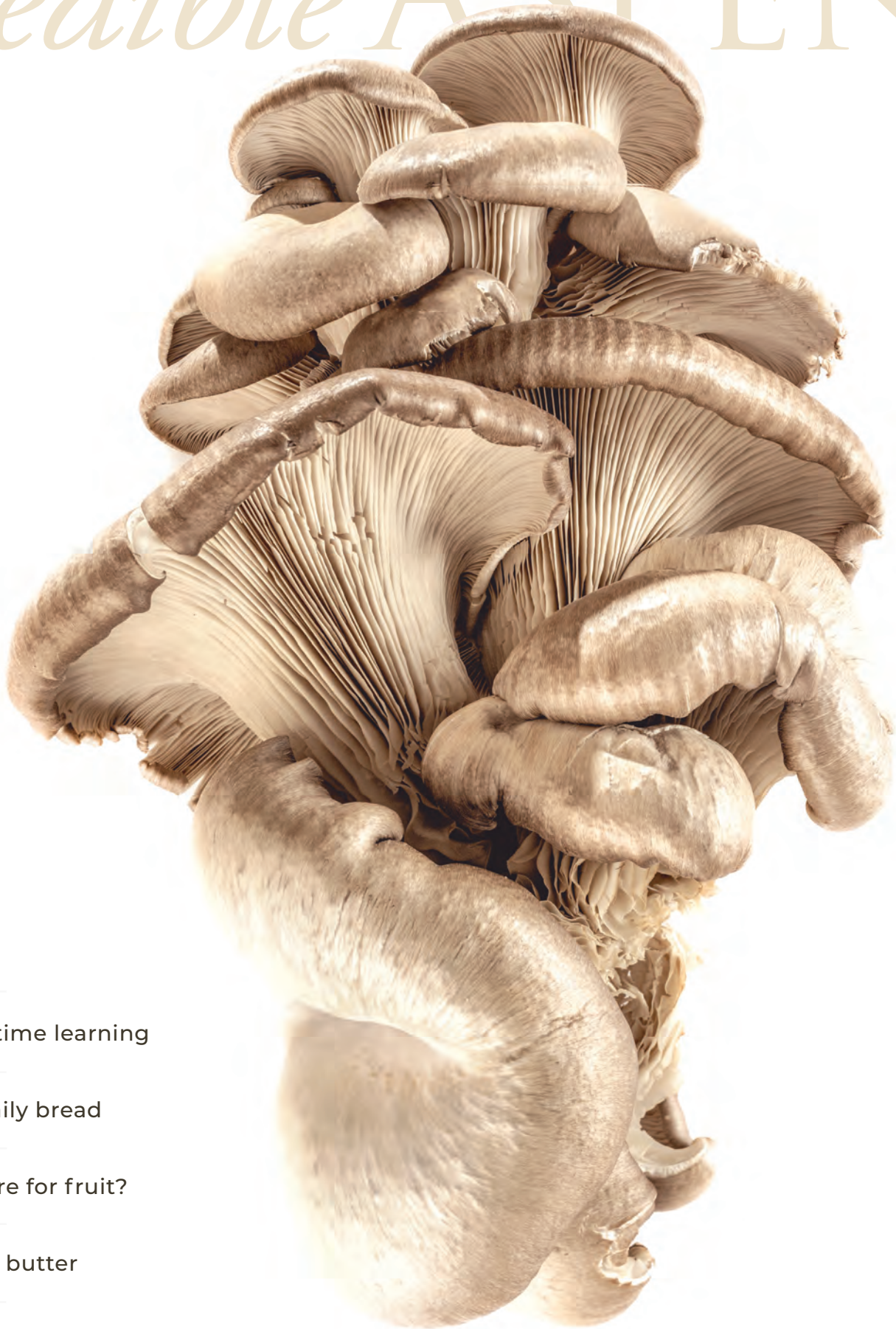


edible ASPEN



lunchtime learning

our daily bread

a future for fruit?

better butter



◀◀ At Shining Mountains Farm in Old Snowmass, Cooper Means and Kyle Jensen mimic conditions found in the wild to produce a cache of mushrooms. They inoculate a human-sized pillow of organic matter, called substrate, with a living network of fungal hyphae, or spawn. In a mushroom farm, substrate is the equivalent of soil in a garden and spawn can be compared to seeds. The inoculated substrate is then placed in trash bins in a climate-regulated room to fruit into fleshy, gilly, delicious oyster mushrooms.



On the Cover

A cluster of oyster mushrooms grown at Shining Mountains Farm. Mushrooms' intricate and extraordinary forms reflect the diversity of life on Earth, encouraging us to consider just how much we can see when we really take the time to look.

Photo by Dan Bayer

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With fresh, local, and sometimes homegrown food, Roaring Fork Valley schools are making student meals healthier—and teaching lifelong habits.

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BAKED AT ALTITUDE

Two innovative bakeries in two western Colorado river valleys are redefining what it means to be the local baker. Hint: It's not just about baking the daily bread anymore.



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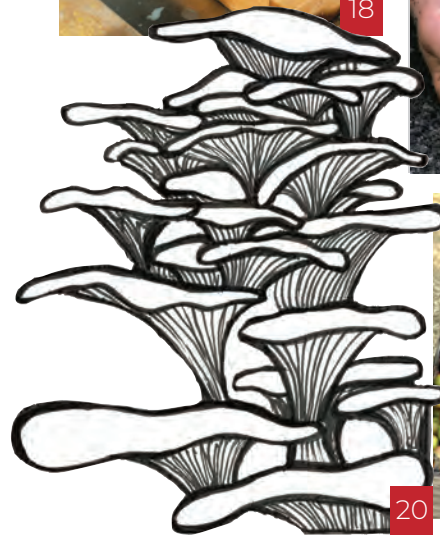
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A cherished ski day tradition, après-ski got dialed up in a whole new way during COVID, and continues to feed families' souls.



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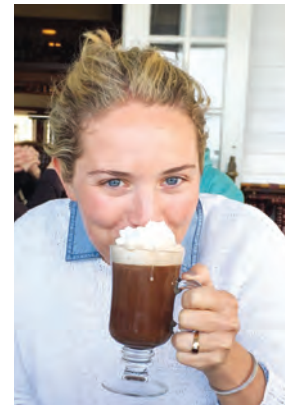
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Post-undergrad, **GENEVIÈVE VILLAMIZAR** grew a life from the ensuing decade of stewardship on acreages, farms, and ranches. The overlap of flora, fauna, cycles, and seasons ignite her landscape design projects and define the stories she writes and lives. Her personal, post-pandemic chapter is one of departures, leaving the comforts and distractions of Main Street Carbondale to once again live close to the land in quietude. From mountain flanks and riverbanks, she'll begin her first long-form, creative nonfiction book, delving into her life as a hunter, angler, and nurturer.

ELIZA BURLINGAME explores the area's culinary and agrarian legacies in *Edible Traditions* (page 61), the department she writes on behalf of Aspen Historical Society where she is the marketing director. The column offers her the opportunity to combine a few of her favorite things: history, storytelling, and all things food. Originally from Newport, Rhode Island, Burlingame has called the Roaring Fork Valley home since 2008. She lives in Snowmass with her husband, Andrew, and son, Jack. For more information about AHS and the public archives, which includes more than 50,000 images, visit aspenhistory.org.



"I gave it all away in my lede," laughs contributor **LINDA HAYES** in response to the request for a comment about the article, "Fully Baked" (page 46) she wrote for this issue. Though barely passable as a baker, writing for publications from *SKI* to *Stratos* (she was food editor for both) has given her a keen appreciation for the long hours, dedication, and passion it requires to turn out quality cuisine from scratch. Baking, especially at altitude and with the added incentive of encouraging community, is even more commendable, she observes. Hayes lives in Old Snowmass with her husband, wine writer Kelly J. Hayes, and a chocolate Labrador named Crouton.



ALI MARGO is a freelance writer and former *Aspen Times* columnist who documented her life and love in her award-winning column, *The Aspen Princess*, for 18 years. Her work has been published in *The New York Times*, *Outside*, and *SKI*, among others. When she's not typing away in her A-frame up the Fryingspan River Valley, including for the *Family Table* column (page 63), she's snowboarding with her husband, Ryan, and 5-year-old son Levi and enjoying an après-ski cocktail in the Two Creeks parking lot.





‘C’est délicieux!’ As they say in Snowmass.

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SNOWMASS

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Delicious Dialog

Having officially completed our first cycle of four seasons as the new producers of *Edible Aspen*, we at the Farm Collaborative are excited to head into our second year with this winter issue.

I hope that we have honored Lisa and Sam Houston's legacy of connecting our community to our food system, and that you have enjoyed our unconventional approach to cultivating a magazine that looks and feels beautifully different. We have had a lot of fun representing our regional food system—through verbiage and art—in a way that provides space to appreciate the beauty, time, and care that goes into making good food happen. Please take the time to notice our slower, deeper, more organic flow to magazine layout, with fewer ads, more art, less flash, more grace, and breathing space.

I'd be remiss if I wrote further without honoring the tremendous lift our team has taken to pull this off, and to do so in such a creative way: Catherine Lutz (editor), Britta Gustafson (art director), Dan Bayer (photo editor), Sonya Ferguson (organization queen), and KVD (keeping us creatively realistic), thank you!

When I graciously accepted Sam and Lisa's donation of this magazine in 2020 and stepped in as publisher, my goal was to dig into climate change challenges and solutions as well as food equity, and add them to the scope of discussion around our collective table. My hope was—and continues to be—to explore and share how intimately connected our food system is to our local and global actions, how farmers and ranchers are the first responders of climate resilience, and how farming can play a vital role both in turning around the impacts of climate change and in creating more equitable food communities.

You'll find some interesting and relevant stories around climate in this issue, including one on the tensions between increasingly extreme weather and the western Colorado fruit industry, and an interview with Colorado Agriculture Commissioner Kate Greenberg. Turn to page 32 to find out how local schoolchildren benefit from efforts to get farm-fresh foods on their lunch trays. Pick up our biannual User's Guide (fall and spring), which now includes food banks and pantries that serve local products, in addition to local producers, restaurants, and markets throughout the

Roaring Fork, North Fork, and Colorado River valleys. And stay tuned as we dig deeper into how the food that nourishes us and our planet can also be made more available to all.

As our magazine endeavor evolves, we will continue to serve up delicious dialogue on all of the above and resources for where to find the freshest foods and beverages. And we will also cultivate conversations that may be tougher to digest but are nourishing for us all and our collective future.

Dig in, and bon appétit!



Eden Vardy
 Publisher
 Executive Director of the Farm Collaborative



Eden Vardy and his family preparing a farm-fresh meal at home.

notable



DINING NEWS ▲

Snowmass Village

Originally planned to open last winter in the High Alpine fine-dining restaurant space on Snowmass Ski Area, the **Alpin Room** serves traditional mountain cuisine from the French, Swiss, and Austrian Alps, including tartiflette and choucroute garnie. Destination Hospitality Restaurant Group opens **Aurum** in Base Village, the third iteration of this eatery after Steamboat Springs and Breckenridge. Aurum specializes in seasonal new American cuisine in an elegant yet casual setting. After a \$70 million sale and multimillion-dollar renovation, the former Westin Snowmass reopens this winter as the Viewline Resort Snowmass, which includes **Stark's Alpine Grill**, specializing in American fare with seasonally curated menus. Also included in the sale and renovation is the Wildwood Snowmass, whose new restaurant, **Last Chair**, is a cozy beer hall open for après-ski and dinner.



DINING NEWS

Woody Creek and Basalt



Two beloved local eateries have exciting new changes. The legendary **Woody Creek Tavern**—the sole commercial operation in sleepy Woody Creek—debuted an upgraded but familiar menu and subtle new look this summer under its new owners, restaurateurs Craig and Samantha Cordts-Pearce (who also run The Wild Fig, The Monarch, Steakhouse 316, and CP Burger in Aspen). The Polaroids and memorable memorabilia remain; dinner reservations may be available. In downtown Basalt, **Free Range Restaurant and Bar** moves to a new building (just a block away) at Basalt River Park this winter. Featuring locally sourced comfort cuisine, the restaurant is the anchor tenant of the new riverfront development.



e d i b l e s

◀ DRINK

Gather 'Round the Fire

In celebration of its 10th anniversary this year, **Bonfire Coffee** offers two new releases. Snowed-In, a seasonal winter blend, is a medium-roast coffee with origins in Colombia and Ethiopia. The limited-edition Whiskey-Barrel Aged Coffee is a collaboration with Marble Distilling Co., a middle-dark blend ideal for after dinner—or morning after. Roasted locally in Glenwood Springs, Bonfire Coffee sources sustainably and is a conscientious community partner with robust composting and charity programs. The original Bonfire Coffee Café in Carbondale will be complemented with a second location in Glenwood Springs in 2022. Stop in at 433 Main St., Carbondale, or order at bonfirecoffee.com.

SHOP ▶

Entertain with Style

Gatherings are back, and holiday entertaining can be extra special with an Amen Wardy tabletop setting this winter. A retail fixture in Aspen for 30 years, this home décor and gift store offers Aspen's widest selection of tabletop settings, including for Christmas, Hannukah, Valentine's Day, and Easter, plus an extensive variety of hostess gifts, gift baskets, and sweet and savory treats. Visit the store at 625 E. Main St. in Aspen or online at amenwardy.com.



DINING NEWS

Aspen

Celebrity chef Lorena Garcia brings vibrant Latin American cuisine to Aspen with **Chica**, the latest restaurant in the Residences at Little Nell building at the base of Aspen Mountain. Featuring a menu with influences from Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina, Chica also has locations in Miami and Las Vegas. **Felix Roasting Co.** opened in the Hotel Jerome in the cozy space at the corner of Mill and Main. The roasting company and coffee shop, with two New York City locations, focuses on the terroir of each coffee and the whole “coffee break” experience. Open from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily, the café serves a variety of drinks and light breakfast and coffee-hour fare. Raphael Derly, former co-owner of the Crêperie, is taking over the **L'Hostaria space** and is planning to reopen it as a wine bar with “a simple, beautiful menu” and a whole new look—keeping the locals’ hangout spirit of its predecessor alive—by midwinter. **Plato's Restaurant** at the Aspen Meadows is bringing back its igloos for a unique winter dining experience. Outfitted with faux-fur seating for up to six people, the igloos are available by reservation only. Local restaurateur and chef Mawa McQueen is now serving dinner at **Mawa's Kitchen**, her flagship restaurant at the Aspen Business Center, which received a fresh new look by local designer Barbara Glass and has double the seating capacity, plus a full bar. McQueen is also planning to expand **The Crêpe Shack** from its original Snowmass Village location—to downtown Aspen on Cooper Street and to Denver's Union Station.





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Purple Passion

Forage Sisters enliven the under-appreciated beet
By Catherine Lutz

For Nicole Carrillo and Mirasol Gomez—friends who create farm-to-table special events as the Forage Sisters—beets are their go-to ingredient. This vibrant purple taproot grows well in Colorado and is available fresh from spring until winter, explains Carrillo, who with her husband also owns Deer Tree Farm and Agroforest in Hotchkiss. But beets are often underutilized, even though they're highly nutritious and delicious.

“We’re always looking for creative and unique ways to use Colorado vegetables, especially something like beets, which usually all people do with is roast them or put them on salad,” says Gomez. “We try to enliven the ingredient.”

With their popular homemade beet gnocchi, which they serve nearly year-round, the Sisters are credited with sparking wider appreciation for the vegetable. (Sometimes they substitute golden beets or butternut squash.)

“Gnocchi are comforting and starchy, and this way they have a sweet earthiness to them,” says Carrillo, who brings her Italian background to the chef’s table. (Gomez’s family is Argentinean; the pair liken the essence of their business to the “inviting welcome of your grandmother’s kitchen table.”) “Gnocchi can be vegan or gluten free. You can make them a main or a side, serve them heavy or light. Everybody loves pasta!”

FORAGE SISTERS' BEET GNOCCHI

SERVES 6

FOR THE GNOCCHI DOUGH

2 medium potatoes
4 medium red beets
1 egg
½ teaspoon sea salt
2½ cups all-purpose flour (plus more to dust)
Olive oil

FOR THE TOPPING

Butter or olive oil
½ cup pistachios
2 cups winter greens (arugula, kale, collard, beet greens),
roughly cut
Lemon zest (1/8–1/4 of the lemon)
Lemon juice

OPTIONAL

Ricotta
Fennel seeds
Pork sausage

Preheat oven to 400°F. Wrap potatoes and beets individually in aluminum foil and roast them in the oven for about 45 minutes, or until soft.

Once veggies cool a bit, scoop the flesh out of the potatoes and run them through a box grater or ricer. Place in a mixing bowl. Peel the skin off the beets and pulse in a food processor until smooth. Place in the mixing bowl with the potatoes.

Add egg, salt, 2½ cups flour, and a drizzle of olive oil into the bowl. Mix by hand until it feels like Play-Doh; add a dusting of flour or drizzle of olive oil if needed to get the consistency right. Gnocchi means “little pillow” in Italian, so to achieve its namesake quality of a light, airy, pillowy pasta, try to minimize any extra flour you might need to achieve the proper consistency.

Once the dough is smooth, flour the counter and roll palm-sized hunks of dough into snakes that are roughly ¾ thick and about 9–12 inches long. Cut these with a knife into ½-inch pieces.

Bring a pot of water to a rolling boil. Working in batches, boil roughly 10 gnocchi for about 2 minutes, or until they float. Remove the gnocchi from the water and place on parchment while cooking the rest.

Heat butter or olive oil in a pan and brown the gnocchi on two sides. Salt lightly. Remove from heat. Toast pistachios briefly in the same pan and remove. Wilt winter greens of your choice in the hot oil. To serve, top gnocchi with pistachios and greens along with lemon zest, oil or butter from the pan, and a squeeze of lemon. Salt to taste and enjoy!

Note: This vegetarian dish can easily be made vegan by withholding the butter and egg in the dough (add more olive oil in the dough to replace the egg). You can also turn it into a complete meal for meat eaters by serving with whipped ricotta, browned fennel seeds, and local pork sausage. 🍷

Skin Deeper

A medical herbalist shares her win-win formula for healthy harvesting and happy skin.

By Cindy Hirschfeld

Medical herbalist Julie Levin relies on all-natural ingredients to craft products for Leaf People, her 18-year-old, plant-based skin care company. Some of them she forages herself through wild harvesting—just not too many at once. Her recipe for forest extract body oil, for example, uses plentiful evergreen sprigs as the main ingredient.

Having trained with herbal medicine practitioners from Africa to Australia, Levin, a longtime Roaring Fork Valley local, strongly advocates for ethical harvesting. That means collecting only what she needs, avoiding trafficked areas near trails, and returning to reseed areas when possible, among other practices. And she's definitely not sharing her spots on social media.

"I see people foraging on Instagram, telling each other where these stashes are," she laments. "Damage gets done to the ecosystem."

Levin also abides by another, less tangible practice: She mentally and energetically cleanses herself on the morning of a harvest (think meditation and mantras). In the field, she asks permission of a plant before harvesting it and then makes a small offering—a sprinkling of leaves from other medicinal plants, say—in exchange for what she takes.

To formulate Leaf People's creams, serums, and other products, "Every plant is chosen for its sustainability factor," Levin notes. "Can I get this ingredient over a long period of time in a way that's sustainable in nature?" For instance, even though root medicine can be powerful, Levin eschews it. "I've never collected in a way that would kill the plant," she says. Plus, she enhances the potency of ingredients like arnica, which is routinely overharvested, with other plants so that she uses less of it.

Levin now grows many of her own plants—burdock root, red clover, chamomile, echinacea, Japanese honeysuckle, and more—on her property in Missouri Heights. She supplements with purchases from other wild harvesters whom she's thoroughly vetted to ensure they're of like mind.

As you set out to discover the satisfaction of brewing up your own natural potion with Levin's recipe, remember to harvest with intention: Clear your mind, ask for permission, leave a little something in return, and take only what you need.



DAN BAYER

FOREST EXTRACT BODY OIL

Use this oil as-is on skin to nourish and soothe stressed skin and sore muscles, or add it to body lotion (1–2 tablespoons per 8 ounces of lotion) or face cream (a couple of drops per jar).

MAKES ABOUT 12 OUNCES

2 cups tree clippings (see below)	2–4 mullein leaves (optional)
Plant-based oil, such as olive or sunflower	¼ teaspoon dried turmeric (optional)
6 whole peppercorns (optional)	1 pinch dried rose hips (optional)

In late spring or early summer, clip some small sprigs of new-growth evergreen (spruce, pine, fir, piñon); the needles should feel gentle to the touch, not prickly, and be pale green. You can also snip off new tips from cottonwood or aspen tree branches, or needles and even berries from juniper. Be careful not to damage the plant as you harvest.

Cut the sprigs into ¼- to ½-inch pieces and place into a sterilized double boiler or small Crock-Pot. Pour in enough oil to cover the plant materials. Add in optional ingredients, if desired—this will increase the formula's anti-inflammatory properties.

Warm the solution to 100 to 115°F (you should be able to stick a finger in it; if not, it's too hot). Keep at this heat for about 3 hours, stirring occasionally. Make sure all plant material remains covered with oil. Then strain the oil through cheesecloth and store it in a sterilized glass jar or bottle. It will keep for 2 to 4 weeks; to extend shelf life, add in 1 to 2 capsules of vitamin E oil. Add a few drops of an essential oil, like lavender or eucalyptus, to vary the fragrance and assist preservation. 🌿

Find out more about Leaf People and order products at leafpeople.com.



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Raw-milk butter is crafted, packaged, and stored at Sustainable Settings in Carbondale.

DAN BAYER

Edible Gold

Raw butter is better in many ways, advocates say.

By Catherine Lutz

When Sustainable Settings got two cows and started its dairy in 2009, it would be a while before its milk-share program got up and running. So, plenty of milk was available to experiment with making dairy products for on-ranch consumption, says Brook LeVan, co-founder and executive director of the nonprofit regenerative farm and whole-systems learning and research center.

Many years later, with the raw milk program going strong, the occasional surplus milk is prized, not necessarily for the rich crème fraîche or delectable cheeses that can be fashioned from it, but for what LeVan and many others consider edible gold: raw butter.

“Heaven on your spoon” is how LeVan describes the taste of the unpasteurized, unhomogenized butter mastered by his wife, Rose (Sustainable Settings’ other co-founder and self-described milk maid).

But the benefits of this butter—made from A2 milk that comes from 100 percent grass-fed cows on a biodynamic farm with regenerative soil practices and nutritious hay—go far beyond taste. And they’ve taken quite some time to realize.

“It took us 20 years to make this pound of butter,” LeVan writes in a draft of his upcoming book. “It actually took our whole lives ... to just participate in the co-creation of this pound of butter. ... Somewhere along the line we had to let go of many things we were taught and to find out for ourselves what was true for us.”

This is what the LeVans have found.

It all starts with healthy soil, LeVan explains, where plant roots soak up vitamins and minerals that eventually make their way to the grazer. Not tilling the soil and other regenerative practices encourage



“When we lost touch with [the family milk cow], we lost touch with many forms of nourishment.” —Brook LeVan

The FDA and much of the modern medical industry focus only on the risks of raw dairy products, and it's true that you can get sick from harmful bacteria that's more likely to be found in unpasteurized milk. The health information website Healthline cites a statistic that 82 percent of all dairy-related illness outbreaks were from raw milk. It's for these reasons that 20 states ban consumption of raw milk; in Colorado you can only get it by buying a share in a herd, like at Sustainable Settings. Raw-butter advocates claim that pathogens are much less likely to develop in butter, which is not liquid, than in milk.

But as with many natural foods, there's little in the way of scientific studies that handily prove either position. Research is not at all robust enough into less visible preventive health measures—like consuming foods high in nutrients and beneficial bacteria—which natural food proponents say outweigh the smaller risk of getting a passing illness.

It's important to look at this whole picture, says LeVan, who along with other raw-dairy advocates has seen plenty of evidence of its benefits.

“The family milk cow used to be a common thing, and when we lost touch with that we lost touch with many forms of nourishment,” says LeVan. “The real solution is our relationship to the soil, and getting back to real food and nutrient density. No one can make a tomato—we can only help co-create flavor, and flavor is this brilliant moment, this fragile elegance that occurs when all these elements to come together.” 🍌

the greatest diversity of nutrients to get transferred to the grazer—and through its milk products to humans. (Sustainable Settings' hay has tested very high for nutrients, LeVan says.)

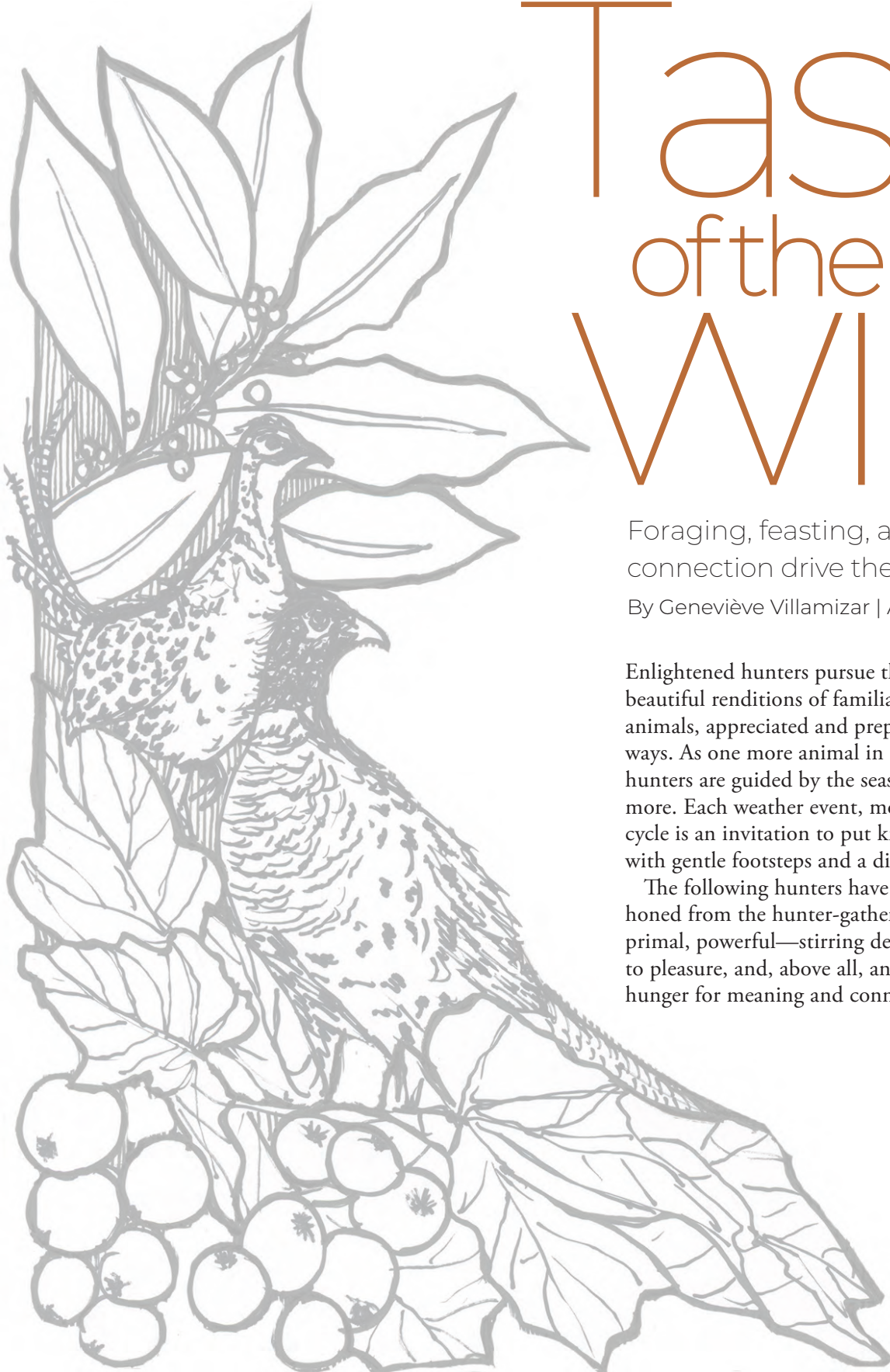
Raw butter—especially from grass-fed cows—is a far superior source of nutrients, including vitamins A, D, and E, according to LeVan and other raw dairy proponents. Pasteurization, a process of heating milk to destroy microbes and extend shelf life, they say, kills not only bad bacteria but also good bacteria and enzymes that facilitate various functions of the human body including digestion, absorbing some essential vitamins, and boosting the immune system.

Another health benefit of milk products from Sustainable Settings and others that focus on raw and grass-fed dairy is the A2 beta-casein protein, which is a matter of genetics. Breeds that have a higher chance of producing A1 proteins, like Holsteins, are favored by the mass-market dairy industry because they produce more milk. Cows with an A2 propensity, like Guernseys and Jerseys, may produce less milk, but it's higher quality.

“A2 genetics is highly beneficial to us, as it cleans our pipes and builds our bones,” says LeVan, adding that A1 milk does the opposite. It is also suggested that A2 milk helps digestion, and that populations who drink it have lower rates of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

LeVan even tells of naturopath doctors in England prescribing pure raw butter to help people with vitamin D and K immune deficiencies. He jokes that since he himself began consuming raw milk products after starting the dairy at Sustainable Setting, “I only age nine months of the year.”





Taste of the WILD

Foraging, feasting, and, above all, connection drive these local hunters.

By Geneviève Villamizar | Art by Kaylee Bowlby

Enlightened hunters pursue the sensuous: beautiful renditions of familiar plants and animals, appreciated and prepared in unexpected ways. As one more animal in the food chain, these hunters are guided by the seasons, and so much more. Each weather event, moon, or reproductive cycle is an invitation to put knowledge into play with gentle footsteps and a discerning hand.

The following hunters have created rituals long honed from the hunter-gatherer impulse. Food is primal, powerful—stirring desire and giving rise to pleasure, and, above all, answering humanity’s hunger for meaning and connection. 🍄



Danielle Davis

Hunter and angler Danielle Davis connected to resourcefulness and the richness of sharing game meals through her father, with whom she's spending several days hunting pheasant this season.

"Game meat makes my cooking more rewarding," she says. "When I've gotten that close to the source and hunted those ingredients myself? I don't think there's anything that epitomizes pure nourishment more than wild foods."

Founder of the Western Meat Collective, Davis collaborates with chefs, farmers, and ranchers to teach butchery, whole-animal cookery, and charcuterie—artisanal skills that can bring a culinary twist to freshly sourced protein.

DAVIS FAMILY BRAISED PHEASANT WITH CURRANTS

- 8–10 pheasant legs
(skin on or off)
- Olive oil
- 4 large shallots, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup diced pancetta (or bacon or guanciale)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried currants (or dried plums or cherries)
- 4 bay leaves
- 1 cup chicken stock (preferably stock that uses all chicken parts, including feet, to make it gelatinous for sauces)
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon quality balsamic vinegar
- 4 cloves garlic, whole
- 1 teaspoon flour
- Salt and pepper to taste

Season pheasant legs with salt and pepper.

Oil a large Dutch oven or deep sauté pan and turn stove to medium-high. Brown pheasant legs 1 to 2 minutes on each side, allowing fat to render if skin is kept on. Remove from heat and set aside.

Add olive oil, shallots, and pancetta to the pan; sprinkle with kosher salt. Once shallots are slightly softened and the pancetta is crisping up, add currants and bay leaves. Return the pheasant legs to the skillet, turning heat to very low.

Combine stock, wine, and vinegar. Pour in just enough of the liquid to leave the tops of the legs uncovered.

Cover and cook until the meat is so tender it pulls easily off of the bone, about 2 hours. Remove legs and bay leaves. To finish the sauce, turn heat up to medium and sprinkle in flour to thicken, only as needed.

Serve on top of polenta and drizzle with sauce for a comforting cold-weather dish.

Kristen Blizzard

For Kristen Blizzard, who with her husband, Trent, manages the website Modern-Forager.com, “Foraging has always been about community and this idea of sharing experiences. With mushrooms—chanterelles, porcini, whatever they may be—one of the most amazing things is the terroir, this connectedness to the land. You open up a jar of freshly dried mushrooms two weeks or two years later, and the smell and taste of the forest remind you of where you were, who you were with.”

On their first date, Kristen and Trent hunted mushrooms, a first for both. Their foraging adventures became a metaphor for living. In addition to Modern Forager, they recently published *Wild Mushrooms: A Cookbook and Foraging Guide*. More than a collection of recipes, it’s a culinary homage rooted in friendships, adventures, and discovery.

“As foragers in this community of like-minded individuals, one of the coolest things we do is share our creations: a meal, an amazing jam, a scone, pickles, this new method or that.”

Here, Kristen pairs chanterelles and feral apricots found around Glenwood Springs for a jam unlike any.



COURTESY KRISTEN BLIZZARD

CHANTERELLE-APRICOT JAM MAKES 9 (8-OUNCE) JARS (OR 18 HALF-CUP JARS)

- 4 cups chanterelles
- 2½ cups fresh diced apricots
- 7 cups sugar
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 box SURE-JELL Fruit Pectin
- ½ teaspoon butter or margarine

Sterilize (9) 8-ounce jam jars and lids in boiling water.

Finely dice the chanterelles. Reduce chanterelles in a deep pan under medium-low heat for 15 minutes, until moisture has bubbled off and mushroom mixture is thick. Measure out 2½ cups.

Combine mushrooms and apricots to measure exactly 5 cups. Add to the saucepan with sugar, lemon juice, pectin, and butter. Bring to a full rolling boil and boil for exactly 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim off any foam.

Ladle immediately into prepared jars, filling to within ¼ inch of tops. Wipe jar rims and threads. Cover with two-piece lids. Screw bands on tightly.

Place jars on an elevated rack in a canner. Lower rack into canner. Water should cover

jars by 1 to 2 inches. Cover and bring water to a gentle boil. Process for 10 minutes, adding boiling water as needed to keep the jars covered. (Add 12 minutes to the processing time for high elevation.)

Remove jars and place upright on a towel to cool completely. After the jars cool, check seals by pressing the middles of lids with your finger. If lids spring back, lids are not sealed and refrigeration is necessary.

Store and enjoy. This is not refrigerator jam, but it can be refrigerated to prolong shelf life and the fresh taste.

Note: If you’d like a low-sugar version, follow instructions for low-sugar SURE-JELL, making sure the mushroom-to-fruit ratio is 50/50. Or try Pomona Pectin.

Reprinted with permission from *Wild Mushrooms: A Cookbook and Foraging Guide* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2020).





KELSEY BRUNNER

Andreas Fischbacher

Recently retired restaurateur Andreas Fischbacher (of *Allegria* and *Cloud Nine* fame, among others) has spent some of his newfound time hunting: red stag and wild boar in Europe this past summer, and, later, high-alpine buck, antelope, and bear in Colorado and Alaska.

At elevations far above pungent sage and scrub, the longtime chef describes dense earthy meat, almost sweet from the succulent grasses, berries, and forbs that flourish in cooler temperatures. Fischbacher endorses whole-animal harvest with gustatory, Old World glee. “What spoils first, you eat first—nothing better for me,” he says of offal such as liver, heart, or kidneys.

An adept horseman, he likes to get in deep and travel light, “but always with salt, pepper. Some garlic, onions, potatoes. A cast-iron pan.

“You have an open fire,” he adds. “Pick the mushrooms, pick some berries. You go out and enjoy the flavor of the woods, harvest what’s there. You cut it. You make it. You eat it. Done! It’s absolutely fantastic. Can’t find it in a restaurant.”

WILD LIVER WITH ROOT WOOD-SMOKED BACON, PORCINI, AND HUCKLEBERRY SAUCE ON CROSTINI AND LOCAL GREENS

- 1 pound freshly harvested liver (any kind; can substitute other scallopini meat)
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 7–8 cloves garlic, sliced
- ½ pound root wood-smoked speck or pancetta of choice, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons butter, cold
- 1 pound porcini mushrooms, cleaned and sliced thickly or quartered
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 4 shallots, diced
- 1 cup red wine (preferably thick and heavy in flavor, or a marsala)
- ¼ cup huckleberries, washed (or lingonberries)
- 2 tablespoons balsamic syrup (store bought or 80% reduced balsamic vinegar)
- 6–7 slices rye bread or crostini
- ¼ pound fresh greens
- ½ cup vinaigrette of your choice (preferably homemade)
- 1 tablespoon quality grain mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste

Wash out liver (creek water is fine) and inspect for parasites (like ringworms). If liver is not desired, tenderloins are easy to access when carcass is hanging to ripen meat. Cut into thin scallopini.

In a cast-iron pan, render speck until crisp. Set aside, saving fat. Brown garlic into chips; set aside. Sauté shallots in speck fat (add oil if needed); remove from pan. In the same pan, sear liver or scallopini meat in bacon fat or olive oil until medium-rare. Set meat aside; save drippings. Sauté the porcinis in olive oil and season with salt, pepper, parsley, thyme, and lemon zest. Set mushrooms aside. Deglaze pan with wine. Add berries, season with salt and pepper, and allow liquid to reduce. Add balsamic syrup; finish by adding cold butter. Liquid should be saucy consistency. Return drippings from meat and mushrooms to the pan and remove from heat.

Brush bread with olive oil and grill over an open flame. Toss greens with vinaigrette. Smear mustard on grilled bread. Top with tossed greens. (Optional: Add small, blistered heirloom tomatoes.) Top greens with liver or meat scallopini. Add porcinis. Drizzle with huckleberry ragout. Finish with crisp speck and garlic chips.

EARTH KEEPERS

THE FARM COLLABORATIVE
farmcollaborative.org



**“We are growing a better world for our children
and better children for our world.”**





JAYME HENDERSON

PAONIA POMME

Wanting to use as many local ingredients as possible, including North Fork Valley apples, Henderson chose The Storm Cellar’s 2019 Roussanne, which has cold-season aromas of spice cake, fresh pears, and chamomile tea. This wine cocktail is both cozy and refreshing, and the Roussanne is a perfect match for Hotchkiss cidery Big B’s Bourbon Barrel Aged Pommeau, an apple wine brandy. The recipe is easily batch-able for a crowd and is a delicious, low-alcohol option for entertaining.

MAKES 1 (4-OUNCE) COCKTAIL

- 2½ ounces dry white wine (Chardonnay recommended if you don’t have the Roussanne)
- ½ ounce apple pommeau or brandy
- ½ ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ½ ounce honey-sage syrup (see note)
- Apple slice and fresh sage leaves, for garnish

In a mixing tin, combine the wine, pommeau, lemon juice, and honey-sage syrup. Add ice and shake well to combine and chill. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass or coupe. Garnish with an apple slice, pierced with a sprig of fresh sage.

Note: For the honey-sage syrup, combine equal parts local honey and water. Over low heat, bring to a slow simmer, adding a few fresh sage leaves. Stir to incorporate the sage—about 2 minutes—and remove from heat. Let steep, as the mixture cools to room temperature. Strain and store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. 🍷

Wine Not?

Ancient favorite drink shows new personality when mixed into cocktails. By Catherine Lutz

“Wine is already this well-constructed, perfectly balanced drink, so why would you add any other ingredients?” Storm Cellar co-owner Jayme Henderson is reading my mind as she posits this question, which often gets asked about wine cocktails. Pointing out that spirits—also painstakingly crafted alcoholic beverages—frequently get mixed and matched, she notes that wine cocktails can be refreshing and lower in alcohol, making them easy to sip at long dinner parties or just when you want to shake things up (pun intended). Plus, you can build some depth and dimension with herbal syrups.

“A wine cocktail can give wine a new life,” says Henderson, who in addition to making wine is a certified sommelier and has experience slinging drinks as a bartender.

Wine cocktails have come a long way since the canned, mass-distributed wine coolers of the ’80s, and by no means are limited to the summery spritzers and sangrias we’re familiar with. Henderson enjoys coming up with complex wine cocktails for The Storm Cellar’s tasting room customers. “It stretches our creativity,” she says.

Here’s her toast to winter in a wine glass.


Where to get it

Storm Cellar wines

Sopris Liquor & Wine, Carbondale
stormcellarwine.com

Big B’s Bourbon Barrel Aged Pommeau

bigbs.com



If we take care of the soil as a diverse living network that's interconnected with all the life around it ... we help to nurture not only the soil and plant life but also our own lives.

A Dirty Secret

Why we don't wash the cabbages By Marieta Bialek

Fall is a busy time on the farm, not only for harvesting vegetables but also preparing for winter: canning, sorting veggies to store in the root cellar, and the always-fun process of making kimchi. As soon as the abundant ingredients for this fermented treat—napa cabbages, carrots, daikon radishes, onions, garlic, and spicy peppers—are pulled from the ground, my crew at the Farm Collaborative dives in: chopping cabbages, measuring out salt, and massaging and punching down the cabbage to draw out its juices. One thing we don't do is wash the cabbages.

Yes, you read that right: We do not wash the cabbages. That's because we actually want the little bit of soil remaining on the leaves—and all the friendly bacteria it contains—to help jump-start the fermentation process, which in turn results in a magical concoction that works wonders on our gut biome. And it's not just the lactobacillus (a probiotic naturally occurring in the human digestive tract) generated through this process that is so healthy for us, but also many of the soil microbes that we consume with our fresh garden veggies.

If you take a good close look, you will see that soil is teeming with life. All you have to do is grab a fresh handful from underneath the plants and watch for a moment—you'll see worms and other living things moving around. And that's just what's visible to the naked eye; millions of microscopic creatures are part of this system, too.

A well-balanced, healthy soil ecosystem is one of the most diverse living systems in the world. Scientists have found that just one teaspoon of good soil can contain up to one billion bacteria, along with tens of thousands of species of fungi, protozoa, nematodes, and other microbes. In a symbiotic relationship with vegetables and other food crops, these microbes unlock nitrogen and other micronutrients in rocks and minerals and make them available to the plants to grow.

Parallel discoveries into the soil microbiome and the human microbiome are proving that beneficial microbes are not only critical to the health of soil and plants, but to our own bodies as well. If enough beneficial soil microbes work symbiotically with plants, they will out-compete the pathogens that are trying to attack and make the plants sick. Our gut biome works similarly: If we feed it enough diversity of nutrient-dense foods that contain enough good microbes, they out-compete the pathogens that make us sick.

In addition to aiding our gut biome, healthy living soil directly impacts the concentration of nutrients in the foods we consume. According to several studies, the nutrient density of fruits and vegetables grown in the United States has greatly declined over the last 50 to 70 years, leaving many Americans with sufficient calories but not enough nutrients vital for good health. Ever since the Green Revolution of the 1950s and '60s, which greatly increased agricultural production but came with the idea that we needed synthetic chemicals to grow enough food to feed everyone, we've been suffering a loss of topsoil and the rich network of life in it. This is because of harmful chemicals, like glyphosate, and the practice of tilling: flipping the soil to kill weeds and the remnants of the last crop, in order to prepare the soil for new seeds. Losing this topsoil also means losing the nutrients in our food.

In the gardens at the Farm Collaborative, much of our purpose is to build soil—or rather, to feed the life within the soil. With regenerative practices such as minimal tilling, cover cropping, and spraying compost teas, we strive to care for the incredible web of life under our feet. If we take care of it as such—as a diverse living network that's interconnected with all the life around it—and plant a diverse

network of crops and trees, we help to nurture not only the soil and plant life but also our own lives.

When I walk barefoot through the garden, I know that some of those tiny beneficial creatures cling to my feet—and I'm OK with that. Our greatest helpers in the garden are helping our bodies as well. And when we don't wash the cabbages while making kimchi, it brings a smile to my face knowing that the microbes helping the fermentation process will also be doing good for my gut, my immune system, and my health in general. 🌱



Marieta Bialek is the Farm Collaborative's soil and production manager and a farmer for over 10 years. Her farm experience includes working on organic and biodynamic farms in Boulder and at the CSU Organic Agriculture Research Station in Hotchkiss, where she planted orchards and helped restore perennial pastures. She earned her degree in ecological and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado at Boulder in 2014. Growing up in Aspen, Bialek developed a love for the planet through hiking, backpacking, and camping.



“As farmers, even
without climate change,
we are used to adapting.”

—Gwen Cameron, Rancho Durazno

A 25-year-old Jonathan apple tree fruits alongside a Honeycrisp, several Montmorency cherry, and crabapple trees in a small orchard cared for by Linda and Jerry Gustafson in El Jebel. This year's early frost added to the sweet flavor of the apples enjoyed by people, birds, and bears alike.

The Future of Fruit

As climate change hits home for Colorado orchardists, the time is ripe for big questions. By Katie Brimm

“As a society, we need to start asking some genuine questions about the value of being able to have food,” says Regan Choi, who helps run Ela Family Farms in Hotchkiss with fourth-generation orchardist Steve Ela.

It’s fall, the last glowing peach of the year has been eaten, and we’re discussing how orchardists in Colorado have been impacted by climate change. Being stewards of a perennial crop that takes years to mature, fruit tree growers don’t have the option to uproot to find a friendlier climate.

Her response is a sobering reframe. It’s clear that the challenges faced by orchardists across our region will not be solved solely by buying local. Food and climate are now inherently globalized issues, raising some bigger questions: “Do we want to rely on transnational food-supply chains? As we saw from COVID, the supply chains break down,” says Choi. “Or do we want to be able to grow food in the United States, close to our communities that need to be fed no matter what’s happening in the world?”

A hard frost begs tough questions

These questions become more urgent every year. The Rocky Mountain climate provides plenty of the chill hours many fruit trees require to produce fruit, and it’s normal for Colorado orchardists to worry about early spring frosts killing the first sets of blossoms destined to become that year’s crop. But in October 2020, western Colorado’s weather stayed unseasonably warm late into the month. Normally, “those first nights below freezing are what let

the tree know it’s time to go to sleep” (go dormant for the winter), explains Gwen Cameron of Rancho Durazno, a father-daughter-run orchard in Palisade. Instead, the warm weather lulled the trees into staying awake.

One night, a cold snap hit the region unlike anything seen in 60 years. In Hotchkiss, temperatures plunged from 80 to just 3 degrees in less than 24 hours. After a sleepless night, Choi and Ela knew there’d been serious damage, but it wasn’t until spring that they, and other orchardists across the region, could assess it fully. Whole orchards of trees had died, resulting in the loss of millions of pounds of fruit and a harvest of only 25 percent of their normal years.

The loss of mature trees is a profound kind of loss. Repercussions extend well beyond the next harvest to nearly a decade of setbacks, as newly planted trees take four to nine years to even start producing. So, in addition to investing in thousands of new trees, orchardists don’t see a return on that investment for years, while sustaining maintenance costs whether trees are producing fruit or not. Combined with climate variability, the risk of losing the sensitive young trees again will only increase.

In recent years, many orchardists have been asking themselves if it even makes sense to replant. Among those interviewed for this article, so far the answer has been yes, even though crops like cherries, which are more sensitive to frost than apples, may no longer have a place in the increasingly volatile western Colorado climate.

“I’m still inspired every day to do what we do,” says Harrison Topp of Topp Fruits, a family-run orchard in Hotchkiss and Paonia.

“I’m still inspired every day to do what we do.”

— Harrison Topp, Topp Fruits

The last apples from the final fall harvest of 2021 at Big B's Delicious Orchards in Hotchkiss, CO. Delicious Orchards, planted in 1965, offers seasonal u-pick on these varieties and dozens of additional fruits and vegetables.

- Lc
Local and Organic
\$ Fuji Apples
\$1.49/lb < 20#
\$.99/lb > 20#
Enjoy!

BRITTA GUSTAFSON

The real question is, are we asking too much of farmers to shoulder the entire risk, investment, and burden of adapting to climate change?

Resilient and adaptable, but in need of larger-scale change

Everyone is searching for ways to adapt. Topp describes using practices like mulch, fungal solutions, and compost teas to improve soil quality and fortify root systems, which help make younger trees more resilient to shocks. “We’re really an all-solutions kind of farm, trying everything we can to make sure that we’re getting the trees ready,” he says.

Colorado has been home to innovative and determined fruit-tree growers since over 120 years ago, when pioneers first took the risks necessary to produce here, encountering failures until they succeeded in adapting to the area’s extreme climate. Remnants of those historic orchards can be seen in agricultural zones across the state.

“As farmers, even without climate change, we are used to adapting,” Cameron notes. “We have frosts, pests, disease ... We come up against new challenges and change. There’s a certain level of resiliency just inherent to being a farmer.”

But climate change impacts are nuanced, intricate, and unlike anything they’ve seen before. Cameron tells of having to pull workers from the fields because of poor air quality from wildfires. Fires and subsequent mudslides created multiple road closures, adding five to eight hours to their drive to markets for months. Due to longer and warmer summers, Choi and Ela describe having an additional life cycle of pest outbreaks and stressed trees that are more vulnerable to disease.

When I ask if they’re trialing more climate-resilient tree varieties, all the orchardists balk. Jeni Nagle of Ela Family Farms shares that the time, land, and money it takes to experiment on a large-enough scale to produce meaningful results is not feasible. Instead, they speak to a core issue for many small-scale agriculturalists: “The biggest thing would be to have financial stability for our farmers,” says Choi, “to not have the constant struggle just to survive from year to year. Then, we’d need the room to plant new varieties and be able to try new programs and expand in different ways that actually can shift as rapidly as the climate is changing.”

With the ongoing drought, less and less water is allocated to agriculture each year. While many orchardists are already set up to be as drought tolerant as possible, fruit needs a certain amount of water to size up into something edible and sellable. “That’s another big question for our state representatives. They say they’re saving water for us, but they’re not,” says Choi. “Like, new [housing]

developments are still allowed to have lawns? That type of policy could really make a difference for us.”

Topp echoes the sentiment. While agriculture is often quoted as using 85 percent of the state’s water, he urges us to remember that in turn we consume that water in the form of food, an essential element of human life.

Even in the midst of these dark times, there is joy. Grief lifts from their faces when I ask them about their favorite fruit, to which they all have passionate replies.

“How can you not just love a peach that’s juicy, dripping down your chin?” says Choi. “Or plums—there are these tiny Japanese yellow plums that when ripe are like a SweetTART. But the elephant heart plums! You slice it and it looks like stained glass, holding it up to the sun ...” I have to cut them off from describing each and every fruit.

As orchardists have done for more than a century, these farmers will adapt, while prioritizing feeding their communities. But when it’s the future of all of our food that’s on the line, perhaps the real question is: Are we asking too much of farmers to shoulder the entire risk, investment, and burden of adapting to climate change? What would it look like if society prioritized and offered real support to the people who sustain our local food systems?

Because they prioritize us. When they talk about their communities, the orchardists speak of love, and tears come to their eyes. The farmers at Ela Family Farms choke up when describing the outpouring of emotional and financial support they received when they had to shutter their CSA.

“Hundreds of people kept saying things like, ‘We realize we actually need someone to grow our food. This has got to be so stressful,’” says Choi. “It was amazing to just have real understanding, to be seen by the people we’ve built relationships with for decades. That’s been the biggest piece keeping me going.” 🍓

This article is sponsored by CORE, the Community Office for Resource Efficiency. Since 1994, CORE has been helping Roaring Fork Valley residents save energy and cut carbon emissions to mitigate climate change. Edible Aspen is proud to partner with CORE—whose innovative leadership includes the nation’s first carbon-mitigation fee and one of its earliest solar rebate programs—on communication about climate issues. Article sponsorship contributes to the cost of producing the content; the sponsor has no editorial involvement.

Daily lunch, lifelong habits

Valley schools are aiming to make student meals healthier, one carrot stick at a time.

By Christine Benedetti | Photos by Dan Bayer & Kelsey Brunner





“When you’re outside digging potatoes and the next day you turn around and eat them, you have a greater appreciation for the food.”

—Stella Guy Warren, Colorado Rocky Mountain School student



Above: Aspen School District Food Service Supervisor Elizabeth Ford fills grab-and-go trays with nourishing lunch for students at Aspen Elementary School. Below: Students stream in for four separate seatings during the lunch rush at Aspen Middle School. PHOTOS BY DAN BAYER

“Real food is what we try to do. If you just cook real food, that’s what the kids want.”

—Tenille Folk, Aspen School District



During Alex Appleby’s valedictorian speech in June, the robotics fanatic gave the audience some advice. Topping the list? “Savor every curry day,” he said. “I speak for the students and faculty alike when I say that curry day is truly a sacred time in the Aspen High School commons.”

Curry day is posted about once a month on the school’s lunch menu. It’s served with chicken or potatoes and comes with rice. It’s not typical for school lunches to get a shout out in graduation speeches, but the Aspen School District food program isn’t typical. It’s only in the past four years that Aspen High School students have benefitted from Food Service Director Tenille Folk’s touch, but elementary and middle school students have been tasting the benefits for more than a decade.

The secret ingredient?

“Love,” says Folk. “You see kids come running through the commons for curry day. You see the kids excited for real food.”

Folk’s mantra is essentially that: “We cook as much as we can. Real food is what we try to do. If you just cook real food, that’s what the kids want.”

It seems simple enough. The USDA’s National School Lunch Program is increasingly trying to adopt the same mission, but what can be achieved in a small district of 1,645 students is far different from the fare served to 30 million who eat in school cafeterias across the country. It’s not just size; socioeconomic levels, food access, and culture all play a part too. In the Roaring Fork Valley, these factors affect food trays from Aspen to Rifle.

Fresh and homemade

Folk joined the Aspen School District in 2009. She previously chefed in Aspen kitchens including the St. Regis and Lulu Wilson. When she started a family, she wanted a schedule that was more conducive to being with her young children, and an opportunity with the Aspen School District opened up. She brings a background of creative restaurant cooking and combines it with an ethos of nutritious home cooking—two characteristics traditionally absent from mainstream school menus.

“In elementary [where students are not allowed to leave campus for lunch] we have more control, with fruit, veggies, and home-cooked meals,” she says. “In middle school we start to expand and give them more options and hope they make healthy choices. [At the high school], because it’s an open campus, we are competing with trying to keep students on campus for lunch. They get even more options to choose from—including grab-and-go options from this café, which is open every day, all day—and they just eat all day long.”

In the elementary school, about 300 students per day buy hot lunch, paying \$4.50 per meal. Another 250 buy lunch in the middle school, where it costs \$5. Before 2016, the high school was serviced by a third-party contractor, but the district board and the school’s wellness committee made the decision to move its food program in house as well. Now, 150 high school students eat hot lunch (for \$6, which includes a salad bar) and another 300 grab sandwiches, wraps, and snacks from the à la carte café, where items like French fries, candy, and soda are conspicuously absent. In their place: house-made granola, hummus, and Naked juices. She estimates that 5 to 10 percent



of the district’s students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

Folk tries to use local food when possible, sourcing at least 10 percent through Mountain Freshies, a wholesale service collecting produce from North Fork Valley farms. (Due to COVID-19 and a staffing shortage, an on-campus garden she started years ago is currently not producing food for school kitchens.) Her philosophy on prepared food is fresh and real, which often makes it healthy too. For example, school chefs craft nacho cheese from butternut squash purée, and the house pizza sauce includes tomatoes, onions, carrots, celery, yellow squash, zucchini, red peppers, and basil.

“We have some kids who get the whole hot lunch and then ask for another second plate for the salad bar,” says Folk. “Whereas in the elementary school, we are struggling just to encourage them to take their carrot sticks sometimes. We put it on their plate anyway just to get the exposure.”

Above: The Aspen Elementary School lunchroom bustles during rush hour. Below: Aspen High teachers let students out early for curry-chicken day. PHOTOS BY DAN BAYER





Garden program students wash pounds of freshly harvested carrots in the greenhouse at Colorado Rocky Mountain School, to be used for its lunch program.

PHOTO BY KELSEY BRUNNER



What's on the Menu?

ASPEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Chicken or cheese burrito with rice and fresh salsa
- Fruit or vegetable of the day, salad bar

ASPEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Chicken nachos with butternut squash "cheese" sauce, black beans, salsa, and guacamole. Salad bar
- Calzones with pepperoni and fresh homemade marinara, made with tomatoes, zucchini, carrots, celery, basil, garlic, and onions
- Paninis (new this year) with turkey, bacon, spinach, and cheese. Sweet potato and fresh fruit.

ASPEN HIGH SCHOOL

- Yellow chicken curry with rice. Fresh fruit, salad bar
- Basil pesto sausage and pasta with alfredo sauce. Caesar salad

ROARING FORK ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

- Chicken nuggets
- Yogurt with granola
- Fresh broccoli
- Fresh peach

ROARING FORK HIGH SCHOOLS

- Chicken posole with tortilla chips
- Toasted cheese sandwich
- Corn
- Fresh plum

COLORADO ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

- Cherry tomato, fresh mozzarella, and basil salad
- Red beet hummus with curried carrots and pita chips
- Pumpkin mac and cheese

Unlimited fruits and veggies

That awareness is a priority for Octavio Maese, director of nutrition services for the Roaring Fork School District; it's also part of his mandate from the Colorado Department of Education and the National School Lunch Program. Whereas Aspen School District's \$745,000 budget for the 2021–22 school year comes from the district's general fund, Roaring Fork's food budget is federally funded—the government reimburses the district on a per-meal basis every month. (Because of a federal waiver for COVID-19, all meals this school year are offered free to students.) Roaring Fork School District relies on federal funding because it has a large number of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, which the government reimburses. Along with that financial support comes regulations.

“The USDA sets forth nutritional guidelines that we have to meet on a weekly basis,” says Maese. “We have to have hot meat and vegetarian entrées, such as beef nachos and cheese nachos. We offer fresh fruits and vegetables every day. [The selection is] not as robust as I would like it to be or have experienced in the past, and because of COVID we have to pre-package all of our fruits and vegetables. So, we'll pre-portion things like peaches and broccoli—but there is no limit on fruits and vegetables for students.”

As part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, a law signed by President Obama and promoted by then-First Lady Michelle Obama, school lunch requirements were updated to include almost double the amount of fruits and vegetables, among other changes.

Maese ensures these guidelines are met for the 2,400 students who eat hot lunch across 13 schools from Basalt to Glenwood Springs. “To be able to provide these fruits and vegetables, even though they're not all from Colorado or organic, a fresh fruit or vegetable is much better than not having it at all,” he says. “That we're continuing to offer those choices is huge.”

Farm to table, directly

Since 2013, the USDA has also had a Farm to Schools program, granting funds to provide schools with local food. But it's not just outside funding that makes local sourcing happen in Roaring Fork Valley schools. In fact, at Colorado Rocky Mountain School, the farm providing produce is run by the school itself and integrated into its curriculum.

“Our mission is a production garden,” says Heather McDermott, director of the CRMS garden program. “We produce a lot of food, and our customer is the dining hall. We feed students three meals a day, as well as the staff and community.”

The private boarding and day college-prep school sits on 300 acres straddling the Roaring Fork River. Part of that land—a historic ranch—has been converted into gardens, an effort that McDermott has ramped up in her six years at the helm. The gardens provide about 40 percent of the produce that the kitchen uses year round, feeding roughly 200 people daily during the school year. “We can't meet all their needs, but we take a big chunk out of it,” she says.

While the Aspen schools' Magical Garden was dormant last year because of COVID precautions, students this fall prepped the beds for hopeful planting in the spring. PHOTO BY DAN BAYER





Colorado Rocky Mountain School garden program students carry bundles of carrots through one of their harvested fields as winter approaches in Carbondale. PHOTO BY KELSEY BRUNNER

“There is no limit on fruits and vegetables for students.”

—Octavio Maese, Roaring Fork School District

Last year, the school harvested 3,000 pounds of onions, which they were able to store in a root cellar and use throughout the year. Because there are fewer students on campus during the summer, when the produce starts to peak, McDermott has to balance growing preservable items with those that can be eaten during August, September, and October when there’s an abundance of food. Some vegetables and fruits can be frozen for use throughout the year, or made into sauces like pesto and marinara. In the summer, excess produce is donated to Lift-Up; this summer, more than 500 pounds of zucchini and cucumber were given to the food pantry.

Feeding the staff and students is important, but so is the process of learning how to grow food. CRMS students participate in a variety of service programs—many sign up for garden work. With an on-campus greenhouse, this engagement can happen throughout the school year, and it includes seeding and prepping for the school’s annual community spring plant sale, which nets \$15,000 from growing and selling more than 8,000 plants. Additionally, the garden weaves into various curricula: Biology students study soil science and composting, health classes study nutrition, and photography students have an image treasure trove. “When you’re a part of the food that you’re eating—when you’re outside digging potatoes and the next day you turn around and eat them—you have a greater appreciation for the food,” says Stella Guy Warren, a senior at CRMS.

Even though Warren is a day student and Carbondale resident, she eats lunch every day on campus and often dinner too. “I think it’s easy to not know where your food is coming from and just show up to eat,” she says.

Warren’s appreciation is palpable, but not every student develops that while at school.

“Students who have gone here then go on to come back and say, ‘This is where I started gardening,’” says McDermott. “It is a more mature thing. But let’s get kids to try to get this concept early instead of only appreciating once they leave.”

Across all three school entities, food and nutrition awareness is key. Yes, eating healthy is paramount and has immediate effects on kids’ learning habits. But creating healthy habits for a lifetime is the long-term goal.

“One of the best things about my job is seeing kids as kindergarteners, and now they’re all graduating,” says Folk. “It’s really cool to see them develop and learn to appreciate food all along the way.”

That gratitude may come in the form of a graduation speech. Often, it’s more nuanced. Smiles, thank yous, and second helpings are all tokens of encouragement. But the greatest satisfaction comes in knowing that students are well fed—with real food. 🍅



many
lush
rooms
among us

Photography by Dan Bayer








Previous page: Light shines through gills on the underside of a mushroom cap. Left: A common yellow russula makes landfall on the forest floor. Like others, this mushroom prefers a wet environment and will fruit after rainfall.

Top left: Poisonous *amanita muscaria* color the forest landscape. A forager's rule of thumb suggests avoiding mushrooms with white gills and those with red on the cap or stem. Top right and bottom left: Midsummer rains brought on a bounty of *boletus edulis*, edible mushrooms known more commonly as boletes or porcinis, in the valley. Bottom right: The buttery gills of a wild mushroom stand out against the otherwise crunchy groundcover in fall.

CAPTIONS BY TESS BEARDELL





“The ground’s generosity
takes in our compost
and grows beauty!
Try to be more like
the ground.”

—Rumi

Fully Baked

Local bakeries rise to the occasion. | By Linda Hayes

Anyone who has ever pulled a loaf of homemade bread (or any favorite baked good, for that matter) from the oven knows the immense satisfaction that act can bring. Then there's the ritual of waiting—or not—for the item to cool, as heavenly aromas set mouths to watering. And the satisfaction of taking that first indulgent bite? Well, you know.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this ritual became a panacea of sorts to many of us. While my husband is the baker in the family for all things sweet, I've nurtured sourdough starters and my pizza crusts stand up to my New York roots. Still, a golden loaf with a perfect interior crumb or a perfectly turned-out blueberry tart is something I can't seem to quite pull off. Fortunately, creative artisan bakeries—and bakers—in our region are making it easier than ever to partake in such wonders (or to order them, at least).



DAN BAYER



A plethora of pastries, crumbles, and other tasty treats decorates the racks and fly off the Louis' Swiss bakery shelves.

Local grains, community values

“Baking attracts good people,” says Chris Sullivan, co-owner of Mountain Oven Organic Bakery along with his life partner, Dana Whitcomb. And from the mellow scene inside their 6,000-square-foot industrial production bakery in Paonia, as well as the Edesia Community Kitchen they manage, the sentiment rings true.

Every Friday morning from 8 to 11 a.m., locals and nonlocals alike who come by foot, bike, or car to purchase pies, breads, muffins, and other freshly baked goods end up communing at a hodgepodge of tables and sofas. “Integrating with the community and breaking bread is something we encourage,” says Whitcomb. “It’s one of our core values to uphold that tradition.” During the early days of the pandemic, the welcoming space provided the much-needed chance to commune safely.

After founding Mountain Oven in 2010 in Crested Butte, where they honed their craft, Sullivan and Whitcomb relocated in 2018 to Paonia, which boasts the largest concentration of organic or sustainable growers, ranchers, orchardists, and vintners in the state. “It was an opportunity to go deeper into the local food movement that had started to take shape there,” says Whitcomb.

Over the years, the bakery has developed a dedicated following of folks who line up at Mountain Oven stands at the Aspen Saturday Market and the Crested Butte Farmers Market on Sundays for offerings that include Birdseed Bread (a 100-percent fresh-milled, local-grain loaf), Honey Oat loaves (toasted local hull-less oat groats are cooked into porridge then folded into dough), Hungry Bunny carrot muffins (a staple

“In addition to increased flavor and nutrition, fresh-milled grain brings it home and makes the connection between what we are consuming and providing so obvious.” —Dana Whitcomb

for 10 years), seasonal fruit or savory pies (ample butter folded into the dough), and plenty more.

Preparation for the summer markets—the business’s most lucrative endeavor, around which the rest of the year is spent “ruminating and building,” according to Whitcomb—is intense. “We prep all week,” says Sullivan. “Obviously, we use machines [commercial mills, sifters, mixers] to help, but everything is made by hand in here.”

The day before market day, bread dough is mixed and set to develop. After proofing, or rising, in canvas-lined baskets, hand-shaped loaves start going into stone hearth steam-injected ovens around 8 the following morning. The pastry baker shows up in the afternoon, works until 2 a.m., then packs everything into a van and hits the road with the bakery crew at 5 a.m. It’s a nearly 24-hour routine.

Lately, Sullivan and Whitcomb have been championing the growing of local grains as a viable crop by regional farmers, such as Steve and Anne Ziemer at Immunity Farms in Lazear, who grow and harvest a crop of Rouge de Bordeaux wheat used in Mountain Oven’s Sesame Rouge loaves. North Fork Organics grows and harvests organic golden Hard Spring Wheat, Mountain Oven’s primary wheat, now milled in house in a custom New American Stone Mill from Vermont.

The value of working so much with local grains? “In addition to increased flavor and nutrition, fresh-milled grain brings it home and makes the connection between what we are consuming and providing so obvious,” says Whitcomb. “It’s a huge value.”

Mountain Oven also offers a selection of fresh stone-milled local flours for sale for home bakers, including whole-wheat flour, high-extraction (sifted) all-purpose flour, pastry flour, rye flour, and more. Sullivan and Whitcomb are also planning to begin wholesale distribution to the Roaring Fork Valley this winter. And they deliver to the Roaring Fork Valley holiday orders for pies, holiday breads, cookie boxes, croissants, and more for both Thanksgiving and Christmas. Orders must be placed through Mountain Oven’s website.

395 Clark Ave., Paonia, (970) 765-7130, bread@mountainoven.com, mountainoven.com

BRITTA GUSTAFSON



Mountain Oven Organic Bakery owners Chris Sullivan and Dana Whitcomb are enthusiastic about the bakery's new grain mill, the only mill of its kind in the region, providing 100 percent local grain.







DAN BAYER

Left and above: Louis' Swiss Pastry rolls out an assortment of baked goods daily.



BRITTA GUSTAFSON

A turnover at Louis' Swiss

Tradition speaks loudly at Louis' Swiss Pastry—the venerable little bakery tucked off to the side of the Aspen Business Center and a longtime go-to spot for early-morning cups of coffee and everything from honey buns to burritos for flight attendants, first responders, workers on their way into town, and locals on their way to catching a flight.

This past August, a sea change took place at Louis' Swiss, as longtime Aspenite and seasoned chef Andrew Helsley—most recently Aspen Skiing Company's executive chef and a board member of the Farm Collaborative, which publishes this magazine—took over the place turnkey from previous owner Felix Tornare, whose father brought the business over from Switzerland in 1982.

"It's an institution and the largest bakery in the valley, with 150 wholesale accounts, including lots of little coffee shops and restaurants that take pastries from us," says Helsley, who now participates in everything from pouring coffee for customers in the front of the shop to frying donuts, shaping bread, and otherwise "helping out the guys in the back" of the 3,000-square-foot facility.

Partnering with Helsley on the business side is Jill Soffer, another longtime local, philanthropist, and passionate home baker. Amanda Johansen, formerly pastry chef at The Little Nell, was recruited as head baker—her broad skill set showing itself in the production of cookies, pies, cakes, and finished desserts, as well as buttery puff pastries and croissants. It's an ideal situation for Helsley, who, among lots of other things, is concentrating on experimenting with different types of what he calls his "new bread," including sourdough, and techniques that might take longer to produce.

Down the road, Helsley sees making better use of the little lawn space beside the shop (perhaps offering wi-fi for those who want to linger and connect). New products may turn up on the shelves and in the bakery shop case, and going 100 percent organic on the baked-goods side is a possibility down the road. For the time being, Helsley says, "We're a local and sustainable business, and a happy workplace with big, exciting things to come."

400 Aspen Airport Business Center, Aspen, (970) 925-8592, louisswisspastry.com



Above: At Louis' Swiss Pastry, bagels are freshly baked in the early morning hours and often sell out before 10 a.m.

Left: Lines are out the door at Mountain Oven Organic Bakery on Friday mornings, as smells of fresh croissants and pastries waft through the air while bakers greet each patron with as much warmth as the goodies they sell.

Our Daily Bread

Granetta Panini

Fiona McCullough has been a legend in the Roaring Fork Valley since she began turning out artisan breads from her Grana Bread bakery in Basalt in the late 1990s. These days, she can be found plying her skills in the little, custom-built blue and yellow wagon on the corner of 4th and Colorado in Carbondale. From small bread ovens, she turns out 50 traditional mini baguettes a day from a basic (long slow fermentation and a tiny amount of yeast) bread dough for European-style ham-and-butter and breakfast sandwiches with local eggs. Morning buns and seasonal fruit tarts are treats.

54 4th St., Carbondale

(970) 230-2817, granetta.com

Tuesday–Friday, 7:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

French Pastry Café

Margarita Alvarez took over this sweet little bakery in 2018 after working for original owner Franck Thirion for more than 10 years. During that time, she learned the secrets to turning out buttery almond, chocolate, and now ham-and-cheese croissants. Other handmade favorites include cinnamon rolls, apple turnovers, fruit-and-almond-cream tarts, and other treats. Keeping with the shop's tradition, she also learned how to make baguettes from "a French friend," which she also supplies to local restaurants like Betula. All this from a mighty bread oven Thirion had imported from France. (Look for some Mexican specialties coming up, too.)

111 Aspen Business Center, Suite G,

(970) 925-3569, frenchpastrycafe.com

Monday–Saturday, 7:30 a.m.–3 p.m.

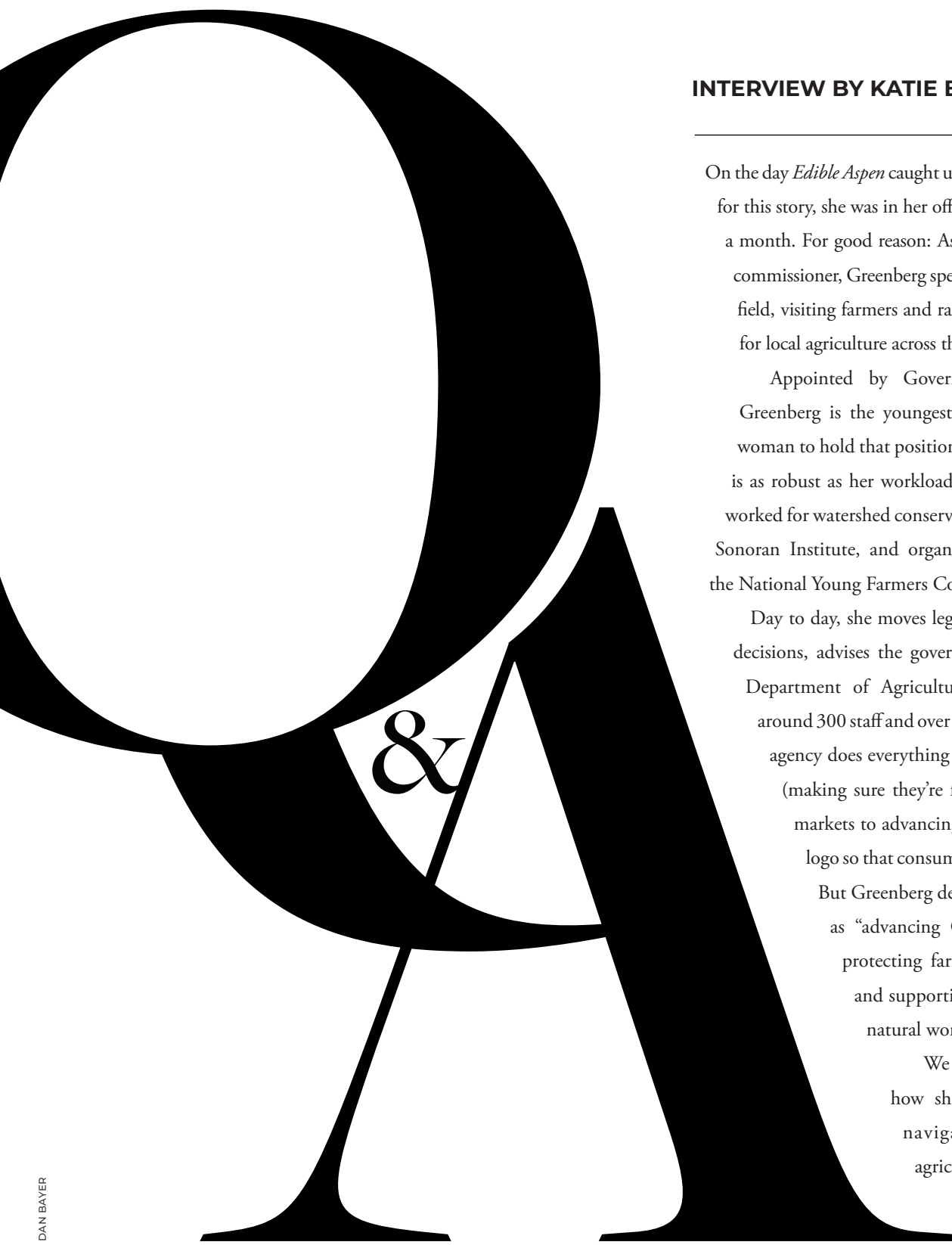
Shepherd Bread

Every Friday in his Carbondale bakery, Dave Biber hand mixes dough for the nearly 100 fully organic, naturally leavened loaves of sourdough bread he bakes directly on the stone hearth of a 500-degree Swedish deck oven. While he learned the basics of breadmaking at renowned Della Fattoria in Petaluma, California, the formula (that means recipe in bakers' terms) evolved over the last 10 years or so to produce the beautiful, golden-crust loaves. Find them at Skip's Farm to Market in Basalt, MANA Foods in Carbondale, and the Redstone General Store.

Colorado's warming climate is creating major challenges for the ag community, and Kate Greenberg's department is responding with measures that support farmers and help with resilience.

Advancing Ag

State commissioner tends a bumper crop of challenges.



INTERVIEW BY KATIE BRIMM

On the day *Edible Aspen* caught up with Kate Greenberg for this story, she was in her office for the first time in a month. For good reason: As the state’s agriculture commissioner, Greenberg spends a lot of time in the field, visiting farmers and ranchers and advocating for local agriculture across the state.

Appointed by Governor Polis in 2018, Greenberg is the youngest person and the first woman to hold that position, and her background is as robust as her workload: She’s been a farmer, worked for watershed conservation organization the Sonoran Institute, and organized farmers through the National Young Farmers Coalition.

Day to day, she moves legislation, makes policy decisions, advises the governor, and oversees the Department of Agriculture, which comprises around 300 staff and over 75 program areas. Her agency does everything from taring the scales (making sure they’re fairly set) for farmers’ markets to advancing the Colorado Proud logo so that consumers know to buy local. But Greenberg describes her job simply as “advancing Colorado agriculture, protecting farmers and consumers, and supporting stewardship of the natural world.”

We checked in to hear how she’s helping Colorado navigate the future of agriculture.

“For farmers and ranchers, it’s incredibly difficult to be innovative [on climate change] when you’re underwater, or when you have no water, or when you’re figuring out if you have to cull your herd, and if [your career] is over.”



Kate Greenberg is the first woman and youngest person to serve as Colorado agriculture commissioner.

Q What are the most pressing issues for young and beginning farmers in Colorado today?

The issues we’ve seen for a long time are still front and center: land access and affordability, and access to credit and financing. How do you get a foot in the door? There’s still some major barriers to entry. Issues of climate are becoming so much of the lived experience, really for every farmer and rancher, but beginning farmers and ranchers are really stepping into it now.

Q How does your department address those issues?

We’re standing up a new \$30 million revolving loan fund intended to target beginning farmers and ranchers, and have the authority to enter into the lending landscape by partnering with financial institutions to distribute those loans. Success for that program is to remove barriers to financing for underserved farmers and ranchers. For a lot of beginning farmers without access to land or from a farm family, you first need experience to build a case for why you should be eligible for a loan. So, we also support paid internships through the Agricultural Workforce Development Program. On climate, we passed a bill creating the Agricultural Drought and Climate Resilience Office. There’s also the Soil Health Initiative, looking at tools in the production and food supply chain where farmers and ranchers have autonomy and agency to make decisions that help mitigate climate change and build resilience. We’ve fought hard for a renewable energy program, allowing us to help cover the costs for farmers and ranchers to site renewable projects on their operations.

Q How is agriculture adapting with climate change, and how is your department responding?

Adaptation is being led locally: Folks are thinking about different crops, or how to grow while putting water back into the system. But for farmers and ranchers, it’s incredibly difficult to be innovative when you’re underwater, or when you have no water, or when you’re figuring out if you have to cull your herd, and if [your career] is over. As an agency, it wasn’t until this year that we finally had a seat at the climate table with the Ag Drought and Climate Resilience Office. We’re building new program areas, shifting focuses and priorities, and trying to resource communities. Trying to support and remove barriers in partnership with producers so they can adapt in the way that makes sense for them.

Q Can you speak to the state of water?

We can’t grow without water, right? Nothing we do at the Department of Agriculture would be meaningful if we don’t have secure water for agriculture. So I’m trying to build our capacity to be at the water table. The water quantity issue is paramount: There’s a shortage on the Colorado River; we’re three years out from mandatory curtailment in the Republican River Basin and just a few years more out from the same in the Rio Grande. Agriculture is the first place that cuts are going to go. My hope is that as a state, and as a country, we continue on the track of collaborative decision-making. There *are* creative solutions.

Q How can the public help ensure a sustainable future for agriculture?

A lot of agriculture feels very alienated from the public, and misunderstood. So it’s critical for consumers to take the time and effort to engage directly with agriculture, whether through education, buying local food, asking farmers questions, or doing farm visits. Once people start meeting each other and learning more, they see how inherently connected we are. It’s headwater protection for our drinking water. It’s the capacity of our working lands for climate mitigation and carbon sequestration. And preserving that potential is one of the most fundamental needs right now for resilience. Understand we rely on each other, no matter where we live.



Dan Bayer

Helping new, young farmers get their foot in the door is one of the main challenges Greenberg's department is working on.

Q What's at stake if we lose our agricultural communities?

These ag communities are where people live, raise their families, build their life. We are one system. Our headwaters, forest health, watershed management—agriculture is a part of that. Private lands, bottom lands—and that's in a lot of places—agricultural production is preventing suburban development, if you can make it profitable. Do we like continuous open space for beauty, aesthetic, or wildlife habitat, or the potential to sequester carbon? Because box homes don't sequester carbon.

Q Tell us a story about a farmer or rancher that touched your heart recently.

Dallas and Brenda May ranch in southeast Colorado, outside of Lamar. They received the 2021 Leopold Conservation Award. I got to drive around with them and tour their ranch. They have figured out ways to integrate nature and support a functioning ecosystem, while supporting a very well-functioning and financially sound working ranch. They showed me their beaver ponds and the hundreds of bird species that come through, and how they manage their herd and what they do on their irrigated farm ground for soil health. It's not just driving toward yield at the expense of the system as a whole. What was inspiring was they see all these points of connection and synergy with nature in their operation.

Q You're the first woman and youngest person to hold this position in Colorado. What's that experience been like?

Many of the rooms I'm in are full of men whose wives are at home, running the business, essentially. This role has allowed me to connect with those women who weren't really sure if their opinion mattered or had a place in making decisions off the farm. If me being a woman in this role can do anything for other women, I hope it's that they understand that their voices are absolutely essential. 🍷

“Do we like continuous open space for beauty, aesthetic, or wildlife habitat, or the potential to sequester carbon? Because box homes don't sequester carbon.”





Bound only to the seasons beat out by Mother Nature, the delicate unfurling of a dill flower orients human position in the natural world. Intricate umbels blossom from bunches of July buds and delight us into the midsummer bounty. By September's call, yellow hues cease and flower petals fall. At this altar, seeds dry brown and stand out tall. Waiting to be blown free, or harvested into a bin for you and me.

PHOTO BY DAN BAYER | TEXT BY TESS BEARDELL

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Lunch Lines

Celebrating 75 years of ski-in, ski-out dining on Aspen Mountain
By Eliza Burlingame

Besides your choice line down a powder-filled run, lines are rarely a welcome sight on a ski hill. Add a made-to-order burger into the equation, however, and waiting in a lift line doesn't seem so bad.

The Ski Inn Restaurant, one of Aspen Mountain's original eateries, revolutionized lunch on the go with lift-line delivery. Housed in a wooden cabin at the base of Lift One (on the west side of the mountain near where Lift 1A, the Shadow Mountain chair, is today), the "refreshment hut" took orders from skiers as they approached the lift and delivered their lunch in line to be enjoyed on the long single-chair ride to the top.

Entrepreneurial part-time Aspenites Chuck Worth and Jerry Kochka had renovated an old house into this short-order restaurant. In *The Aspen Times* on March 23, 1950, the duo announced the opening of "the world's first Ski Inn, Aspen's version of a drive-inn [sic], directly under the world's longest chair lift." The menu featured typical lunch fare: "a large table spread with sandwiches," coffee, and Coca-Cola. Hot tea, chocolate milk, and apples were 10 cents, "hamburgs" were offered at 25 cents, and hot dogs and candy bars cost skiers 5 cents.

Unfortunately for early riders of Lift One, the hut burned down in 1953 in a blaze that likely started from grease on an overheated grill. Though no other on-mountain establishment has offered such expeditious delivery service since, dining on the hill has perhaps become as popular a ritual as skiing itself.

Following the fire, the Ski Inn's second owners, Howard and Jean Awrey (who also operated the Sundeck at the time), filled the gap in base-area eats with the Skier's Café. Built slightly uphill from the Ski Inn the following year, the still-standing, chalet-style building would eventually become the Skier's Chalet Steakhouse, which lasted until 2005. (The historic building is slated to once again serve food and drinks under a redevelopment plan for the neighborhood.)



Skiers waiting in line for Lift One order lunch from the Ski Inn Restaurant at the base of Aspen Mountain, around 1952. Aspen Historical Society, Mary Eshbaugh Hayes Collection

Another innovative establishment called the Wayward Bus (think Aspen's first food truck) also offered on-the-go fare for skiers in the first few decades of Lift One. Likely named by a Steinbeck fan, the lunch counter advertised "curb service" and was run by Stan Johnson, Dean Billings, and Ralph Jackson. As skiing on Aspen Mountain boomed in the years that followed, Ruthie's Restaurant, further upslope at the top of Lift 1A, opened in the early 1980s and served skiers until it closed 2006.

Though the challenges of operating full-service restaurants as high as 11,212 feet are great, the mountain's culinary mainstays have become Aspen bucket-list destinations. The

Sundeck, originally designed by Herbert Bayer, was a hard sell for Aspen Mountain visionary Friedl Pfeifer, who had to persuade investors of the need for a warming hut at the top of the lifts, complete with a restaurant and bathrooms, "especially for our lady skiers," Pfeifer wrote in his biography, *Nice Goin': My Life on Skis*. However, since opening in 1946 in conjunction with the first Lift One, it has become internationally renowned for its high-altitude views and high-end fare. Now in its 75th anniversary season, following several renovations and boasting a LEED-certified, environmentally friendly design, it is not uncommon for guests to ride the gondola sans skis to enjoy lunch on the deck.

Perhaps even more popular among some skiers and riders (despite lacking direct lift access), Bonnie's, previously Gretl's, originally opened in 1966 as Tourtelotte Restaurant. A pit-stop panacea, its legendary apple strudel, pancakes, soups, and sandwiches draw fans of all ages. These days, the scene at Bonnie's is often the only line you'll see on Aspen Mountain. 🍷

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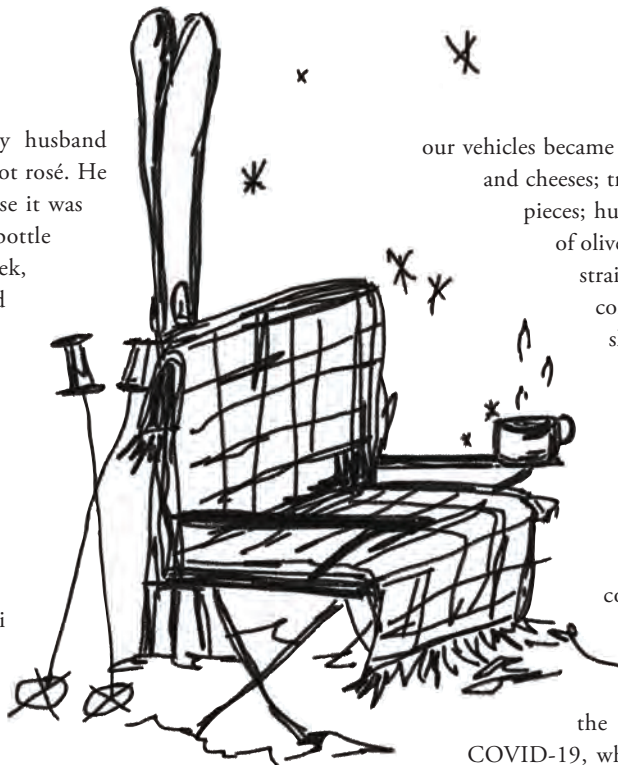
COVID-born ski-day tradition does more than fill bellies. By Ali Margo

For my birthday early last March, my husband bought me a nice bottle of Veuve Clicquot rosé. He knew I would like the champagne because it was pink and bubbly, but also because the bottle came with (no joke) its own jacket—a sleek, fitted pink case with a gold zipper and handsome leather handle to insulate the bottle and keep it cold, though that was not an issue when we drank it outside during an Aspen winter.

We cracked the bottle open in the parking lot at the base of the mountain and poured the champagne into plastic cups to share with our friends during what had become a weekly ritual: enjoying our own version of après-ski during that long COVID-influenced winter. Instead of packing into crowded bars, or herding our ruddy-cheeked, wild-haired children into base-area restaurants for overpriced hot chocolate they'd quickly lose interest in while we rushed to finish a pitcher of beer before the tired kids started having meltdowns, we would gather outdoors.

Every weekend, we'd meet up with other families after our ski day at an outer lot that's popular among locals for its proximity to the lift and remoteness from bustling, touristy base areas. We would take up residence in the far corner of the lot, where several Sprinter vans were strategically parked to share common space, with the sliding doors facing each other for easy access to refrigerators and stovetops. Over the course of the winter season, our parking lot après setups became more elaborate, comprised of more and more of our best car-camping gear: an outdoor rug, a few collapsible tables adorned with red-and-white-checkered tablecloth, Yeti coolers, insulated Thermoses and can koozies, plastic plates and flatware, kerosene firepits, gas grills, and an assortment of slouchy camping chairs for lounging, often with down blankets draped across our laps to ward off the late-afternoon cold.

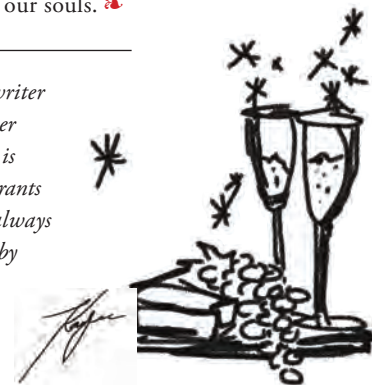
As our setup got more elaborate, so did our food. What started as a few beers cracked open from coolers that took up permanent residence in



our vehicles became beautiful serving platters of charcuterie and cheeses; triangular bars of Toblerone, broken into pieces; hummus and crackers with an assortment of olives; and once, a fresh batch of chili served straight out of the hot pot with homemade cornbread muffins, sour cream, and shredded cheese. We ate it out of coffee mugs, still steaming hot. For the kids, I'd make real hot chocolate from full-fat milk and bars of Ghirardelli I'd melted over a double boiler the night before, piled high with mini-marshmallows straight out of the bag.

It's true that sitting outside in the cold—trying to figure out how to drink cocktails with your mittens still on, or how to score the best spot for the most sun before it dropped below the ridge—was a necessity born out of COVID-19, when whatever pleasure could be gained from gathering inside had been desecrated by the inherent risk. But in many ways, spending time together outside was so much better. The kids could play, often sledding or building jumps so epic they had to put their skis back on. The adults could spend quality time together without worrying about who would pay the bill or how much it would cost or whether the last parking shuttle had already left. We could also eat—our fingers cold, cheeks flushed, and legs tired from a day on the slopes—satisfying our hunger but also feeding our souls. ❄️

Ali Margo is a freelance writer who lives in Basalt with her family and two pugs. She is thrilled to return to restaurants but her favorite meal is always at her home, surrounded by friends and family.





Straight from the Source

One of our goals at *Edible Aspen* is to elevate the hard work and invaluable contributions of our region’s local food producers, food entrepreneurs, and those working toward food equity. And one way we’re doing that is with our biannual User’s Manuals. Published in spring and fall, and complementing the more editorially robust summer and winter issues, these magazines are practically oriented. With useful, informational articles and beautiful, inspiring images, the User’s Manual is centered on the Local Food Source Guide, an updated listing and maps of farms and ranches, restaurants, markets, and beer, wine, and spirits producers that focus on local, seasonal, and sustainably produced ingredients. We also include food pantries and other organizations that provide access to fresh, local food for those who otherwise might not be able to buy it regularly—because everyone should be able to enjoy the fruits of their foodshed.

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