blueberries are just about gone. Blackberries are starting up. Cherry and main crop tomatoes are ready. Flowers are in abundance for cutting. Try the Cape Gooseberries and the many varieties of peppers, eggplants, beets, and radishes. Lettuce, arugula, herbs, cabbage, onions, summer squashes, cucumbers, green beans—Wow! You can practically survive on the food available here!

Before continuing, it's time for a confession—and possibly an apology. The truth is, this story was added into this book about forty-eight hours prior to your picking it up, so if your sofa is stained with wet ink, I apologize. When approached to write about Cape Cod's favorite farm, I was soon informed that Ron was believed to be "out to sea." "What does that *mean?*?" I asked a Coonamessett Farm staffer. I was told that before Ron and his wife, Roxanna, bought the then dairy farm in 1984, Farmer Ron was a marine engineer who graduated from New York's Maritime College and spent twenty years as a commissioned officer for NOAA's (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Fisheries Service, as well as a captain aboard Woods Hole's celebrated vessel the *Albatross*. Over drinks at the local watering holes between long trips at sea, Ron would proclaim to friends that he was going to give up the sea and become a farmer. Those trips at sea had delivered him from the seducing breezes of the South Pacific to the ridged glaciers of Alaska and beyond, but he finally kept that promise to himself. Ron continues to be involved in conducting research to benefit commercial fisheries. "Just my luck," I replied. "Deadline's a couple of weeks away and I get the only farmer who doubles as Jacques Cousteau." I waited idly for our farmer to return to *terra capea*.

Ron's commitment to research goes well beyond the whitecaps. It pools into just about everything he digs, waters, and plants, and he'll pass on his knowledge to any budding farmer-to-be who will listen. In the spring and fall there are tours at Coonamessett Farm just about every day—up to 5,000 a year. The farm hosts school groups, has opened its doors to the likes of the Montessori Middle School for "learning beyond the classroom," and partnered with Cape Cod Children's Museum for a hands-on Little Sprouts program for chil-

dren ages four to ten. During the twelve-week program the kids plant, maintain, and harvest their own veggies, herbs, fruits, and flowers, and learn about organic gardening methods and composting. One could say that the Smolowitzes' roots in the Cape Cod community are stronger than any under their soil.

I am planning to buy baby chicks to rotate our flocks. If anyone is interested in purchasing a few, give me a call. I'm also going to Foxwoods Casino next week if anyone is interested in staking me. In one case—chickens—you put grain in and sometimes eggs come out. In the other—slots—you put in quarters and sometimes you get more back. I think I have a better chance on making my money back at the casino.

Farmer, gambler . . . what's the difference?

It is by no accident that this piece contains only e-mails to loyalists, as opposed to direct quotes from the farmer. When I finally caught up with Ron Smolowitz, I found he is a man of few words, in spite of his colorfully offbeat e-mail newsletters. We talked for a while, but

during that time I kept looking down to find farm brochures and fliers magically appearing in my lap: "Yoga on the Farm" . . . "Storytelling and Pumpkin Painting Day" . . . "Artisan's Fair" . . . "Earth Day Celebration" . . . "Fiber Festival" . . . "Coonamessett Eco Cross Cycle Race." It was obvious that Ron preferred that the farm and his work with the community do the speaking for him. And so they have.

His last e-mail raises an interesting point. Thanks to Ron and Roxanna, Coonamessett Farm has evolved into five greenhouses with demonstration hydroponic and aquaculture systems, a wide range of vegetables, herbs, and berries, a general store, a café, an ice-cream stand, a menagerie of animals (both domestic and exotic), and most recently a wind turbine. It would seem that an undertaking of this magnitude would have to most definitely be backed with not just a great passion for farming but also a gambler's heart—and the gambles seem to keep paying off. Not just for Ron Smolowitz, but also for the thousands of residents of Cape Cod who know that when the sky occasionally seems like it *is* falling, they can always turn to their beloved Coonamessett Farm.

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TOM DOTT has been co-owner of the Lamb and Lion Inn in Barnstable, Massachusetts, since 1999. Before moving to Cape Cod, he and his partner, Alice Pitcher, ran a four-diamond restaurant in New York's Hudson Valley that specialized in all things local. Tom promotes "culinary adventures" to inn guests and works part-time at The Wine List in Hyannis. In 2007, he received an Eddy Award for feature-length editorial for "The Vines That Bind," which appeared in the winter 2007 issue of Edible Cape Cod.
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FARMER ~ EDIBLE EAST END (NEW YORK)

Organic Farming's Guru

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Scott Chaskey and His Quail Hill Farm

It was lunchtime in a little café in Amagansett, New York, a few years back and the actor Alec Baldwin, now a star of *30 Rock*, was sitting across from organic farmer Scott Chaskey. A woman hesitantly approached the two men in the booth, recognition lighting her face. She looked from the actor with the contagious smile to the bearded farmer then breathed, "Aren't you . . . *Scott Chaskey?*?" That's how a very close friend of Scott's tells the story.

Chaskey, the director of Quail Hill Farm, one of the oldest CSA farms in the country, is almost instantly identifiable by his bushy, flaxen-softened white beard. "My wife has never seen me without the beard," he grins. When Megan and Scott, both studying abroad, met in London in 1978, the beard was red.

Driving along Deep Lane by the farm you often see the bearded and lean-framed Chaskey silhouetted against the light, driving his tractor along the top of



the hill. You easily spot him among the thousand people attending the January Northeast Organic Farmers Association conference in upstate New York. He's board president of the 1,700-member group. He's everywhere, mentoring growers on organic farms, coaching five farm apprentices, teaching in local elementary schools, guiding children's hands as they learn to seed, and touring graduate students over Quail Hill fields. At last July's potluck supper in the apple orchard, yes, there was the soft-spoken, bearded farmer reading one of his poems, for, as his passport indicates, his profession is "farmer-poet."

While he may look like he stepped out of a nineteenth-century daguerreotype, Chaskey personifies the new breed of highly educated, highly motivated farmers who are leading America's Community Supported Agriculture movement. "Farming is my passion," says Chaskey, who received a master's in writing from Antioch University and studied for two years at Oxford University.

In the early 1980s, Scott and Megan married and moved to Mousehole, Cornwall, on the English coast. There he heard of the Cliff Meadows on the south-facing slope, known locally as "the earliest ground in Britain," which once grew the first new potatoes and first daffodils sent to Covent Garden. Soon, an old Cornish farmer was tutoring him in an ancient understanding of organics and soil. It fits Scott's persona that he managed to rent Cliff Meadows land to farm, bought an acre he still owns, and single-handedly built a frame house. The Cornishman visited daily. Scott learned.

He and Megan, an accomplished flutist, traveled with the first of their three children to Amagansett in 1989 for an extended visit. There they attended a meeting of a CSA to which Megan's parents belonged. Unexpectedly, Chaskey found himself planting the first crops for Quail Hill Farm, which would open in spring 1990 as a CSA project of Peconic Land Trust.

In Amagansett his passion for protecting the soil—its structure, its health, the life that thrives in it—grew. It took him several years to nurture the land back to vitality. He began to teach everyone who would listen—CSA members, schoolchildren, chefs, other farmers—about the critical need to save diversified organic seeds and the need to farm sustainably. "I don't think anyone realizes how central education is to what we do," he says.

There is his other passion, writing and poetry. His second book of nonfiction, *Seed Time*, its title from a Wordsworth poem, is about the relationship between

farming and writing. “It follows a seed from its development until it blossoms and goes back to seed, just as a writer needs seed time,” says his literary agent, the former editor Paul Bresnick. A charter member of Quail Hill, Bresnick says, “I’d always admired the letters Scott wrote to farm members, which always began with some beautiful writing about nature, about land, about wildlife.” Almost a decade ago, Bresnick, now in a new career as a literary agent, persuaded Scott to write a book inspired by the newsletters, *This Common Ground—Seasons on an Organic Farm*.

Though the well-reviewed book speaks of nature, fifty-eight-year-old Chaskey doesn’t consider himself primarily a nature poet, though he supposes many do. His real subject is “the mystery of self and others in relationship to the world. The big picture.”

Chaskey reflects on his time at Oxford. “I had a reader’s card at the Bodleian Library, the *Bodleian*,” he says, his voice still rising in amazement. “It’s an unusual thing to stay active as a writer and to teach without being an academic. So while I’ve done some teaching, I’ve been lucky enough to have a whole different profession, working out-of-doors. . . . Writing a poem requires a lot of space, more space for me than writing prose.”

“Space from people?” a visitor questions.

“Space—whatever ‘space’ means. It also involves silence, and more time than I’ve had available for years.” Then, “The solitude of the back field . . . that can be a very inspirational place, the back field, alone seeding in the earth.”

While the five-foot-nine poet may run short of time, time reshaped is one of the bonuses the more than 200 harvest-share members receive along with produce. As you head down the sandy path to the little farm stall, your intention is to fill several sacks with vegetables—in August: onions, peppers, red fingerlings, fennel—quickly harvest some jade beans and eggplant from the fields, and dash off. You take only a few steps past the wild blackberry bushes and milkweed when you feel your breath let go as the mystique of the oasis Chaskey has nurtured in the midst of prime Hamptons real estate takes hold.

“When you walk into Quail Hill, you walk out of a nine-to-five business time frame into seasonal time,” says Kristi Hood, chef-owner of the nearby Springs General Store. Like many members, she has contributed recipes to two editions of the *Quail Hill Farm Cookbook*. It is a sophisticated primer on preparing the

diverse variety of vegetables a CSA grows. Says Hood, “Scott is very much in sync with the land. He extends his love into the land, his love into what he grows. He is a lovely, spacey, delightful man.” You sense this personality in his cookbook introduction.

In 1988, Chaskey was intent on nourishing his beloved soil, not a social community. It quickly became obvious that a very social community was growing alongside the vegetables, and in winter, when land lay silent under ground cover, its friendships deepened.

“The extraordinary thing about this Community Supported Agriculture movement,” says Chaskey, “is that it came out of a need that many people had to re-create community. It’s reached so many. I never had any calculation in the beginning of trying to create something like this. But it’s how it’s spun out basically.” Twice monthly, Chaskey broadcasts his thoughts on this “broad community—of the soils, of people, of animals” on WLIU, the local NPR station.

Those Scott touches support his community as it interacts with the outside community. There are occasional classes, perhaps on canning or bees. In the apple orchard there is a community pancake breakfast and a gala fund-raising dinner with 150 sitting at a single, long, candlelit, white-clothed table. Top local chefs prepare these meals, clearly volunteering their time with enthusiasm.

Scott is a singular man. There is a palpable chemistry that draws others to him, perhaps because he is so soft-spoken and seems accessible, perhaps because his passions are so visible. That is why he connects as a teacher.

He often arrives in East End classrooms with packets of seeds, soil mix, compost, worm casings. At East Hampton’s independent Ross School, students receive a hands-on understanding of the importance of nature’s cycles. After meals students walk into a narrow passageway and scrape their plates into compost bins. Twice a week these scraps are carted to Quail Hill’s compost heap. “When the Ross kids come out to plant in the spring they see their compost is part of nourishing the soil. Then they help plant the crops that they eat at school. So it’s the whole cycle.” In addition to farming more than 275 varieties of produce, herbs, and flowers on 6 acres for the CSA, the farm grows crops on another 24 for schools and restaurants, and shepherds 120 more for Quail Hill’s Preserve.

Chaskey has inspired many with his local, seasonal message. Joe Realmuto, executive chef at the top



Quail Hill's chalkboard displays a weekly offering.

East Hampton restaurant Nick and Toni's, says, "Fifteen years ago, Scott gave us gardening lessons on what to grow, when to grow. He's an artist so in touch with the earth." On nearby land preserved by the Land Trust, Chaskey set up tents for inner-city children from Camp Erutan (nature spelled backward) to camp overlooking Gardiners Bay and to learn to finger Quail Hill soil. Says Chaskey, "Start-up CSAs come here—one a year for ten years—with their list of questions. They help us seed; we give or sell them the transplants." When Scott arrived he found only one other organic farm, The Green Thumb, on Long Island's South Fork. There are now several dozen on Long Island's East End. Chaskey has mentored most.

"There is something very grounding and centered about Scott's perspective on the world around us," says Fred Lee, a North Fork organic grower and owner

of Sang Lee Farms in Peconic. "His poetry dovetails and complements his farming. There are times I think, 'I can't do this.' Seeing how stable and competent Scott seems to be adds to my confidence, [and I realize,] yes, it can be done!"

Scott's influence, passion, and efforts to teach both growers and consumers about saving diverse organic seeds and expanding sustainable agriculture to rebuild soil extend throughout the Northeast. He's been on the NOFA board for ten years, its president for two. Board member Elizabeth Henderson of Peacework Farm speaks of the power of Chaskey's soft-spoken delivery and how he overcame earlier animus. "Under Scott's leadership there's cooperation and negotiation rather than hidden agendas and secret plotting against each other." He's also a board member of Vermont's Center for Whole Communities.

Despite his deep roots in the organic community, Chaskey is a questioning soul. “What is my view of current organic standards?” he asks. “I guess you can tell because we’re not certified, although Quail Hill grows organically. We’re choosing at Quail Hill not to be certified, even though I’m on the board of NOFA New York, which is a certifier. What I don’t support is the attempts at manipulation by big business.” What he strongly supports is certification for the many dairy farmers whom NOFA is helping transition to organic operation and teaching consumers about the virtues of organic milk.

For Chaskey, the bottom line for agriculture across the land and in the solitude of the back field is sustainability. “It takes nature 700 years to build one inch of topsoil. The world’s six-inch layer of topsoil upon which all agriculture depends is endangered by intensive industrial farming.” He hopes to revive an “effective NOFA organic seed program that connected

farmers and consumers with the importance of maintaining a viable, diverse organic seed supply.”

Tomatoes illustrate what Chaskey means about diversity. He actively disliked tomatoes until the mid-1990s, when a farm member insisted he plant seeds she had saved from an amazing tomato she’d tasted in New Jersey.

“Hated tomatoes. Why? Because I had *never* tasted a tomato,” he said. He knew only bland, industrial impersonators.

Scott grew out Terri Stein’s seeds, barely believing their flavor. Today, Quail Hill holds a popular community tomato tasting. Some 250 adults and children vote on bite-size samples of the forty-plus varieties Quail Hill now grows—Matt’s Wild Cherry, Pruden’s Purple, Brandywines, Juane Flamme, Green Zebras. You look down the row of wooden tables and you recognize the man sampling top-ranked Sungolds, the man in the blue-checkered shirt with the contagious smile.

GERALDINE PLUENNEKE has written for *Newsday*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and other publications, and is writing a book on recovering America’s lost flavors and nutrients. She lives in Montauk, New York, and frequents Quail Hill Farm.

FARMER ~ EDIBLE FINGER LAKES (NEW YORK)

Heroes of the Heirlooms

Antique Apples Make a Commercial Comeback at Red Jacket Orchards

There’s a revival of a certain kind happening in the Finger Lakes. This one doesn’t involve music, religion, or a theater stage, but it does require earth, air, water, human determination, and curiosity, and plenty of budwood. Near-lost varieties of apples, the fruit America is most famous for, are being given another chance to shine and delight the masses on a large commercial scale. For the flavor-hounds among us, we have Red Jacket Orchards to thank for the pleasure.

In 2006, Red Jacket Orchards, a 600-acre orchard and fruit farm in Geneva, New York, started experi-

menting with heirloom apples in their already successful retail business of tree-ripened fruit and juices. In 2007, they harvested the first crops from the ten acres of heirloom apples they started, a small yield of several bushels per variety, nothing compared to the usual gold standard of a yield of 1,000 bushels per acre, but the apples come out winners. Indeed, next year’s crops look promising enough to ensure that a good many customers will get to taste the difference between an antique apple bred for flavor and versatility and a conventional apple that was bred for travel, size, and beauty.



Red Jacket apple crates stand at attention.

“I love that I can taste history with these heirloom varieties,” says Brian Nicholson, president of Red Jacket Orchards, who along with his twin brother, Mark, manages the day-to-day of the business. “Each of these varieties has a story that needs to be told. Everything about the apple is there in the graft, in the cultivar. It doesn’t go away. So by using what we’ve learned from growing other, more usual types of apples, we hope we can grow the heirlooms with equal success and make them more available to customers who want that special experience with more uncommon fruit.”

Red Jacket Orchards has an interesting history of its own, as worth telling as that of the fruit they grow. In 1958, the family moved to Geneva from Long Island, where the Nicholsons had been turkey farmers, selling poultry and eggs. With Robert Moses’s megamove to get people out of and into the city via highways, the Nicholsons sold the family business and property to eminent domain and high-tailed it out of there. They took the unexpected windfall from the sale and, answering an ad in *The New York Times*, invested it in a 150-acre cherry farm along Route 5-20, which at that



time was a major road that took people all the way to California. Mrs. Nicholson came sight unseen with the children, including son Joe, who would eventually grow up to run the orchard and become known as one of the most innovative and successful growers in the region. Fifty years later the fruit farm is 600 acres and growing, with new varieties of crops and juices being added each year, and Mark and Brian, the third generation, now stepping into management roles for the long haul.

It is that third generation that has brought the Nicholsons back to their family roots, or at least a few hundred miles closer. They started selling product to the New York City greenmarkets back in the 1980s, and Brian remembers that first visit to the city. Brian, Mark, and their older brother, Jay, left Geneva at 4 A.M. with a truck filled with RJO products, driving through the tunnel, blinking at the big city lights, thinking they were going to get killed or at least disappear forever. But they made it safely to Union Square and set up camp. They sold half of what they brought; it was a bit disappointing to return home with a half-full truck, but they were heartened by the comments of the shoppers, such as “We’ll see you next week, right? You’ll be here with more of the same, yes?” And little by little, as the shoppers came to know them, the RJO guys were more than just encouraged by the savvy New Yorkers; they also learned from them. “We ride subways here, you know,” one greenmarket regular told them. “We need our hands free to get through the turnstiles.” Brian was confused by this until he realized they were packing their apples in brown grocery bags, just like back in Geneva, where shoppers were getting in their cars, bags safely in the back. So they switched to bags with handles and have kept that ever since. They continue to listen to what their customers want and try to provide them with that unique culinary experience.

Some of the new/old varieties that they are growing for these customers provide challenges, especially for the impatient foodie. “Newtons,” Brian claims, “taste much better after they’ve been stored for a while and the flavors are allowed to develop.” The fruit is kept in a cold storage and the starches in them convert to sugar. If eaten straight from the tree, the apple has a texture that is reminiscent of a mildly sweet but raw potato. The return of these long-stored apples, however, is well timed, as North Americans are also returning to the old ways of food preservation. Root cellars are back

in vogue, while canning, curing, smoking, and pickling have become requisites in the curriculum of culinary school programs and professional kitchens. How perfect that the “apple of our eye” wants to spend a season in the cellar, with the rest of the preserved foods, before being chomped on.

All heroes have heroes of their own, and Brian and Mark are eager to nod to Ian Merwin, a Cornell pomology professor, as one of theirs. Ian and his wife, Jackie, operate Black Diamond Farm in Trumansburg, a sixty-four-acre farm where they grow, among many other crops, specialty apples. Ian prefers to try out a large number of the heirloom varieties but on the smaller scale that he and his wife and daughter, who do all the work themselves, can manage. Much of his research at Cornell focuses on the genetic history of these antique apples and also on the variety of flavors produced. During visits to the Cornell Geneva Experiment Station, a depository that houses several thousand types of apple varieties, Ian might sample 100 to 150 different apples before choosing a new one to bring back to the farm.

Here’s where budwood comes in. Contrary to Johnny Appleseed’s tossing seeds left and right to grow trees, growing heirloom trees is possible only through grafting existing bud branches onto rootstock. The rootstock tells the tree how large to grow, and the budwood determines the fruit. Ian provided the Red Jacket guys with not only most of their graftings for the heirlooms but also the education needed (both Mark and Brian were students of Ian’s at Cornell) and experience with each of the varieties that they chose to grow.

“Mark came over in September, a few years ago,” says Ian, who is still teaching at Cornell while running the farm, “and we went for a walk through the orchard. He asked a lot of questions about the different apples, looking for the types that would work well on a larger scale.”

“It was like walking through a living catalog, with everything I needed to know about the ones that performed well and would be a fit for our customers,” says Mark. This was important since many of the other grafts available are grown in regions that differ from the unique climate of the Finger Lakes. “I had a whole selection to choose from that was being grown right here with similar conditions to what we have at Red Jacket, and Ian was incredibly generous to share all of this with us.

“Trial and error can be a costly thing when you are a commercial grower,” he continues. “With Ian’s help, we could avoid many mistakes.” Mark took this back to the Red Jacket family, who weighed the decision carefully and decided to move forward with the experiment.

The RJO gang has ten acres dedicated to heirlooms, a beautiful wide-open field just behind the 5-20 corridor that cuts through Geneva. Behind the gas stations, strip malls, and all that is new and somewhat garish of Geneva are rows and rows of the fruit that fed Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, their families, and countless others centuries ago. “I really want to get some signs up here so people know what this is, what we’re doing,” Brian says.

The ten acres account for about 2 percent of the total acreage RJO has in production. However, once they go into full harvest and are ready for a larger market, Red Jacket will be one of the largest producers of heirloom apples in the Northeast. “I don’t know if it makes us the largest, but it definitely puts us on the map,” Brian chuckles as he gazes out over the fields of trees no taller than a toddler. If there is such a map, it was created centuries ago by farmers with a vision for well-fed citizens with an eye for apples.

Among the varieties available at Red Jacket are Golden Russets, which have a firm and granular texture with ample tartness; Newton Pippins, which were considered a favorite of Benjamin Franklin; Northern Spy; Lady Apples; the oddly named 20-ouncers; Baldwins; Margills, which are also known as Perfumed Princess because of the lovely smell they send; and Keepsakes, which aren’t considered heirloom but are the parent of the Honeycrisp, another unusual variety they grow.

Some small-scale farmers might criticize Red Jacket’s interest in growing these specialty fruits for a large production, but there is an opportunity here that has to be acknowledged. Red Jacket is *the* apple producer

for New York City. They’re at every greenmarket, their juices are on the shelves of many grocers both large and small, and if you want local apples through FreshDirect, the home delivery grocer serving the five boroughs and in the summer, Long Island, Red Jacket is what you’ll order. So, if a company that big, with that much of a consumer base, takes a gamble on these heirloom varieties and does well, perhaps these delicious, flavorful, and incredibly nutritious fruits will shove their way into the spaces being taken up by the mass-produced, mealy, bland apples that we’ve accepted. American farmers are capable of growing incredibly delicious fruits and vegetables, the best the world has to offer, and many are leading us into an agricultural return of growing for flavor, aroma, and culinary bounty. Many farmers are reviving the heirloom varieties, but few of us are actually seeing these goods when they are grown on a small scale in a small town.

Ian Merwin agrees. “The guys at Red Jacket have a real opportunity here. They have a large, sophisticated consumer base, and they’re good marketers. People are interested in these antique varieties, and Red Jacket will do a great job bringing them to interested eaters on a large scale.”

If the crops grow and sell well, Mark has his eye on a few other possibilities. There’s an apple called the Caville Blanc, which was grown by Thomas Jefferson and has as much vitamin C as an orange, that he’d like to add to the list. Also in contention is the Chestnut Crabapple, which is about the size of a tangerine and packs a delicious sweet-tart flavor.

“We’re so excited about reviving these classic gems. They’re like a piece of living history in the orchards,” he says. “It’s so rewarding to bring these products to a broader audience. Especially with the chance to tell the history of the apple, since it’s also telling the history of our country.”

MICHAEL WELCH is the publisher and editor of Edible Finger Lakes. He is a trained professional chef and writes about the people behind the food and farms of Central New York.

Shelburne Farms

Cultivating a Conservation Ethic

Just before noon on a bright August day in northwestern Vermont, a tractor turns in through the gate of the Farm Barn at Shelburne Farms and disgorges a wagonload of visitors into the courtyard. A few local children dash off to the farmyard corner to say hello to their favorite animals and to check the chicken coop for eggs. Others make a beeline for the cheese room, where they know there will be tasty morsels to sample and cheese makers to watch in action. The wagon driver gives a brief introduction to the Farm Barn for the first-time visitors who remain. As she speaks, youngsters stare in fascination at a chicken taking a dust bath where the stone foundation meets the ground. Adults step back to appreciate the soaring turreted roofline of the 120-year-old building, whose silhouette within the pastoral landscape more readily evokes a fairy-tale castle than the agricultural hub it has always been.

On a similar summer day around 1900, this barn at the heart of the spectacular 3,800-acre model agricultural estate established by Dr. William Seward Webb and Lila Vanderbilt Webb on the shores of Lake Champlain would have buzzed instead with the labors of carpenters, blacksmiths, and wheelwrights. Mule teams would have led wagons full of grain to the Farm Barn over crushed stone roads ribboning through fields and woods according to the plan of legendary landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Flash forward a century, and the Farm Barn still hums as the center of the now 1,400-acre working farm as well as in its newer role as headquarters of the nonprofit environmental education center established by the Webb family in 1972. It is one of a number of impressive Robert H. Robertson-designed buildings on the National Historic Landmark property, but it epitomizes the unique juxtaposition of past and present set within the raw natural beauty of a working landscape.

During the farm's May through October season, the Farm Barn offers a wealth of hands-on experiences that bring to life both the realities of farming and the environmental mission of Shelburne Farms. On a hot and busy summer day, the farm can be a lot to absorb.

So focus on just one sense—say, smell—and starting in the Children's Farmyard, an educational farm within the working farm, breathe in the earthy, funky scent of animals and sweet hay mingled with a whiff of fresh sawdust from the Beeken Parsons Woodshop, an independent furniture-building company specializing in sustainably harvested wood. Move on, walking clockwise, to the sour-sweet dairy aromas of the award-winning farmhouse cheddar operation, which uses only milk from the farm's grass-based dairy herd of 125 purebred, registered Brown Swiss cows. Then catch the smell of warm, naturally leavened bread wafting from the ovens of O-Bread Bakery, another privately owned business on the farm for more than thirty years. Circle back to the Farm Cart, a silver food truck surrounded by wooden trellises wound with climbing squash vines, where a griddle sends out the rich perfume of browned butter from dozens of grilled cheese sandwiches served during a peak-season lunch hour. Order a sandwich and throw down one of the blankets offered for all to share, or sit at a picnic table crafted out of trees from the property. There could be no better way to enjoy all you have seen and smelled.

The Farm Cart is just a few years old, a more recent effort by Shelburne Farms to translate its mission of cultivating a conservation ethic into something that visitors can see, touch, or taste. Melted cheddar between hearty slices of bread dipped into a bowl of fresh tomato or roasted squash soup is not only a thoroughly satisfying meal but also delectable evidence of what the landscape can provide if we care for it. "Our goal is to support healthy communities with access to fresh, healthy food and a healthy environment," explains the nonprofit's longtime vice president and program director, Megan Camp. "We can't just talk about healthy food systems, we have to try to build one here ourselves as well." The Farm Cart's sandwiches, soups, and salads feature Shelburne Farms' cheese and produce from the property's own five-acre Market Garden. Much of it is prepared in the restaurant kitchen of the seasonal Inn at Shelburne Farms, which opened



in 1987 in the renovated original Webb residence known previously as Shelburne House. The restaurant has earned a reputation for creating some of the finest farm-to-table food in the country, with cheese, vegetables, eggs, veal, lamb, and pork from the farm, as well as maple syrup and other wild ingredients foraged from the fields and forests.

From grilled cheese sandwiches at the Farm Cart and house-made lamb ragù served over fresh pasta at the Inn to community offerings like spring foraging walks, backyard farming classes, and seasonal festivals and to a jam-packed education calendar of field trips, family workshops, and multiday courses for teachers and farmers, “all of our programs help kindle human connections to nature and agriculture and build a sense of place and community,” says Alec Webb, a great-grandson of Dr. and Mrs. Webb, and president of Shelburne Farms since 1988.

Almost forty years ago when Alec was just eighteen years old and about to head off to Yale, his father gathered the family on the South Porch of a sadly dilapidated Shelburne House. After years of trying to reestablish a viable farm enterprise on the vast estate, Derick Webb had reluctantly concluded that selling most of the property might be the best option. Alec and his five siblings asked for the chance to pursue another avenue. With their father’s blessing, they developed a plan for innovative land use and conservation and reinvented the property as an agriculture-based educational and community resource with a working farm at its core. The effort turned into a life mission and career for Alec and his brother Marshall, who now manages the property’s woodlands and special projects. Alec never made it to college, but he has no regrets.

“Farming has always been at the heart of Shelburne Farms,” Alec recalls. “One of my earliest memories of growing up on Shelburne Farms was the aroma of manure from our dad’s overalls hanging in the garage. . . . My father converted a former golf course on the property into pasture for milking cows and built an innovative dairy pole barn in 1952, the year I was born. I remember hot summer days in haylofts, bringing home puffball mushrooms from the fields, or strings of perch caught off Orchard Point, and collecting tubs of shiny brown horse chestnuts in the fall. A great old apple tree near our house must have been there when the Nash family was farming the same plot of land before our great-grandparents came to town.”

Vivid memories like these made it impossible for Alec, Marshall, and their siblings to accept that housing developments might replace the fields, the trees, and their favorite fishing spots. Such deeply felt connections inspired them to find a way to preserve Shelburne Farms, and, through its work and powerful presence, they hope to encourage others to become active stewards of whatever place they call home. “Kids will always need meadows to walk through, cows and farm animals to touch, and places to understand the source of our food,” says Vermont sugar maker David Marvin, who has served on the Shelburne Farms board for two decades. “We all need special places for time alone and space apart that can help connect body and soul. And we need to respect and enjoy our natural and historic treasures that they may inform and enrich us. Shelburne Farms offers all of this. But, what I find so compelling about this place is that its offerings are only a means to a greater end: to develop a conservation ethic that will ensure this and other special places are available for all children and their children.”

At Shelburne Farms, connections happen everywhere. In the farmyard, children learn to make a circle with their fingers and squeeze gently but firmly around the warm teat of a caramel-colored cow with soft, patient, dark eyes. The first squirt of milk never fails to elicit surprise and delight. Sitting in a circle shaking cream into butter is another revelatory experience for all ages. Food “manufacturing” was never so immediate, so personal, and so delicious. On a field trip in the sugar bush, grade-schoolers realize with pride that they can find their way back to a tree to which a partner first led them blindfolded. Without ever having seen it, they retrace their way by listening to the changing sound of their own footsteps, feeling the bark of different trees, and picking up other clues from the forest. During an adult course on traditional survival skills, the group pauses while digging burdock root near Orchard Point to marvel at the unexpected arrival of a shimmering orange veil of monarch butterflies taking a rest in the Vermont woods on their way south.

On a brisk but sunny fall afternoon, Sam Smith, the farmer who runs the Children’s Farmyard, is speaking to a group of about twenty farmers about on-farm education. “Many of the most important education experiences are in the unscripted moments,” he suggests. As if on cue, a goat wanders through the group and stops to sniff curiously at someone’s water bottle, prompting Sam to mention hygiene around animals. A

preschooler, oblivious to the adults, follows a chicken into their midst and then stoops to carefully pick it up following the method taught to farmyard visitors. In the spring Sam is responsible for the flock of pregnant ewes. “During a lamb birth,” he says, “you get thirty kids around watching, and it’s the most amazing thing.” On the other end of the cycle, Sam continues, three of his young summer apprentices had recently found a dead chicken while doing their chores. “I was worried about them,” he admits, “but they got it. A farm has both life and death.” Exposing the real work of farming and helping people to take that learning beyond the perimeters of the farm is critical. “The farm is not a petting zoo, not a museum,” emphasizes Megan Camp. “It’s not like agriculture in a pickle jar,” she continues, meaning that it’s not all bottled up in a jar where you can see but not touch. “That is why we try to connect schools with farms in their own communities so that they can experience agriculture as part of the fabric of their communities and not something to just visit.”

The farmer education workshop continues the following day in the Market Garden, a patchwork of small fields anchored by a quiet white farmhouse where visitors can see the remains of old brick foundations from the original glass greenhouses in which gardeners tended exotic palms and other delicate plants. Now the focus is on more climate-appropriate ingredients for the Inn and the Farm Cart, from early spring peas to sturdy kale and chard. There’s a definite chill in the air as the group, bundled in hats and sweaters, traipses around the gardens. Led by Shelburne Farms educator Erica Curry and assistant market gardener Tasha Brodeur, they are on a treasure hunt for the “fabulous five” of the growing cycle: sun, water, air, space, and soil. The farmers, of course, know about these elements, but they are here to learn how to share this knowledge with visitors at their own farms all over Vermont, as well as in Ontario, New York, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Delaware. The goal of the two-day course, Erica explains later, is to help farmers “demystify” the language of education and schools and translate what they do on their farms into simple, engaging activities.

Erica pauses to point out a lush green field of rye, and Tasha explains how the farm raised five pigs this year in the Market Garden, feeding them whey from the cheese operation and food scraps from the Inn, supplemented with a little grain. The pigs, in turn, deployed their superior rooting skills to clear and fertilize a promising piece of land that had been covered

with brush. “The cooks would bring the compost to the pigs,” Tasha says with a grin. “They were so into it and really got to know the meat they would be serving.” The pigs provided an education and connection not only for the cooks, Erica elaborates, but for visitors of all ages, illustrating the symbiotic relationships possible in an integrated, sustainable agricultural system. On the nuts-and-bolts side, she adds that it’s a good idea to post signs near pigs warning of their very sharp teeth. A few farmers nod knowingly.

The pigs had been sent to slaughter a few weeks previously, and some of that pork was destined for the final Inn dinner of the season. In a celebration that is becoming a tradition, this last meal is dubbed “The Whole Beast,” underlining the goal to use as many parts of the pig as possible. By late morning on the day of the dinner, the kitchen at the Inn is thrumming with lard-fueled anticipation as head chef Rick Gencarelli, executive sous-chef Aaron Josinsky, and their crew prepare for a capacity crowd of more than sixty. Rick readily admits that pig is a favorite. “It’s the most generous animal,” he says as he stands next to a fifty-pound piglet rubbed with salt, cinnamon, crushed red pepper, fennel, and coriander seed. “There isn’t any other animal we get so much out of.”

In the busy prep kitchen, two cooks are twisting fresh tortellini around a filling made from scraps of house-made mortadella and pancetta. Another has just finished picking the meat from two pig heads for a course of traditional Mexican *pozole*. The ears are sitting on the counter waiting to be deep-fried for a crispy pig salad, which will also include crunchy bites of nose, cheek, and jowl. Among all the porcine pieces, it’s almost a relief to see a stack of beautiful Market Garden carrots. “Don’t worry, they’re getting wrapped in bacon,” chuckles a cook.

Aaron is contemplating the possibilities for the mound of creamy white fat rendered from the pig heads. “It’ll probably go in the beans,” he says before running down into the stone cellar to show off his cured meats like guanciale made from pork jowl, pancetta, and long, slender dried soppressata sausages wrapped in paper. Upstairs he pulls out the fresh charcuterie: pale boudin blanc, loops of smoked garlic sausage, house-made hot dogs, liver terrine made with a generous ratio of fatback, and a rustic pâté wrapped in pancetta. But he is most excited about his first try at blood sausage, proudly holding up a plump, dark curl of boudin noir flavored with apple, onion, fatback, black pepper, nutmeg, and



One of Shelburne's happy new calves

clove. "It turned out delicious," he says happily, and "it really taught me something."

Apart from their devotion to all things pig, the chefs love this meal because of both the challenge and responsibility it represents. It reflects the approach that Rick, a veteran of the Boston and New York City restaurant scenes, took soon after he arrived to head up the Inn kitchen in 2005. "When I worked in New York," Rick explains, "I would sit down and think about all the things I like to eat, write up a menu, and get on the phone and source it. It was all essentially nameless and faceless. Here at the farm, you go to source it out and *then* write the menu. You know the farmers. You know how they raised their vegetables and their animals. You might even know the animals." That kind of intimate

knowledge of the raw ingredients cannot help but affect how you work with them, Rick says. "It changes how you cook. It makes you a better cook. Every day I am humbled by ingredients."

A few springs ago Rick pulled into the Farm Barn courtyard for a meeting just as Sam Smith emerged from the Children's Farmyard looking for a hand. Rick thought he was just going to help move some animals until Sam told him to suit up in overalls and boots. "At that point," he says, "I figured I was in for more than moving sheep." Rick ended up helping Sam deliver a pair of male lambs. He was at the head of the ewe keeping her still and calm, he notes, while "Sam was at the other end doing the hard part." When Rick tells this story, people often ask if he was uncomfortable when

those lambs eventually came to the Inn kitchen. “I felt such a connection to them,” he admits, “but not in the way that made me not want to use them. It made me appreciate them even more, deepened the connection. It made me respect the cycle even more.”

“When people come to Shelburne Farms, whether they came for a special dinner at the Inn or for a field trip,” Megan Camp reflects, “we’re always asking ourselves, how do they leave with a better understanding of their role in the world? Have we helped them make a

connection between agriculture and the environment?” About 140,000 people visit Shelburne Farms annually and each one has the potential to carry its message away with them. “It’s sort of this ripple thing,” Megan continues. “We don’t ever think that it’s Shelburne Farms that’s going to change the world. It’s through our members and visitors, the educators and the farmers we work with, our partnerships with other organizations. It’s all about the multiplier effect.” She pauses and smiles. “And we’re like the yeast.”

MELISSA PASANEN *writes about food for the Burlington Free Press, is a staff writer for Art of Eating, and is the coauthor of Cooking with Shelburne Farms: Food and Stories from Vermont.*

FISHERMAN ~ EDIBLE TORONTO (ONTARIO, CANADA)

From the Fresh Waters

A Glimpse of Life on the Bay

Akiwenzie’s Fish & More is our family business, which we started in 2002 out of necessity: to earn more from our commercial fishing company. We have a tradition of fishing in our community, and we are applying our grandfathers’ and grandmothers’ teachings of using only what we need. Our ancestors would find the best way to use the resources without taking more than they needed to survive.

My family is involved in all aspects of our company. I am the fisherman, and my wife and boys help me on the twenty-three-foot open steel boat when the weather permits. My wife smokes and pin-bones the fresh and smoked fish. Our boys, who are eleven, ten, and eight, help with most aspects of the business and watch my wife and me to learn and be our quality control. They sure do learn fast. The boys have helped us at the markets for the first four years—we’ve home-schooled them, and they’ve become our salesmen and barkers. We put our hearts into all we do, and we take care in all we do—as if we were feeding our family. Our fish is yesterday’s catch, and our smoked fish is cured with the care of our family values.

I have fished with a number of family members since I was ten years old and fell in love with the waters of Georgian Bay. I fish alone most of the time now, lifting the nets by hand as my family has done for as long as I remember. It is a great feeling being out on the bay and being able to help so many people with great fish. I fish in the same way as our elders have for years and with their long-silent voices still in my heart. Upon occasion I have the great opportunity to feed one of our cultural *dodems* (clans), the bald eagle.

The water is a precious workplace for me, as I have had many jobs in the past that were not as pristine. I was a high-pressure water blaster in Sarnia for a number of years, working in the “chemical valley” with a surreal environment of dangerous equipment and toxic materials. A few years later, I was in a different type of dangerous and toxic career in nuclear mechanical maintenance at Bruce Nuclear Power Development, but now I find my work environment to be a fragile and unpredictable partner; I now watch more carefully the work area I utilize, for it is our most precious resource.

I am on the water from early spring—about the first week in April—till late January, early February. For the greater part of the year I am pretty much alone on the water except for my fellow fishermen. It isn't till the warm weather sets in that I see the first of the sailboats start to silently sail by while I lift and set my nets. A little later, and the anglers and recreational boaters start to make me feel crowded on our waterway.

I have seen so many wonderful events out on the water it is hard to do justice to Mother Earth in so few words. It's so peaceful to be alone with only your thoughts and nature. I have seen water so still you couldn't tell where the water ends and the sky begins. Some days there are multiple rainbows, fog so thick you can taste it. The sky is a canvas, and the Creator toys with our hearts as He makes one beautiful creation after another. I see the seasons change day by day from the “capsule” of my boat, which insulates me like an

ultrahigh-definition television, with all my senses being subjected to almost sensory overload.

I have often hastened up to our house to drag my wife and kids down to witness some spectacular event of nature coming to life up close and personal. Nature in all her glory is wondrous to behold, but she also has an alter ego that can be as dangerous as it is beautiful. In winter I enjoy listening to the large snowflakes landing on the sides of my boat with a whisper. And to the large cumulonimbus clouds that bring the summer lightning shows in the distance—transfixing you as they approach and in awe as they envelop you, and then leaving you feeling insignificant and fragile, all the while exciting all the cells of your being. Making you feel so alive while being so close to demise.

If I had a dream job in mind for everyone to try at least once in their life, it would be my wish that you each could accompany me on my daily commute and toil a hard day's work in my paradise.

ANDREW AKIWENZIE resides on the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation Reserve on the beautiful Bruce Peninsula, near Wiarton, Ontario. He is a commercial fisherman on Georgian Bay, where he catches some of the best whitefish from Ontario's cold, deep waters. He is also continuing a family tradition by respectfully harvesting his daily catch and preserving his cultural traditions. His practices of good living and love for Mother Earth's bounty are setting examples for his three boys by showing them their cultural responsibilities as caretakers and children of the land.

Andrew Akiwenzie and his wife, Natasha, on his fishing boat at the Cape Croker First Nation Reserve

Photo by Lauren Carter



Running the Numbers at New Rivers

A Profile of Bruce Tillinghast

Cooking with fresh fruits and vegetables grown by local farmers all boils down to the math for the owner and head chef of New Rivers, Bruce Tillinghast. Take sixteen dairy farms, then add suburban sprawl, and subtract the sixteen dairy farms. This equation, this disappearance of the farms in Tillinghast's boyhood hometown of Lincoln, Rhode Island, has had a calculable impact on the venerable Providence chef. His efforts to undo the damage have long shaped the way Tillinghast shops and cooks, both for his restaurant and his home kitchen.

Tillinghast should be the food-shed ambassador for Rhode Island. He speaks with a devotion about local produce and seafood that would sweeten even the sourest cynic. Though humble about the effect his philosophy has had in influencing chefs across the state, Tillinghast will be the first one to tell you that the flavor of food harvested close to home just cannot be beat.

"Just try local, seasonal asparagus. You can get asparagus 365 days a year now, but there is just nothing like asparagus in season . . . nothing like it. The taste is sweet. It is truly wonderful. And though we could get raspberries in February from Guatemala, you really can't beat the berries in season from places like Little Compton," Tillinghast declares.

Aside from fruits and vegetables, Tillinghast is also bullish on shellfish harvested in Rhode Island waters. "Rhode Island has some of the best hard-shell clams around. There is just no comparison. The clams that have lately been flooding the market from South Carolina farms lack the freshness, as well as the flavor, of a locally harvested clam. You can even tell the difference in the color of the shell."

Tillinghast started New Rivers with his wife, Pat, in 1990. In that time he has developed relationships with area farmers that have turned into friendships and working collaborations. When Steve Ramos, of Steve's Organic Produce in Bristol, makes his delivery to the New Rivers kitchen, Tillinghast's grin runs from ear to ear as he pores over the contents of each container, exalting in the beauty and aroma of the fresh greens.

Mâche is one of Tillinghast's favorite greens and can be harder to find than most. Steve Ramos grows mâche, among many other herbs and greens, for New Rivers. Together he and Tillinghast worked on finding a variety of mâche with distinct flavor and, when picked at the proper maturity, is exactly what Tillinghast recalls from market trips in France. Mâche, a small-leaf green sold in little bundles, is a staple in the markets of France during spring and fall, when the temperatures are chilly. In early springtime Tillinghast counts on mâche, sorrel, breakfast radishes, rhubarb, and, of course, asparagus as soon as they become available locally.

In the kitchen it easy to see how Tillinghast, a Rhode Island School of Design-trained graphic designer, turned to food for artful expression. There is inherent creativity yet stylish simplicity in the dishes he develops for New Rivers—all of which illustrate a deeper understanding of the ways an immigrant population has shaped the food culture of Rhode Island.

With ease and comfort that reflect his gentle and affable manner, he settles in behind the stove, but not before he is totally ready to begin.

"In this business we have a term called *mise en place*, which is very important if you are cooking in the home or in the restaurant. It's a matter of having everything in place, all your ingredients prepped as far as you can in order to assemble a dish at the last minute," explains the chef. "In doing so, home cooks will have more time to spend with their guests. In the restaurant, everything is at hand when we need it, especially during the rush."

The littlenecks Tillinghast is preparing have just been delivered by quahogger Dan McGowan. McGowan has been quahogging for thirty years and is an old friend of the chef. The littlenecks were just raked from the bay and their dark, glistening black shells shine in the light over the stove. The shell color lightens with heat from the burner, yet the meat stays plump, as a result of the clams' freshness and the gentle precision with which they are cooked.



Tillinghast working the stove at New Rivers

“One of the important things I learned early on from Madeleine Kamman [whose cooking school Tillinghast attended before opening New Rivers] was learning to deal with fresh ingredients and matching food flavors of the same season and of the same geographic area.”

When Chef Tillinghast is too busy at New Rivers, he can count on his *chef de cuisine*, Beau Vestal, to procure the ingredients that his bustling Providence restaurant needs to feed an adoring public. Beau makes weekly rounds to gather produce from area farms and markets in Rhode Island or just over the border in Massachusetts to Four Town Farm. He is also an avid forager, and his finds often make their way onto the evening’s menu.

Tillinghast keeps in close contact with his friends at local farms to stay informed about what is available for menu planning. On the bottom of the weekly menu he includes what he calls the “sustainability statement,” giving customers the rundown on what local farms have

contributed to their meal. “A lot of people comment about it. Many of our customers choose to come here because they have read the list of farms on our Web site or have heard about the fact that we are trying to support sustainable agriculture.”

The menu changes about six times a year, but often, when new items come in from a farmer, those items will pop up on the menu that evening. Similarly, when seasons wane, Chef Tillinghast is ready to adapt. Most important, he remains committed to supporting the local farmers and is very encouraged by the support he receives from the community of customers who are aware of his efforts.

“It’s very upsetting to me to see how rapidly farmland has disappeared in the state of Rhode Island. Once a farm is lost, it is gone forever. Farming is not a renewable resource in Rhode Island. Cooking this way is important to me because I don’t think we can necessarily count on getting our food from far away forever. I would hate to see our farms disappear in the meanwhile.”

GENIE MCPHERSON TREVOR is a writer living in Providence, Rhode Island. She is also the editor of *Edible Rhody*.

Photo by Chip Riegel

Massachusetts Avenue Project

Charting a Course for Local Food in an Urban Environment

During Buffalo's era as an industrial powerhouse, the West Side of the city stood proud, flush with European immigrants, tidy homes, family-owned businesses, markets bursting with fresh food, and sidewalks that played host to hopscotch and marble games. Today, the once-thriving West Side—which runs between Buffalo's urban core and the Niagara River—can, like many residential areas in postindustrial cities, be likened to a gap-toothed smile. Vacant lots have replaced modest pre-World War II homes, empty storefronts line the nonresidential streets, and the sidewalks are more often covered with litter than the chalk-line remainders of childhood games. While the West Side is in the beginning stages of a quiet and hopeful resurgence, boasting pockets of bustling businesses and recently restored homes, much of it remains abandoned and disheveled.

When observed from above, one of the brightest specks in this part of the city covers approximately half an acre of residential land. On it stands raised beds rich with well-tended soil and late-summer produce. A straw-bale greenhouse provides the backdrop to the colorful garden, and the recent award of a 1,000-gallon rainwater harvesting system ensures plenty of hydration for this tender spot of land during the dry months. Though any neighborhood block club would be proud to claim this little patch of sustainably farmed urban agriculture as its own, it is instead both the inspiration and the method for the Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP).

Founded in 1992, MAP initially emerged from the fold of a strong neighborhood block club. By 1997, it had a permanent staff and was functioning as an outreach organization for neighborhood youth. After a time of sorting out both its mission and its structure, in 2000, it officially incorporated, having expanded its horizons even further than its founders could have imagined.

Today MAP encompasses a variety of programs, stemming from both its figurative roots in the neighborhood and its literal roots in the ground. Its overall mission is to “nurture the growth of a diverse and equitable community food system to promote local

economic opportunities, access to affordable and nutritious food, and social-change education.” But in practice its goals are accomplished through three distinct programs: Growing Green (a multifaceted youth-based program), Food Ventures (a microenterprise development program for adults), and the Mobile Market (a farm stand on wheels).

GROWING (UP) GREEN

At its most basic level, Growing Green is an urban agriculture youth development program, a model that's been found effective in cities across the country. MAP's eight-week summer program, subsidized by the city of Buffalo, employs a diverse group of thirty to thirty-five neighborhood kids who range in age from fourteen to eighteen. These students work the farm, learning about the process of growing and harvesting food using sustainable farming practices and techniques. Germinating seeds, composting, and vermiculture are just a small sample of the hands-on curriculum they experience.

“When our kids first come to us, they don't really know much about where their food comes from or how to grow things. They might not even be interested in any of that,” says Diane Picard, Growing Green's program director.

But participating in the process of tending the farm and reaping its crop provides MAP's youth with an opportunity to learn about responsibly raised food, healthy eating, and working hard as a member of a team.

“Eating is so personal. It's about your family, it's about your culture, it's about your daily routine—it's very personal. But it is also this amazing branch which provides kids the chance to start thinking about access and privilege, region and globalization, and all of those types of things,” says Erin Sharkey, MAP's creative director and outreach coordinator. “It's a privilege to work with these kids around food. I think it's a clear justice thing, it's clear that people deserve food, that it's about necessity, and that it's empowering to start talking about those things.”



In his capacity as Growing Green's education coordinator, Jesse Meeder is both firm and approachable, his ease with words and his serious tone encourage the kids to listen to him, but his beach-bum looks and casual manner make him seem less like an adult and more like one of the kids. Meeder works with the students year-round, developing programming that they as a group can then take on the road. By way of games, skits, and other hands-on activities, MAP's teens teach their peers and younger children about important but simple food-related issues like choosing a healthy snack, making applesauce, or understanding the importance of eating local. "I think that too many times a youth program is a gymnasium where unsupervised kids hang out. I think that what we really want to do is say, 'Hey kids, this is your life, this is your future, this is your city. We're not creating a program to pacify you, we're creating an opportunity for you to step up and grab this life.'"

When asked about what changes can be seen in the teens who work the program, there are endless stories of kids making better choices about their diet, of character development, of the lessons that the opportunity of having expanded experiences can teach almost any teenager about themselves and others. "But we're not the kind of organization that is looking for kids to have a lightning-bolt moment," Meeder says as he tips back in his chair, having almost as much difficulty sitting still as one of his kids might. "It's all about opening a discussion or a perspective that they can explore and develop their own opinions on. So we work on increasing their vocabulary on a subject, their knowledge on a subject, but we're not going to expect kids to drop soda or suddenly love gardening. It's all about that base of knowledge and appreciation for something different."

Growing Green's efforts to provide teens with paying jobs structured around an urban sustainable farm, to teach teens to make educated food choices and then in turn use that information in a community outreach platform, would be accomplishment enough, but these are not Growing Green's only tools for training, education, and development. Regular, well-attended cooperative community dinners help to make good use of excess produce and serve to teach the kids about planning and organizing a meal. An annual food conference for teens is also planned and run by the youth program and staff. With both of these projects kids learn how to use design programs to develop marketing materials and then put those materials to good use.

What is perhaps Growing Green's most publicly recognized project is its youth enterprise program, headed by Zoe Hollomon. This program has developed a line of value-added products that includes Amazing Chili Starter and Super Duper Salsa. These products—soon to be joined by a fruit-based salad dressing—can be found on the shelves of over a dozen specialty stores and supermarkets in the Buffalo area. The line, made from locally grown produce and packed at a copacker not far from the city, provides additional revenue with which to pay teens for their hard labor during the nonsubsidized school year. Additionally, it supplies kids with an opportunity to understand the basics of business.

"I treat them like owners and managers of their own company," says Hollomon, a woman with a bright personality and eyes to match. "The youth are involved in every aspect of the business. They go to the farm, meet the farmer, visit the packing facility, make cold calls to potential retailers, learn about inventory, and participate in product demonstrations. After the kids develop these skills—and you basically hand them the responsibility of handling this big thing, this business—they're nervous and hesitant, but after they have the opportunity to do all of these things, they realize that if they can do this, they can do important things."

FOOD (AD)VENTURES

With over ninety jobs created and over forty new businesses under its belt, Food Ventures is an exciting and successful part of the MAP family. This microenterprise offers comprehensive and individualized consulting and resources for adults interested in developing food-based small businesses.

Assistance with product development, understanding food safety and packaging requirements, developing marketing skills, and gaining industry insight are just a few examples of the many services offered to people enrolled in the Food Ventures program. Also important is the ability to "batch-up" new recipes, navigate the sometimes arduous process of adhering to USDA labeling standards, and sourcing the best ingredients at a good price.

This one-on-one counseling and tutelage works hand-in-hand with MAP's commercial community-use kitchen. Together the two have worked to provide the launching pad for some of Buffalo's most well-recognized artisan food lines, food vendors, custom caterers, and niche restaurants. Participants have access



Massachusetts Avenue Project's raised beds of onions and squash

to the fully licensed commercial-grade kitchen, cold and dry storage areas, and restaurant-quality tools like chafing dishes and hotel pans. Unlike any other business model in the Western New York region, Food Ventures nurtures aspiring entrepreneurs, helping them to make the connections required to develop a solid business model and a delicious marketplace-friendly product.

Trudy Stern, owner of Tru-Teas, is just one of the many success stories from Food Ventures. "MAP is part of a long tradition of local, community-minded, progressive foodies who have always been here in various incarnations. We know that beautiful, locally produced, good food is revolutionary," Stern says. "I found Food Ventures when I came back to Buffalo with an idea to make and sell Mad Yak Tibetan Hot Sauce. [They] introduced me to the network of small food processors in New York State and made a commercial kitchen available for my first food venture."

Donnie's Smokehouse, a destination restaurant on Buffalo's East Side that is respected for its standards and quality, is the current incarnation of what began as a Food Ventures project. When owners Racine and Ellis Leverette (husband and wife) found MAP, they felt as if they'd struck gold. "Food Ventures led me to the Small Business Development Center and helped me get my ideas about my business in order," Racine explains. "They were there when no one else was. The kitchen was outfitted with everything I needed to start my catering business. And now, here we are today. If we'd had to do this without them, it would've been a long and difficult road." Donnie's specializes in delectable BBQ and has received high awards in competitions across the country for its secret recipes. "MAP was a big help. They offered a wealth of information I wouldn't have had access to, but they were also an inspiration."

FOOD FOR GROWTH

In 2000, MAP teamed up with Samina Raja, an assistant professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Buffalo. Raja had been interested in community gardening in urban settings and began to think about how cities could be better planned in order to accommodate access to healthy foods in urban areas. MAP was trying to find funding, and Raja seemed like the light at the end of the tunnel. Diane Picard approached her.

“MAP needed statistics and facts to back rhetoric,” Raja tells *Edible Buffalo*.

So Raja set about her research, ultimately releasing a well-respected and often-cited report entitled “Food for Growth: A Community Food System Plan for Buffalo’s West Side.” This report made local headlines, opened eyes, and helped MAP to secure funding and bolster its mission. The report, in essence, asserted that Buffalo’s West Side is made up of veritable “food deserts” where there is no access to food at all or access is limited to small corner stores carrying items with long shelf lives—unhealthy foods laden with preservatives, additives, and trans fats.

There’s a chill in the air, and kids are running around the parking lot, giggling and squealing. Some have managed to cover almost all of their clothing in brilliant purple paint, the brightest hue in a West Side parking lot on a dreary fall afternoon. Just over a dozen teens are working in coordination with the Growing Green staff to ready their latest project, designed to lessen the plight uncovered by Raja’s study. Its body purple and its nose lime green, MAP’s new eggplant-inspired Mobile Market is scheduled to hit the road within just a few weeks.

The vintage Winnebago has been gutted, its 1970s-era benches and foldout table/bed replaced with modern wooden shelving and cubbies designed to showcase the lovingly raised produce from MAP’s urban farm. The interior, painted out with a soft spring green and a warm peach color, has room for a variety of products and even a cash register. The Mobile Market will travel the streets of its own neighborhood—as well as those of Buffalo’s East Side—selling fresh fruit and vegetables to people who lack the necessary transportation required to make a trip to a grocery store. The Growing Green youth and their mentors will staff the “produce department on wheels” in addition to using

the opportunity through conversation and skits to demonstrate the importance of eating healthy to Buffalo citizens young and old alike.

Other area farms that use sustainable practices will help to boost supply if demand reaches beyond the capacity of MAP’s own garden. This won’t be the first time that MAP has reached out into the community to make connections with rural farms. This practice of looking within as well as beyond the city’s borders has helped MAP become part of an important and fast-growing network of people and organizations passionate about building a sturdy local food system in Western New York; being an area with thousands of farms and a rich agricultural legacy, Western New York is ripe for change.

NEXT SEASON

Good-natured and articulate, Michael Tritto, MAP’s new executive director, is excited about the future and MAP’s ability to spread its mission to other urban areas with similar struggles. “We see our role as being rooted in this neighborhood, serving our residents here on the West Side. But we also hope to run our programs as models . . . as learning tools for other groups to come and observe and receive consultation.

“I’d like to see a nonprofit microprogram [that will] spread our expertise and help other organizations do what we’ve done. How we can leverage this program to have a more significant impact is an issue. But there’s also something precious about the organic, familial size of our organization . . . and the culture is something that has to be nurtured. We want to see more happen, but I think what we want to do is help others replicate our success.”

In a few short weeks the snow will come. Most likely it will be in fits and starts until after the new year, so with the exception of what Growing Green can bring to life in its organically constructed greenhouse, aspects of the program’s work will have to wait until Western New York’s growing season begins. Meanwhile, students will venture to conferences and meetings to practice their public speaking skills and teach others about what they’ve learned and what MAP is all about. Others will work on the launch of the new salad dressing, while some will stay focused on reaching other kids through Growing Green’s various education and outreach programs.

"I think the institution of public school does a lot to kids and to their psyches. They're one of many kids in a room, and the schools are focused on the kids passing tests and being quiet," says Holloman. "The kids don't get enough of the types of experiences that develop independent thought, of voicing and challenging the administration, and those are the skills that will make them leaders in the future. I think we help them with those opportunities by providing them with these skills, skills which also build their confidence."

"[Having those skills] builds community amongst other kids who are thinking about their world and about how they have an impact on it," replies Sharkey. "I think that it is powerful that they have each other. To be honest, the hardest part of our job is to stay out of the way. We give the kids the tools, and then we step back and get out of the way."

"If you're looking for heroes here," comments Meeder, "the only ones you'll find are the kids." He pauses. "The kids are the heroes here at MAP, no question."

CHRISTA GLENNIE SEYCHEW is a former food editor for a popular Buffalo magazine. Currently, she works as a freelance food writer and as cofounder of the nonprofit *Field & Fork Network*, an organization dedicated to connecting Western New York producers with consumers.

ORGANIZATION ~ EDIBLE NUTMEG (CONNECTICUT)

CitySeed

Satisfying a Community's Taste for Change

When you love food, your cravings can drive you pretty hard. Whether you've found yourself road-tripping across state lines to get to your favorite snack shack, spending a weekend stove-side to re-create your grandmother's secret recipe, or schlepping home your body weight in edible souvenirs, you know that a good meal is a powerful motivator. For Jennifer McTiernan H., Anne Gatling Haynes, Harvey Koizim, and Judy Sheffele it was the lure of a juicy, ripe, local tomato that led these four New Haven, Connecticut, neighbors to found CitySeed, a nonprofit organization whose innovative programs have made it a force for change and one of *Edible Nutmeg's* local heroes.

A COMMUNITY CRAVING

New Haven is a diverse city with a dinner menu to match. *Taquerías* and Turkish kebab houses, renowned burger joints and hot-dog stands, and—most famously—red-sauce Italian joints and road-trip-worthy pizza

parlors are just a few of the options available to the eager eater. For those wishing to whip up their own home cooking, however, fresh food was not nearly as prevalent. "You just couldn't find a fresh tomato," explains Jennifer, now CitySeed's executive director, "not to mention one that was grown in Connecticut."

In 2004, the four neighbors found a solution to their salad-bowl sorrow—they launched a farmers' market in their own section of town, Wooster Square. The community's response surpassed all expectations—even those of the participating farmers who, on the market's very first day, had to send runners back to the fields for a midday harvest to keep up with the demand of their customers. As farmer Peter Rothenberg of Northford Farm in Northford, Connecticut, describes the market, "It just caught on like wildfire. It gives people a sense of community that is so lacking these days. People are happy at the market—they're smiling—it's an event."

A sense of community is a strong bond that many cite when talking about their local market, and you can



Shoppers at the Wooster Square Market

feel it when you visit—among the eaters, the farmers, everyone. “Bringing my product to the market is more than selling. It’s an exchange,” says Nunzio Corsino of Four Mile River Farm in Old Lyme, Connecticut. “I look forward to seeing my market friends—both my customers and the vendors.” Ideas for what to grow and how to grow it flow freely between farmers and eaters alike. Growers share tips for maximizing New England’s abbreviated growing season. Eaters pepper them with questions about their methods and their forecast for the harvest. Peter explains, “For these farmers, eaters aren’t consumers, they are part of the farming process. Bringing food to the market is another part of the growing cycle of preparing the soil, putting seeds in the ground, and harvesting.”

In its second season, CitySeed launched three more markets in three very different New Haven communities: the Fair Haven section of the city (in collaboration with Junta, a Latino-based nonprofit, and GAVA, a local merchants association), Downtown (in collaboration with Town Green, a community-betterment organization), and Edgewood Park (in cooperation with Westville Village Renaissance Alliance). Each market

reflects the personality of the neighborhood. As Benjamin Gardner, CitySeed’s program coordinator, notes, “A lot of the people who come are fiercely loyal to their market. It gives them a sense of pride.” That’s because CitySeed’s programming springs directly from the needs and desires of the community. “It’s not like CitySeed sat there with a map and a handful of thumbtacks, plotting the next spot for a market. Each of these markets started because the community came to CitySeed and asked us to have one there.”

THE ECOSYSTEM OF FRESH FOOD

The markets, however, are just one facet of CitySeed’s work. Government policy, community outreach and education, food access and security, farm viability—these may not be the first thoughts that pop into mind when you take a big bite of summer’s first juicy, ripe, local tomato, but for CitySeed they are all pieces of the fresh-food puzzle. As Jennifer explains, “Food is everything. It touches everything—the environment, social justice, family connection, community involvement—it

puts all of these things together.” CitySeed has developed a wide range of programming and partnerships to address the whole ecosystem of community, grower, eater, and public policy that make a healthy food system possible.

Much of CitySeed’s energy is devoted to behind-the-scenes policy efforts. In partnership with like-minded organizations they are working to change the rules, such as what defines a farmers’ market and how much (or how little) is spent on ingredients for school lunches, that often keep segments of the population, such as seniors and kids, from having better access to fresh food.

CitySeed reaches out to the community with educational tools that appeal to everyone from dedicated locavores to fresh-food newbies. For three seasons their Farmers’ Market Recipe Cards, which feature recipes from some of the top chefs in the state, have given eaters all across Connecticut creative ideas for enjoying local ingredients. CitySeed’s preschool program, Growing Healthy Eaters and Readers, encourages good eating habits among children and their families through hands-on literacy-based activities and farmers’ market field trips. Bilingual materials—such as newsletters that provide market information and tips for working with available produce and a cookbook that features market-goers’ favorite recipes—reach into New Haven’s Latino community with helpful information and knowledge sharing.

CitySeed has developed innovative programming to clear some of the most challenging hurdles confronting nutritionally at-risk communities. One such program is the Community Sponsored Market, or CSM, which hand-delivers boxes of produce, called shares, fresh from their Fair Haven market each week. A number of the shares are sold at face value to area employees and residents whose schedules preclude them from shopping at the market themselves. The sales from these boxes help to subsidize the market. Bolstered by grants from area organizations, reduced-cost shares for Food Stamp and WIC recipients and community groups that represent those in need are also available. The CSM program made it possible for CitySeed to distribute over 1,100 subsidized shares to New Haven

residents in 2008, providing farm-fresh food to those who need it most. The guaranteed income from purchased shares also gives the farmers the working capital they need to be able to support markets such as Fair Haven, where underserved communities need and want better access to fresh food but do not have the economic power to fully support a market. As CSM farmer Peter Rothenberg says, “The CSM program is the quintessential win-win. It takes a lot of energy, but it works.”

Of course, you can’t have good food without environmentally and economically sustainable farms. CitySeed has organized a number of programs to connect the dots among growers, eaters, and chefs. Through the Buy CT Grown Steering Committee, CitySeed provides area growers with technical marketing assistance—helping them to get their farm message out. In 2008, the group launched www.buycctgrown.com, a searchable database that allows eaters to find local producers, products, and farm-related events in the state. Their Seed to Table program is a budding project that will help smooth the distribution channels between farmers and area chefs.

A BRIGHTER FOOD FUTURE

Too often the local foods movement is labeled as the elitist fancy of gourmands and foodies. A stroll through a CitySeed market proves that most eaters, however, aren’t looking for fancy, just fresh. A mother getting fresh carrots for her kid’s lunch, a young couple looking for apples for their first pie, a senior gathering some root vegetables for a soup—these are the kind of eaters you can find on any given day at a CitySeed Market and farmers’ markets all across the country. To a growing number of eaters fresh, local food isn’t a luxury—it’s dinner.

Jennifer sums up CitySeed’s objectives simply. She hopes that in the future “fresh, nutritious food will be available to everyone, and that farmers will be able to support themselves by providing it.” These goals, shared by a growing number of eaters and organizations across the country, sound less like a manifesto for indulgence and more like plain common sense. A fresh tomato on every plate. It’s a craving worth satisfying.

SHERRI BROOKS VINTON is a writer and speaker who enjoys teaching eaters how to support local, sustainable agriculture with their food choices. Her monthly newsletter, *Sustainable Solutions*, can be found at www.sherribrooksvinton.com.

People, places, things

ALLEGHENY (PENNSYLVANIA)

The Allegheny Mountain Region in western Pennsylvania is rich and alive. Local chefs and farmers are always proclaiming, “Everything grows here!” The residents are lucky to have such a large community—which encompasses rolling fields and farmland or urban metropolitan gardens—dedicated to sustainability.

Maggie's Mercantile A vegan, vegetarian, and raw-foods restaurant utilizing ingredients from Maggie Raphael's organic farm and greenhouse.

Penn's Corner Farm Alliance This is the largest CSA in the region, connecting more than sixteen local growers with home tables and local restaurants.

East End Food Co-Op Pittsburgh's only customer-owned natural foods store.

Milestone Specialty Produce A local greenhouse that provides lettuce and salad mixes to more than ninety-five restaurants and employs adults with psychological and behavioral health problems.

Chef Bill Fuller Corporate chef for the big Burrito restaurant group, which has six unique restaurant concepts in the region, all incorporating local foods on their menus.

www.ediblecommunities.com/allegHENY/peopleplacesthings

BOSTON

One of the most exciting aspects of Boston's current food culture derives from very traditional roots: farms surrounding the city providing food to the local communities and the nearby cities. To this day, you can drive within ten miles of downtown and be among strong, thriving family farms. These farms remain integrated in their own communities as well as in Boston proper through farm stands, farmers' markets, CSAs, and directly into the kitchens of the city's most-popular restaurants.

Cider Hill Farm, Amesbury A farm that is aggressively working to incorporate new methods of energy use on their farm and also working to change legislation to make it more attainable for other farms.

Kelley Erwin Kelley is the driving force in the Farm to School program. She works as a liaison between farms and school systems, bringing locally grown food into Massachusetts's public schools.

Taza Chocolates One of the few chocolatiers in the United States that produces chocolate by beginning with grinding cocoa beans sourced from small cooperatives in the Dominican Republic.

Fried Clams, Woodman's of Essex Fried clams were first made on July 3, 1916, in Essex by “Chubby” Woodman as a way to increase the sale of his locally harvested clams.

Peter Davis, Chef, Henrietta's Table, Cambridge Peter was a pioneer in sourcing directly from local farms and food artisans.

www.ediblecommunities.com/boston/peopleplacesthings

BROOKLYN

While Brooklyn is perhaps best known as being a community of nineteenth-century émigrés and twentieth-century blue-collar disco dancers, it has undergone a remarkable renaissance in the last decade. Legendary birthplace of the egg cream and the hot dog, Brooklyn's kitchens are now more likely to offer slow-cooked grass-fed lamb or community garden-grown heirloom melons. As young hipsters have moved in next door to old-timers, this urban oasis in the shadow of Manhattan is a delicious destination in its own right.

Junior's Cheesecake This is one creamy concoction from the borough's coolest diner, a landmark that welcomes visitors with a neon glow from its perch at the base of the Manhattan Bridge.

Tom Mylan Tom was the founding meat man behind the proteins at Marlow & Sons and Diner, later wielding his cleavers at Marlow & Daughters, the borough's newest all-sustainable butcher shop. (He has since decamped to launch his own venture.)

Sixpoint Brownstone Beer Made right in Brooklyn, this American brown ale is named after one of the borough's most beautiful features. (It's awfully tasty, too.)

Red Hook Ball Fields Every weekend all summer long, Latin American vendors set up stands to sell tacos, *huaraches*, *agua frescas*, *pupusas*, and *arepas* while amateur soccer leagues compete in the fields overlooking the Red Hook waterfront.

East New York Farms More than just trees grow in Brooklyn: This lower-income neighborhood boasts a community garden so well managed that they sell at a farmers' market just outside the neatly kempt rows.

www.ediblecommunities.com/brooklyn/peopleplacesthings

BUFFALO

The food culture of Buffalo and its surrounding region is rooted in a long agricultural history and robust ethnic foodways that provide a diverse culinary landscape. Despite the short growing season, the proximity to Lake Erie and Lake Ontario and the nutrient-rich soils allow farmers to grow a wide variety of crops from apples, pears, and corn to the unexpected peaches, kiwi, and artichokes.

Lake Erie Concord Grape Belt New York's first Agricultural Heritage Region is the oldest and largest grape-growing region in the country. Stretching approximately sixty miles along the shores of Lake Erie, it encompasses more than 30,000 acres of vineyards.

Ethnic-Influenced Foods The region has it all, including Polish (*pierogi*, *golabki*, *chrusciki*, *platskis*, *kielbasa*), German (*Wiener schnitzel*, *bratwurst*, *sauerkraut*, *sauerbraten*, *Rouladen*, *roast beef on kimmelweck*, *liverwurst*, *beer*), and Italian (*cannoli*, *cassata cake*, *Italian sausage*, *DiCamillo Bakery*).

Maple Syrup Wyoming County is the second-largest maple syrup producer in New York State.

Confections Local goodies include Fowler's Fine Chocolate, sponge candy, and the Charlie Chaplin.

Samina Raja Samina, assistant professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Buffalo, penned the pivotal "Food for Growth" study, which shined a spotlight on food insecurity issues in the city of Buffalo and which was the driving force for food access to be an integral part of urban planning.

www.ediblecommunities.com/buffalo/peopleplacesthings

CAPE COD

Just seventy-five miles from Boston, Cape Cod is a popular vacation destination, offering over 550 miles of spectacular coastline, historic sea captains' homes, and quaint towns. The Cape's rich maritime history and fishing heritage can be traced from the clambakes of early Native Americans to the fish and chips served up at clam shacks across the Cape today. In addition to clams, oysters, lobster, and cod, the Cape is renowned for its cranberry bogs, with about 1,000 acres under cultivation.

Seafood The Cape is justifiably famous for its fin and shellfish, whether it's cod, haddock, halibut, tuna, flounder, striped bass, and pollock, or lobster, clams, and oysters.

Shellfish Promotion and Tasting SPAT is a nonprofit organization with the goal of boosting Wellfleet's shellfishing tradition. They host an annual OysterFest to fund its scholarship program for people pursuing a career in shellfishing.

Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association The association focuses on building sustainable fisheries for the future and representing the traditional communities that rely on this resource.

Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Association This is one of the oldest farmer organizations in the country, having been established in 1888. Its mission is to support and promote the approximately 330 cranberry growers of Massachusetts.

Cape Land and Sea Harvest CLASH is a three-day celebration of the rich fishing heritage and abundant local foods of Cape Cod.

www.ediblecommunities.com/capecod/peopleplacesthings

EAST END (NEW YORK)

Buffered by the sea, this Long Island farming, fishing, and resort community seventy miles east of New York City enjoys one of the longest growing seasons on the East Coast, and harvests tomatoes and sweet corn well into fall. While some of its soils have been farmed continuously for four centuries, the East End's culinary renaissance includes a burgeoning wine country, edible schoolyards in most districts, and a farm-to-table cuisine encouraged by discriminating locals and cosmopolitan visitors.

Bonac Clam Pie This signature dish is an amalgam of culinary influences from Native Americans and the first British settlers, called Bonackers. The pie contains clams, onions, potatoes, and a long list of other possible ingredients.

Peconic Bay Scallops Sweet, smaller, and more tender than sea scallops, bay scallops are making a comeback since their die-off in the 1980s, which was due to overharvesting.

Peconic Land Trust One of the oldest land trusts in the country, this group has built on Suffolk County's decades-old agricultural reserve laws, to preserve about one-third of the East End's remaining farmland.

Long Island Wine Country The North and South forks are now home to nearly fifty wineries, offering a trail of tasting rooms and winery-hosted food tastings.

Mecox Bay Dairy and Catapano Goat Farm These two East End award-winning farmstead cheese producers (one is on the South Fork and the other is on the North Fork) sell their products at local restaurants, farmers' markets, and gourmet stores.

www.ediblecommunities.com/eastend/peopleplacethings

FINGER LAKES (NEW YORK)

With two million acres of farmland, over one hundred vineyards, an increasing number of farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture programs, and incredible farmer-to-chef collaborations, the Finger Lakes is one of the most exciting culinary hot spots in the country. From roadside organic cider mills to family-run goat farms; from fair trade regional coffee roasters to "u-pick" blueberry spots, there is an abundance of year-round activity in the local foods movement in Central New York.

Elizabeth Henderson Elizabeth is a pioneer in the CSA movement. Her book, *Sharing the Harvest*, coauthored with Robyn Van En, is the go-to guide for starting and running a successful CSA program.

Hermann J. Wiemer Hermann is one of the most successful figures in the Finger Lakes wine industry and is largely responsible for bringing global attention to the area's wines by insisting on quality and traditional wine-making techniques.

The Ithaca Farmers Market One of the top five farmers' markets in the country. Open for business since 1973, this not-for-profit venture has been a fantastic model for others in the region and has given farmers a reliable and successful location to sell their produce.

Lively Run Goat Cheese The Messmer family consistently creates some of the best chèvre on the East Coast, which is widely distributed throughout the region and in New York City.

Farm Winery Act of 1976 This piece of legislation made it possible for farmers in the area to not only grow grapes for wine making but also to sell wine on their premises.

www.ediblecommunities.com/fingerlakes/peopleplacethings

GREEN MOUNTAINS (VERMONT)

Here's a statistic that underscores the value Vermonters place on knowing where their food is from—Vermont has the nation's highest per capita direct sales of food products from farmers to consumers, at 5.5 times the national average! With a population just north of 650,000, Vermont is also home to more artisan bakers, cheese makers, and farmers per capita than many other locales with larger populations.

Pete's Greens Owner Pete Johnson is an innovative and entrepreneurial farmer with a CSA that delivers to hundreds of members throughout the state.

Mad River Valley Localvores Volunteer-led, -conceived, and -driven by Valley resident Robin McDermott, this is an exceptional initiative that has raised funds and consciousness.

Kildeer Farm This is a dream farm stand that looks as delicious as everything tastes, operated by innovators and leaders in the organic-growing arena for many decades.

Maple Wind Farm The farm provides low-stress and grass-fed rotational grazing of beef, lamb, pork, and poultry, humanely raised and processed. You can taste the difference.

Red Hen Bakery Owner Randy George uses locally sourced flours and grains in many of his artisan breads, which are baked and delivered throughout the state each day.

www.ediblecommunities.com/greenmountains/peopleplacethings

HUDSON VALLEY (NEW YORK)

The Hudson Valley—the approximately 125 miles of majestic lands between Albany and Manhattan—is home to some of the country’s most enduring food traditions. Once known as the nation’s “bread basket,” it reigns again as a major agricultural producer, with dairy and milk production its largest sector. A back-to-the-land movement throughout the valley and Catskill region is attracting new farmers and a renewed commitment to local, sustainable foods.

Ken Greene Ken is cofounder and owner of Hudson Valley Seed Library in Accord, New York, and is devoted to developing “heirloom seeds with local roots.”

Glynwood, Cold Spring A nonprofit group that helps communities preserve farming through outreach, education, and best-practice development.

Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture An agricultural learning and development center that also exquisitely links farm to plate in its on-site restaurant, Blue Hill, co-owned by the renowned chef Dan Barber.

Fleisher’s Meat Located in Kingston, New York, this is one of the only butcher shops in the nation to sell solely pasture-raised and organic meat. Founded in 2004, this shop is renewing interest in the raising and consumption of quality meat.

Dairy Farms From Ronnybrook in Ancramdale to Hawthorne Valley in Ghent and throughout the region, there is a new commitment to the production of quality milk and dairy products.

www.ediblecommunities.com/hudsonvalley/peopleplacethings

JERSEY (NEW JERSEY)

If you’ve ever tasted a Jersey fresh tomato or enjoyed a Delaware Bay oyster (also known as a “Cape May Salt”), you have

a sense of the bounty of the Garden State. From preserving open lands to feeding its inner-city children, New Jersey is a microcosm of the issues and opportunities faced nationwide in terms of maintaining access to fresh foods. Today’s interest in local foods has resulted in an appreciation of the farmers, fishermen, and producers who sustain the country’s most densely populated state.

Cape May Salt/Delaware Bay Oysters Thanks to a half century of dedicated efforts by scientists and activists, this salt-water delicacy has survived the ravages of parasite and pollution and thrives once again.

Rutgers University Agricultural Experiment Station A leader in food and agriculture through its new Food Innovation Center, Rutgers’s experiment station oversees asparagus breeding efforts, promoting 4-H or offering Master Gardener classes.

Ramapo Tomato Considered the true Jersey tomato. As higher-yield varieties became popular in the 1960s, the seeds for the Ramapo all but disappeared. Thanks to Rutgers University, these tomatoes are available again.

Honey Brook Organic Farm Honey Brook, one of the oldest operating organic farms in New Jersey, has the largest CSA program in the nation, with over 2,300 memberships.

Valley Shepherd Creamery New Jersey’s only commercial sheep dairy. In less than five years, founder Eran Wajswol has single-handedly revived the art of cheese making in the Garden State.

www.ediblecommunities.com/jersey/peopleplacethings

MANHATTAN

With a reputation as big as the Empire State Building, “Gotham” has long been at the forefront of America’s culinary vanguard. From the iconic hot dog and bagel to kebabs and *bi bim bap*, New York City is a melting pot, a wonderland of so-called ethnic eats. It’s famously home to the finest of fine dining, too. And it’s a city in love with food from the nearby countryside, boasting vibrant community gardens and the largest network of farmers’ markets in America.

The “Slice” The Big Apple owns the crispy-crust wedges of pizza. It’s an egalitarian creation, found on every corner. Wall Street bankers, NYU kids, and cabbies all consider it the ultimate easy meal.

Union Square Greenmarket Launched in 1976, the city's biggest farmers' market has grown from a handful of stalls to selling everything from sheep's milk ricotta to fiddlehead ferns, and it is all grown, raised, caught, and baked right in New York City's backyard.

Chinatown Pot Stickers These fatty and fabulous panfried pork dumplings are served up for about a buck and half—and worth the trek downtown.

Danny Meyer The restaurateur behind the Union Square Hospitality Group, Danny is responsible for the city's heaviest dining hitters: Union Square Café, Gramercy Tavern, The Shake Shack, 11 Madison Park, and, last but not least, the Big Apple BBQ Block Party.

The '21' Club Here you can still order steak Diane and a Manhattan—made with rye, of course—and transport yourself to an era when the men always wore neckties, the ladies wore gloves, and the band played all night.

www.ediblecommunities.com/manhattan/peopleplacesthings

NUTMEG (CONNECTICUT)

Connecticut has been losing 8,000 acres of farmland a year, one of the highest rates of farmland loss in America. Fortunately, many small family farms have survived and their number is increasing, as young farmers see opportunities to follow their dream while meeting the ever-growing demand for fresh, local foods. Once rooted in agriculture, Connecticut is primed to extend those roots a little deeper.

Connecticut River Shad Native to the Connecticut River, these shad are the foundation of one of the oldest commercial fisheries in America.

Cato Corner Cheese The mother-and-son team of Elizabeth MacAlister and Mark Gilman hand-make internationally recognized farmstead cheeses with raw milk from the cows on their Colchester farm.

Plow to Plate An initiative of New Milford Hospital, this community coalition made locally grown food standard hospital fare while promoting healthy eating.

Holcomb Farm This nonprofit project of the Hartford Food System provides high-quality free, fresh food to 1,500 local families supported by the project's 500-member CSA.

The Farmer's Cow Seven Connecticut families formed The Farmer's Cow to secure a future for their families, their dairy businesses, and their land.

www.ediblecommunities.com/nutmeg/peopleplacesthings

PHILLY (PHILADELPHIA)

One wonders if William Penn, the English Quaker, had food in mind when he first referred to Philadelphia as “The City of Brotherly Love.” Culinary enclaves, such as the 9th Street Italian Market and Chinatown, thrive alongside countless ethnically inspired BYOBs scattered throughout the city, offering a United Nations of flavor. Today, Philly's food scene is enhanced by the dozens of farmers' markets that have sprung up in the city and surrounding region.

Judy Wicks Founder and proprietor of White Dog Cafe, Wicks—a leader in the local living economies movement—is cofounder of the nationwide Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), and founder of the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia (SBN).

Weavers Way Food Cooperative Farm A grocery store and community outreach program, this urban farm grows and sells over \$80,000 worth of produce a year on 1.5 acres.

Common Market Philadelphia A wholesale distributor that is creating a sustainable link between local farms and the urban marketplace.

The Amish While the country moved to an industrialized food culture in the twentieth century, these “plain people” focused on farming as a way of life. Their religiously inspired commitment to a rural environment produces high-quality food infused into the local foods movement.

Philly Cheese Steak The ubiquitous cheese steak may not be fresh or healthy, but it reminds us of the role that personality and tradition play in maintaining a local food culture.

www.ediblecommunities.com/philly/peopleplacesthings

PIONEER VALLEY (MASSACHUSETTS)

Pioneer Valley agriculture combines the pastoral traditions of New England and the progressive ideals of the notorious “Massachusetts liberal.” From the winter harvest of maple syrup, all the way until autumn's last pumpkin is plucked from the vine,

Pioneer Valley farms offer CSA shares, stock community food co-ops, and sell bushels of berries and ears of corn from roadside stands along country lanes. Long home to poets, artists, musicians, and academics, the “Happy Valley” is a bastion of forward thinkers and free spirits, and through the cultivation and preparation of local foods, its farmers bring sustainability, accessibility, and community to those who live here.

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture The CISA is instrumental in not only promoting but building the infrastructure that has made local foods and the Eat Local ethos a given in the Pioneer Valley.

The Farmstead at Mine Brook Producers of delicious award-winning Goat Rising chèvre and Jersey Maid cheeses, created at a small farm in the hills of Charlemont. Their cheeses are sold and used extensively throughout the Pioneer Valley.

Food Bank Farm/The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts Half of the farm’s output provides over six million pounds of food to hungry people in Western Massachusetts through Food Bank’s 400 member agencies, with the other half going to their member CSAs.

Nuestras Raíces A social justice organization committed to empowering the low-income urban community of Holyoke through the cultivation and production of local foods, at both inner-city community gardens and recently purchased farmland.

Greenfield Free Harvest Supper An annual community meal created with ingredients donated by Greenfield-area farmers and served to over 1,000 people on the Greenfield Town Common.

www.ediblecommunities.com/pioneervalley/peopleplacesthings

QUEENS

The borough of Queens is the second largest in population in New York City, and the tenth most populous county in the United States. It is a patchwork quilt of small neighborhoods, each one presenting an education in traditional foodways. The taverns of Astoria excel in authentic Mediterranean cuisine while the food stalls of Flushing’s Chinatown dazzle the taste buds with exotic Asian delicacies. You’ll find real Irish bacon, bangers, and farls in Woodside, and you’ll swoon at the scents and sights of Jackson Heights’s curry houses. Surprisingly, Queens is also home to the only working historical farm in New York City and the longest continuously farmed site in New York State.

Queens County Farm Museum Dating back to 1697, this working farm is the longest, most continuously farmed site in New York State. Recently the farm instituted a sustainable four-season growing program, providing fresh produce to city residents on a year-round basis.

Flushing’s Chinatown More than 390,000 Asian-Americans call Flushing home, and Chinatown’s legendary food stalls provide ample edible reminders of their ancestral homes.

The Lemon Ice King of Corona The Benfaremo family has been making their signature fruit-laden Italian ices for more than sixty years. This Queens institution can’t be missed.

Astoria Cemented in popular culture as the area where Archie Bunker resided, Astoria is home to one of the largest Greek populations outside of Greece and is, quite possibly, the culinary capital of Queens, with delicious souvlaki, fresh grilled fish, roasted potatoes, and more.

Street Food Throughout Queens, you’re likely to run into a mobile food truck such as the famous El Rey del Taco Truck or the myriad halal street meat rovers selling grilled-to-order kebabs and more. Have no fear: The food is incredibly fresh, authentic, and satisfying.

www.ediblecommunities.com/queens/peopleplacesthings

RHODY (RHODE ISLAND)

Rhode Island, affectionately known as Lil’ Rhody, is home to a rich and varied food shed with its 850 working farms and over 450 miles of New England shoreline. In a state where everyone lives within fifteen minutes of a local farm or farm stand, Rhody’s small size is its strength. Between 2002 and 2007, Rhode Island saw a 42 percent increase in the number of working farms. From the quintessential quahog to johnnycake lore, Rhody’s dynamic local food scene champions a unique culinary heritage.

Carpenter’s Grist Mill The state’s only active water-powered grist mill, built in 1703, was restored by Bob and Diane Smith. Using whitecap flint corn from Stuart Sherman’s nearby farm, the mill grinds authentic cornmeal for the signature johnnycake.

Farm Fresh Rhode Island A nonprofit organization working to connect farmers with eaters through farmers’ markets, restaurants, school delivery programs, and online.

Casey Farm Owned by Historic New England, this historic eighteenth-century farm is managed by farmer Patrick McNiff, who raises a wide variety of organic produce, chickens, pork, beef, and lamb.

Quahogs Rhode Islanders can't get enough of these hard-shell bivalves, whether simmered in chowders, chopped in "stuffies," fried in fritters, served over pasta, on the half shell, or even personified in cartoons.

Johanne Killeen and George Germon Since 1980, the owners of Providence's Al Forno restaurant have seen foodies flocking from across the globe in search of their renowned grilled pizzas, baked pastas, and desserts made from locally sourced ingredients.

www.ediblecommunities.com/rhody/peopleplacethings

SOUTH SHORE (MASSACHUSETTS)

The South Shore is proud of its rich and diverse agricultural and aquacultural heritage. Small dairy farms, world-class vineyards, and historic orchards dot this community, which is sandwiched between Boston, Providence, and Cape Cod. The finest oysters in the world are harvested from Duxbury Bay, while New Bedford holds the honor of being the nation's top-grossing fishing port. Although rapid growth and suburbanization increasingly challenge the South Shore, many active local organizations are committed to protecting its unique community.

Plimoth Plantation A bicultural museum, which offers an opportunity for personal encounters with history and teaches the traditional ways of the Wampanoag People and the colonial English settlers of the 1600s.

Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership SEMAP is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help agricultural enterprises in southeastern Massachusetts achieve economic success.

Island Creek Oysters, Duxbury A much-beloved co-op growing the world's finest oysters and scallops. Founded in 1992, they sell 100,000 oysters a week.

Cranberries There are 458 growers and more than 12,000 acres of cranberry bogs in the state; approximately 85 percent are in

southeastern Massachusetts. In the 1940s, the town of Carver produced more cranberries than any town in the world.

Macomber Turnip This variety originated in Westport and is highly coveted, as the seeds are not readily available through seed companies; you have to know someone who makes his or her own seed.

www.ediblecommunities.com/southshore/peopleplacethings

TORONTO

Toronto is surrounded by the Golden Horseshoe, so named because it wraps around (in a horseshoe shape) the western end of Lake Ontario. This region, which encompasses the Niagara Escarpment (a UNESCO world biosphere reserve), Ontario's Greenbelt (the world's largest designated greenbelt), large urban areas, and rich, fertile land and lakes, is made truly exceptional by the devoted individuals and organizations who dedicate themselves to ensuring its healthy, safe, and sustainable future.

David Cohlmeier, Cookstown Greens In 1988, David began supplying restaurants and hotels with specialty organic produce, much of it unusual heirloom varieties, from his farm one hour north of Toronto.

Michael Stadtländer and Jamie Kennedy Two local chefs and restaurateurs who met while working in Switzerland, they were at the forefront in bringing the field-to-fork movement to Ontarians through Knives and Forks, an organization they founded in 1989.

City of Toronto Kudos to the city and its councilors for being world leaders in recycling programs, local food procurement policies, and other initiatives that have, and will continue to have, a profound impact on the citizens' well-being.

Michael Schmidt Michael, a dairy farmer, has been waging a multiyear battle with Ontario authorities to enable Ontarians to purchase raw milk from farmers. For him, it's all about the right to choose.

The Stop and FoodShare Two organizations that go well beyond distributing food to the needy by striving to challenge the larger social and political systems that allow hunger to exist.

www.ediblecommunities.com/toronto/peopleplacethings

VINEYARD (MARTHA'S VINEYARD)

A 45-minute ferry ride from Woods Hole and you're on the island of Martha's Vineyard—100 square miles, six towns, surf-breaking beaches, and thriving shellfish ponds. The island is home to an estimated 15,000 year-round residents. A long and thriving agricultural and seafaring history, living local on the island today means fresh produce, seafood, and local meats that are distinctive to Island fare.

The Martha's Vineyard's Shellfish Group The group, a non-profit for over thirty years, has a community-based resource management program that seeks to preserve and expand the Island's traditional shellfisheries.

Rick Karney As the founding president of Slow Food Martha's Vineyard, Rick made great strides toward improving the industry's involvement with RAFT (Renewing America's Food Traditions) and thus indirectly effected an increase in the area's bay scallop population.

Allen Healy Allen started a legal raw milk dairy in Chilmark.

Flavio and Marcia Souza As the chief operators of Island Grown Initiative's Mobile Poultry Processing Trailer, they provide safe, clean, humane, on-the-farm slaughter and processing of poultry for Island farmers.

Gina DeBettencourt Involved with food service at Edgartown School, Gina works proactively to get local foods into school lunch menus and to create relationships with farmers.

www.ediblecommunities.com/vineyard/peopleplacethings

WHITE MOUNTAINS (NEW HAMPSHIRE)

New Hampshire boasts an astonishing bounty of award-winning wineries and cheese artisans, maple syrup from its woodlots, and fields blazing with sun-warmed berries—all of which complement its breathtaking natural resources. The region's world-class chefs love the pace of life here and vie for what local farmers produce. The seacoast may be small, but the fishermen's cooperative sustainably harvests the most succulent lobster and shrimp to celebrate every season.

Boggy Meadow Cheese A dairy farm on the banks of the Connecticut River that makes farmstead cheese from old alpine recipes using natural culture and vegetarian rennet.

Candia Vineyards Wine maker Bob Dabrowski's boutique winery offers wines from the state's first Frontenac, LaCrosse, Noiret, and Diamond grape varietals, which have been hand-picked to thrive in the robust New Hampshire climate.

The Good Loaf Lynda Shortt, the bread lady, had been baking artisan breads out of her garage before opening a retail shop in Milford, on Route 13. Her breads are simple yet sophisticated.

Polly's Pancake Parlor Polly's is housed in an original 1830s carriage shed, where maple sugar boils while you look over your menu. It also has amazing mountain views.

Sustainable Farm Products at Nelson Farms Sarah and Shawn Nelson are two young farmers who began raising certified organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs with literally their hearts and souls. Sustainable Farm Products is unique in that it has extended the growing season by heating greenhouses with recycled vegetable oil.

www.ediblecommunities.com/whitemountains/peopleplacethings