

notable edibles

Join a CSA

According to Dartmouth College's Sustainability Institute, on average, 65 cents out of every dollar you spend for food at the supermarket go for packaging, delivery and marketing. Thirty cents go to chemical companies that make fertilizers, pesticides and genetically altered organisms. That leaves five cents for the farmer.

If you wonder why farms are failing (over 20,000 a year go under in the U.S.), that's why. If you wonder why your food tastes more factory-made than something fresh and alive, that's also why.

Winter is the time to choose a farm to get behind by joining their CSA program. CSA stands for "community-supported agriculture." It works like this: You sign up with a local farm (even in urban areas there can be local farms), paying for a whole season in advance or in regular installments. Once a week you get a load of fresh-picked goodies, whatever is ripe and in season. Some Front Range CSA farms also add options for flowers, Western Slope fruits, even fair-trade coffee.

The farmers know in advance how much to plant; they also get paid up front, so they can afford the seed and tools to get going. They share risk and luck with the customers; if the early lettuce freezes, everyone has to wait for the second planting; if there's a great year for melons, everyone gets extra melons. Since most CSA farmers plant dozens of crops, the deliveries tend to be lush every week.

The customers get produce the day it's picked, not stuff that has been shipped thousands of miles. They know how it is grown; many pick it up right at the farm. They know the farmers. They can ask questions and provide feedback. Hey, how about more fresh dill? And a tad less zucchini? *LE*

To find a CSA farm to join go to localharvest.org/csa/ and enter your zip code.

The Godfather of Sausages

Some of our favorite commercial products are those that started as a family tradition, became a hit with friends, then mercifully wound up on a store's shelf where you can buy them anytime you want. That's how Mulay's Sausage Corporation got its start at the popular Independence Day celebration in the laid-back mountain town of Crested Butte, the enterprise's home base.

Loree Mulay-Weisman and her husband, Ward, developed a cult following around the country by selling Italian sausage sandwiches at several Crested Butte summer festivals over the years. "For that first festival gathering we spent 12 hours making 400 sausages with a Kitchen Aid—grinding fresh lean pork, mixing spices and stuffing the sausage by hand," recalls Mulay-Weisman.

Mulay's Sausage is made according to a centuries-old recipe from Sicily, Italy, passed down by Mulay-Weisman's family. The Mulay family crest dates back to the year 1326 in Palermo, Sicily, and reached the United States when her great-grandparents immigrated and settled in Pueblo.

The recipe for Mulay's Sausage has stayed all natural, with no nitrates, preservatives, artificial colors or hormones. Today, their product line includes mild Italian, hot Italian, killer hot Italian and breakfast sausage, all sold as links or ground; brats and chorizo will be coming soon.

Find them in most Vitamin Cottage stores and many independent stores throughout the region. You can also purchase sausage online at thesausagelink.com. I recommend the "killer hot." *LE*

Mulay's Sausage Corporation

970-349-1423

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(left) Photo by Carol Topalian; (right) Photo courtesy of Loree Mulay-Weisman



Organic Vegetable Gardening Class with Sue Oberle

Veggie gardening is so much more than raising a few beans. There are sensual flavors and colors, pride of accomplishment and exercise. The only thing better is doing it organically! Join Sue Oberle to learn how you can successfully grow veggies as beautiful as those grown conventionally while benefiting yourself and our environment.

On Feb. 7 Sue will offer a class at Fort Collins Nursery with local chef Linda Hoffman, owner of Come Back to the Table. They will prepare a menu of mostly local foods that all can sample. Linda focuses on the cooking/nutrition side of things while Sue will talk about growing and season extension. There will also be a discussion on preserving the bounty of the harvest. See comebacktothetable.com

On February 28, Sue will teach a class on organic vegetable growing at the High Plains Garden. For a class description, see fcgov.com/utilities/highplains.php

Editor's note: After working 10 years on the same leased land, this January Sue was told her land was being converted into an RV storage area. She sent out an announcement to friends and wrote me about the replies: "I've been overwhelmed by the support I've gotten from people. People are crawling out of the woodwork to help us move our operation, lend land to store things, etc. I've got a bunch of meetings in the next few days, but (holding breath and fingers crossed) there is a very good chance we'll be able to purchase our own small acreage soon, at least have a place to set things into the ground until we can recoup." It's a good community we've got here.

The Pickle Next Door—Mountain Valley Canning

When I invited Andy Jesik to an end-of an issue party, this was his reply "Thanks for the invitation for your party tomorrow; it's looking doubtful, we are in the middle of preparing 5,000 pounds of cabbage..."

Mountain Valley Canning, conceived in 2007, is the brine-child of Andy and his partner Nathan Shafer. Andy's family has been in Colorado for over 150 years passing down time honored traditions and recipes.

MVC's mission is to provide great canned food that revives the idea of preserving locally grown food from your own yard or a local farmers. Nathan and Andy are the Dear Abby of fermentation—helping countless would-be canners, and offering numerous tours and classes at their kitchen for students to learn about food preservation—all free of charge.

When the produce is in season they go to the farms and get the cucumbers, cabbage, onions, peaches, and horseradish right from the fields.

Many of you may know them from the Boulder, Longmont, or Lafayette farmers' markets. In high season they offer six jarred products: sauerkraut, raw sauerkraut, bread and butter pickles, dill pickles, horseradish, and peaches.

In winter you can still obtain the sauerkraut, bread and butter pickles, dill pickles, and horseradish. They will also have raw sauerkraut (yum and so nutritious!) available year round, but only by special order.

Look for their products at the Wheat Ridge Meat and Poultry store, the Redstone Meadery in Boulder, the Niwot Market, and the Colorado Cupboard in Longmont. You can also order from their online store, or with a phone call. They'll deliver for five dollars from downtown Denver to Longmont. *LE*

Mountain Valley Canning

720-206-5714

or 720-280-0755

mountainvalleycanning.com



(left) Photo courtesy of Sue Oberle; (right) Photo by Megan Newton

Agriburbia: Growing More Than Houses in the 'burbs

Agriburbia is a new land-use concept that integrates aspects of agrarianism with land development.

"Up till now, housing developers just focused on shelter," said Quint Redmond, who coined and trademarked the Agriburbia concept. "We want to address the human need of food the best we can. We believe agriculture is part of the infrastructure of a development."

Redmond, owner of Golden-based real estate design company the TSR Group, sees Agriburbia as the coming wave for residential development.

Agriburbia aims to keep neighborhood open space and wildlife habitat included in residential development plans, but adds one or more agricultural components to the mix. Those components can range from individual vegetable garden spaces to community agriculture projects to full-scale agricultural enterprises, such as vineyards and a winery, within the same development.

The TSR Group has a few Agriburbia projects under way, with a 994-dwelling-unit project in Milliken leading the way. The project, called Platte River Village, has received preliminary approval from the town of Milliken and is ready to proceed pending financing.

In the Milliken proposal, the 618-acre Agriburbia design keeps almost 50 percent of the previously tilled land in production by leaving much of the perimeter and some of the interior of the subdivision open for the growing of high-yield crops.

Redmond said the Agriburbia concept is based on a lifestyle common in the past. "Living close to your food is not a new idea—people used to do that all the time," he said, recalling the Victory Gardens that people grew during World War II.

Redmond is convinced that the old idea of subdivision development is about to change. "I think it's dead in the water, the old type of suburbia," he said. "You can't spend all that money on infrastructure and not get more out of it. We can't keep spreading out without growing stuff in between." *LE*

Questions? Contact Quint at qredmond@theTSRgroup.com



Lots of land in this plan.

The Colorado Agriculture "Big and Small" Conference and Trade Show February 18 - 21, 2009 in the 4-H Building, Island Grove Park, Greeley, Colorado

The "Big and Small" trade show provides an opportunity to explore the worlds of traditional and organic farming. Participants will meet with other producers, view presentations by agriculture industry professionals, and even sample cuisine made from Colorado-grown fare.

The conference will address consumers' growing interest in local and organic products by giving local producers a place to network and learn about the latest techniques in the crop and livestock industry.

A tour of organic farms sponsored by the Colorado Producers Association Organic (COPA) will kick off the conference on February 18th. The tour will provide an in-depth look at how any size operation can incorporate organic practices.

The conference is hosted by Colorado State University Extension, Wyoming Cooperative Extension, COPA Mountain Plains Farm Credit, Aurora Organic Dairy, WSARE, and West Greeley Conservation District.

More information at coloradoagriculturebigandsmall.com



Colorado's First Bourbon

This isn't mountain moonshine, but high-end small-batch bourbon. Using only Colorado ingredients Peach Street Distillers has released their first (legal) bourbon—"Peach Street Distillers' Straight Bourbon Whiskey." Each 750-milliliter bottle is hand-numbered by distiller Davy Lindig and features a black wax-dipped top. The first release featured only 200 bottles.

In order to be legally considered bourbon, as opposed to whiskey, ingredients must be at least 51 percent corn and aged for a minimum of two years in a new American oak barrel that has been charred, according to Packaging Manager Danny Wilson. "We use more like 60 percent corn," Wilson said. "Also, bourbon doesn't have to come from Bourbon County in Kentucky in order to be called bourbon. That's just something they made up in Kentucky."

Rory Donovan founded Peach Street Distillers in November 2005 with Bill Graham and Dave Thibodeau. The group chose to locate the distillery in Palisade because its warm days, low humidity and cool nights create perfect growing conditions for fruits including grapes, apples and the famous Palisade Peaches. Although their bourbon doesn't contain fruit, all of their small-batch brandies are 100 percent fruit. Their other products include Goat Vodka and Jackalope Gin.

"We've slowly been filling barrels, and in January we're going to step up our production of bourbon and distill like crazy," Lindig said. Just take a peek into their barrel-aging warehouse, or "rick house," to see all the barrels lined up waiting to make bourbon.

"Waiting for this bourbon has proved to be quite an exercise in restraint, but the rewards are well worth it," said Donovan. "We haven't made up our minds yet as to how or how far we'll distribute the bourbon," said Wilson. Right now the bourbon can only be purchased in their tasting room in Palisade, but their other spirits can be found all over Colorado.

Peach Street Distillers

144 S. Kluge Ave., Building #2, Palisade, CO
970-464-1128 • peachstreetdistillers.com

Peach Street products can be found at:

Colorado Springs: Cheers Liquor Mart, 1105 N. Circle Dr.
Denver: Argonaut, 700 E. Colfax
Boulder: Liquor Mart, 1750 15th St.
Fort Collins: Crystals Liquor, 356 E. Harmony

Katherine Weadley