

FISH & GAME
MMXIII - MMXIV

SPRING

YEAR ONE



PATIENCE

I've been waiting a long time for this.

The ham was cut from the pig's carcass sixteen months ago. The breed was Tamworth: mild-mannered creatures with red bristles, a fine marbling throughout, and a ratio of meat to fat that we presumed was well suited to the prosciutto we set out to make.

I had done my best to cut the ham in such a way as to include all the hind muscle groups while not cutting into the loin. The cut was sweet: precise, that is. The ham, once separated, was round, smooth and appeared truly prosciutto-worthy, so we went ahead and buried it in sea salt. At a certain point, based on our somewhat loose calculations, we remembered to pull it from the salt, brush it off, and hang it up.

It's really quite simple. Cut the meat, salt the meat, hang the meat.

Just use quality meat. Only use quality meat. Always. Use. Quality. Meat.

More than a few variables exist between the salting and the finished product. We're working those out. Those are our secrets. I will say this: traditional methods, frowned upon by know-nothings and rhapsodized by the *cognoscenti*, seem to have a favorable effect. Yes, friends, there is no substitute for sweet country air.

Fifteen months after hanging in various spots in our verdant valley and



only days after the one-year anniversary of our opening of Fish & Game, we cut into our ham. Older than the restaurant itself, this is one of several pre-opening projects that is teaching us how the ingredients that end up in the kitchen ready for the evening's menu are years in the making. Our menu tonight, any night, began years ago.

Jori provided even greater examples of this idea when I showed her this essay. She wrote back to me: "We plant garlic in October and wait patiently until June/July to eat it... We start seeds in February for a plant we won't harvest until August. We plant puntarelle and asparagus and wait three years to harvest them... We do these things because of the beauty and the reward of having the connection and knowing we're doing it the right way, even though in this day and age it seems like the wrong way because it takes too long."

We knew we had to cut into this ham to determine if our curing and aging methods had taken the ham in the right direction—not because we were impatient, as impatient as we all seem to be in this age of immediate gratification—but because we have more hams hanging. Had this ham gone off, there was great likelihood the others were off as well.

This was our test.

We have no ham tester (the little hollow point needle used in Parma and other famous ham regions throughout the world) to stick into the meat and pull out a core sample. We do need to buy one of those.

To date, all the hams had been cured and hung in the exact same method, only at different times.

Holding the ham, smelling it, touching it, we all—Kevin, Jori and I—shared the feeling that everything would be all right. But we had to cut it to know: to taste the salt, the texture, to see whether or not some unwanted bacteria had crept inside, quietly rotting the meat from within, giving us false hope.

The meat was fine. Better than fine. It was a deep pink, with a tight grain and perfectly *à point* in its saltiness. Fifteen months is approximately nine months shy of when I'd like to be pulling the hams, however with more pigs queuing up for curing, we felt it prudent to check our oldest ham's progress to aid in guiding our future efforts.



Allowing the hams to hang for at least 24 months, I think, will afford them a more developed “nose:” greater complexity and a bit of funk in the aroma, adding greatly to the sensuous pleasure of consuming salt cured, air-dried pig.

The ham into which we cut is now a staple at the bar, served thinly sliced. Last week we also served it in the dining room wrapped around one of our eggs, soft boiled, and dressed with a ramp leaf salsa verde. Honestly, though, I prefer this kind of ham eaten on its own, perhaps accompanied by a glass (or two) of Malvasia from Emilia-Romagna... or perhaps even a dry cider, made nearby... or sherry, of course. With ham this good you can't really go wrong.

As Jori elucidated, the ham is only part of that for which I've been waiting. *The ham is the ham.*

The aforementioned waiting also pertains to the time, space and mindset

to make the ham and hang it in the manner we did: like having a garden and working the soil, allowing it to develop and knowing that what we do won't be truly great until the soil is rich with life. The waiting also refers to the spring that teased out its arrival following the deep freeze of this winter past. The waiting is what was and isn't anymore as I am here and definitely not there.

Waiting may not be the right word. I'm not sure that I or Jori or any of us immersed in this project were ever really *waiting*. I'm not one to pine. It's just nice to be here *giving it time* and allowing for life to take its time. Proper time. And I'm just conscious

enough to recognize that.

I am, however, also aware that the years, the winters, take their toll and, as Alvaro Mutis put it, on one's “face one could see the rigidity of controlled pain that is accepted as the price we must inevitably pay to go on being who we are.” The spring eventually softens this hard existence but the lines remain, remnants of the absence of mercy in nature. We have no choice other than to be OK with this.

On occasion something will trigger memories of the time I spent working and living in the city. There were times of elation, moments of inspiration, collaborations with great talents, long hours, weeks, months, intense and engaging discourse, fucking in cars parked outside three-star Michelin restaurants, apartment and neighborhood hopping, intentional decadence, drinking and over-eating, falling in love. Life happened. And as it did it brought memorable moments.

But for a good part of my time in the city after the turn of the millennium, there was a lingering discomfort: a dissatisfaction with the cynicism that surrounded the business, some bad partnerships, and the density, but most of all an unbridgeable disconnect with the product and conflicted feelings about the paradigm on which so many restaurants are built. That has changed. And now spring is here.

We at Fish & Game have created a unique situation in the Hudson Valley, the result of a fantasy shared by more than the people directly involved with the restaurant. What is being built and what has already come to pass at and around Fish & Game is part of a more general awakening. An attentiveness. A more considered style of living than I have ever witnessed or been a part of.

Being human and a still very much a New Yorker, I find it challenging not to quip that this “enlightenment” is probably due to our heightened sensitivity that the waste of our rampant consumerism is close to consuming us. Such unchecked growth is perhaps partially a result of too much of the “think big!” mentality, the mantra of industry titans and self-proclaimed masters of the universe.

I wonder now if it was hard for He-Man to see beyond his muscles.

I’ve begun to think of it this way: we’re not capable of much, yet the little bit we do can resonate far beyond our time. It is this small work, when done with great care and attention to detail – up and down the ladder of all the elements involved in our doing, before and after the doing is done – that is making this time more beautiful than any I have ever known. Witnessing this *and* being a part of it, has made the waiting – if only recognized after it has passed – worth it. And so I smile, knowingly, as I begin to understand that spring – the cutting of a ham and the green – is our annual reminder of the necessity of patience and its persistent beauty.





SPRING

The spring took its sweet time arriving.

Although winter weather fluctuates very cold/not that cold, lots of snow/no snow the land in the Hudson Valley remains largely unworkable, frozen, and unproductive.

Spring, however, transforms the earth from barren to verdant in short order. This spring looked a lot like winter until mid-April, so when it finally began to thaw, months of planning and longing for sun and fresh produce shifted quickly to production; the restaurant's expansive plans, pent up for so long, burst forth in several directions. As the sun crept higher in the sky and a slow-motion wave of green broke over the landscape, the crew eagerly rode it forward, building, planting, and foraging.

In anticipation of spring, Jori and Zach Kalas began germinating seeds in Patrick's heated garage. They built shelves, hung grow lights, and cloaked the racks in translucent covers for added warmth. The ground outside was still covered in snow, but within that garage glowed a Kubrickian assemblage of fluorescent light and organic material: a synthetic harbinger of spring's impending fertility.

As soon as the weather improved enough to work outdoors, Kevin, Zach Kalas, and Steve began building a chicken coop on an old trailer chassis, bought from a farmer and towed from the roadside





spot where it had languished unused for years, to house the laying hens that had just arrived as a passel of sixty tiny, fluffy, multicolored chicks. As they knocked the coop together on the first truly warm day of the year, maple sap tapped from the sugarbush down the hill reduced on a propane burner nearby. Inside the garage, the tented racks of seed starts flourished while the baby birds peeped, pecked, and scurried under heat lamps on the floor.

By the time some of the starts were ready for planting

outdoors in mid-April, there was enough happening at the farm to allow Zach Kalas to leave the kitchen and become the restaurant's dedicated farmer, working alongside Jori tending vegetables, chickens, and bees alike. In the evenings he delivers eggs and sprouts to the restaurant, communicating the day's progress to Kevin and Zak.

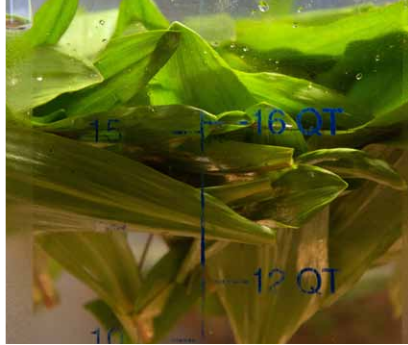
The fast-growing chicks were moved outside to a metal cage on the grass for a few days before getting introduced to the coop, towed out and parked in the field beyond the garden, and ringed with a solar-powered electric fence. In May, the transplanting began in earnest, along with direct sowing of more tender crops.

May also marked the beginning of serious foraging. Wild onions and ground ivy had already appeared, but the warm sun and regular rain brought forth a proliferation of ramps, marsh marigolds, angelica, garlic mustard, dandelions, yarrow, and others.

Zak spends each morning before service walking the fields and the woods, digging and snipping roots, stems and leaves for the week's menu. This daily perambulation, largely on the land surrounding their house, allows him to connect with the granular details of the season: what's popping up, what's peaking, what's past prime. Besides the sheer pleasure of the endeavor seasoned with occasional tedium in the form of pouring rain or poison ivy his ongoing interaction with the wild land informs the menu by providing both rich sensory stimulation and extended quiet for thinking.

All of these wild delicacies, many with unusual and slightly feral flavors, appeared: marsh marigold bud "capers," grilled ramps, wild onion broth for poaching halibut, angelica ice cream, peppermint roots puréed into crème fraîche for anointing braised beef, and plenty of delicate leaves and flowers used as garnishes. The most elegant of these, spear-shaped trout lily leaves mottled like patinated bronze, gracefully adorned prestigious





dishes like halibut and spit-roasted duck.

June sees the bees arrive. Zak secured a sufficient supply to ensure the restaurant would have a stock of honey to last an entire year: four hives should yield twelve gallons of liquid gold. The restaurant also split the cost of a centrifugal extractor with the farmer who supplied the hives. The discussion has currently turned to where to place them, as proximity to different flowers can produce wildly different results.

The restaurant has only been open for a year, but there's no doubt that more ground has been covered, literally and figuratively, in the last three months than any other period so far.

JORI'S RAMP KIMCHI

3 LBS RAMPS

1 CUP WATER

1/4 CUP SEA SALT

1 LARGE HAND FRESH GINGER, JUICED

1/4 CUP HIGH QUALITY FISH SAUCE (MEGA CHEF, RED BOAT, HOMEMADE)

1/4 CUP UNPASTEURIZED YOGURT (OPTIONAL)

75G KOREAN CHILI FLAKES

25G BLACK SESAME SEEDS, TOASTED

8G ANISE SEED

Toss ingredients together, and allow them to macerate for 24 hours at room temperature. Pack the mixture into fermentation crock or lidded mason jar submerged in larger jar full of water* and store in a cool place.

Fermentation takes 3-8 weeks depending on temperature and batch size.

*For a detailed tutorial on this method, consult Jori's Tumblr:
<http://ladyjaynes.tumblr.com/post/80219036626/spring-ramps-kimchi-yes>





CLIMBING TREE FARM

NEW LEBANON, NY

Climbing Tree Farm started by accident. A few free sheep, used to tame an unruly lawn on an old family farm in Berlin, New York, led Colby and Schuyler Gail down the path toward growing animals for meat. Now, on about ten acres each of pasture and forest sloping down a mountainside in nearby New Lebanon, they raise heritage pigs, sheep, and poultry (chickens, plus geese and turkeys for the Holidays). All their animals live outside all year, and graze rotationally to allow the plants to recover between visits.

In both quantity and quality, the pigs are the stars of the Climbing Tree show. The soft-spoken, unassuming couple and their two young children tend heritage breeds and crossbreeds, some quite rare: Red Wattle, Berkshire, Gloucestershire Old Spot, and Mulefoot. Mulefoots are named for their non-cloven hooves; Zak loves the breed for their deep flavor — with a slightly metallic, almost briny complexity — and for their thick, sweet, easy-eating fat. They're prodigious foragers, and often jam their whole heads into the ground to find food. The breed is currently designated as Critically Endangered, with only a few hundred purebreds in the world; the American Mulefoot



Hog Association calls them “The rarest swine in America.”

The stereotypical image of pigs on a farm shows them in a pen with a wallow. Seeing the Gail’s pigs wander, root, play, and sleep in the forest, it’s instantly clear that pigs are primarily woodland animals. Though they enjoy open spaces, it’s obvious how much they love the trees for shade, back scratching, and above all for the nuts and fruit they offer. It’s easy to spot the hickory and oak trees in these woods; they’re all surrounded by moats of soil churned by pigs searching for fallen nuts. The Gails lease 300 or so acres from a neighbor, who is selectively logging the property and leaving the nut trees to create what’s known as sylvopasture: a hybrid of field and forest that offers a wide variety of food sources for the animals.

Forage makes up about half their diet, in season; in addition they get milk from High Lawn Farm in Lee, MA, whey from Berkshire Blue in Great Barrington (New Lebanon is just a few miles from the Massachusetts line) and non-GMO grain grown to order. Besides the pigs, Climbing Tree is also raising Bresse chickens for Fish & Game. This French breed, prized for its rich, gamy flavor and luscious yellow fat, is considered by many to be the best eating chicken in the world. The first of these birds should appear on the menu towards the end of summer.







CARROTS

This carrot dish from the end of March was the first course of 2014 to consist almost entirely of vegetables. During spring's long, slow supplanting of winter, this plate marked a pivot point, a fulcrum on which the kitchen's perspective flipped from looking backward at the pantry to forward at the soil; the governing inspiration for each week's menu moved from the interior (the various preserved concoctions and carcasses filling the cellar, fridges, and freezers) to the exterior, to fresh food growing in the ground. Not fully outside yet, in this instance, but rather the vast and immaculate greenhouses at Blue Star Farm in Stuyvesant, from whence these carrots came. Planted in late September, the equinox found them fat enough to pull.

When your raw materials have sterling provenance, they don't need much polishing to shine. The carrots, still with greens (carrot greens, especially young ones, are delectably edible) got a quick sauté in butter lifted with a bit of maple syrup, both made in house. To complement the bright orange carrots, Kevin made a spinach-watercress purée (that also possibly contained some arugula) by blanching the leaves, then blending them smooth with olive oil and about .005 percent lecithin by weight to give it some body and keep it from weeping on the plate.

Once tender yet al dente, the carrots moved to a warmed, waiting plate for embellishment with a spoon of verdant purée, a watercress leaf, a few cubes of diced pickled watermelon radish, and a couple ribbons of Jori's pickled carrots from the fall. To finish, a paper-thin curl of lamb pancetta, cured in salt and spices and hung for a month. Chilled for easy cutting on the deli slicer, then layered between sheets of plastic wrap until service, the fat melted on the hot carrots so that the strip of belly flattered them like sheer silk draped over shapely legs. It also provided the requisite hit of cured, meaty umami: a salty, savory exclamation point to round out the flavor spectrum and enhance both the sweetness and earthiness of the carrots. The following week flowering claytonia (also known as miner's lettuce, and among the most cold-tolerant greens available) replaced the watercress as a garnish, along with slivers of Jori's brown butter pickled onions.

MR. NATURAL

Zak's natural wine epiphany came in Paris, in 2006: a bottle by the legendary Jean-Marc Brignot was "an electric purple I had never seen before; it was so vibrant and alive, the taste complex but still very light." He promptly ordered another Brignot, a white, which was "this orange, hay-colored wine, and equally delicious." Now, as Zak works to assemble the best natural wine list in the country, he relies on importers who specialize in similarly revelatory and idiosyncratic expressions of fruit and soil. In the last five years, Zev Rovine has become one of the most important purveyors of natural wines in America. His roster is well represented on Fish & Game's extensive list.

Zev came to New York to be a musician, and while pursuing that career he worked as a waiter in a number of fine establishments, picking up wine knowledge all the while. After a year in San Francisco and a stint in Utah as a ski bum turned wine bar owner, he returned to New York to begin distributing and then importing the kind of wines he had fallen in love with during his travels: wines made with minimal intervention—a light touch both in the fields and in the winery—by producers earnestly and expertly collaborating with nature. It's hard to make good wine this way; everything must be kept super clean (tanks and hoses especially) but it attracts kindred spirits: creative people taking risks to stay true to their personalities and the land.

In 2009 he took a crash course in French, and began visiting the country regularly, drinking in the Paris bars that focus on natural wines and driving far and wide to meet the producers, shipping a pallet of wine back to New York after each trip. He was in the right place at the right time; these wines were just beginning to break into popular consciousness. A few places—Uva, Diner, Marlow & Sons, all in Brooklyn—were early supporters, and over time he landed Manhattan clients, among them Chambers Street Wines, Astor Wines & Spirits, and Gramercy Tavern. As with the winemakers, there's a self-limiting aspect to the business; only so much production is possible when something is made by hand, and thus the business grows at a measured pace.

Is it just a fad? Maybe, but there are many trends that would be far worse for produc-



ers and consumers alike. The increase in both supply and demand for these wines is a sure sign that more and more people want their drink to be grown and made as carefully and sustainably as their food, and that's hard to scoff at. Besides, the unusual colors (often cloudy) and flavor profiles (which can veer into pretty feral territory on occasion) plus the perennial possibility of a little unexpected carbonation mean that this is likely to remain a niche market for quite some time. That's not a problem; Zev sells out of everything he imports.

There's still some confusion about what constitutes a natural wine. To clarify, Zev offers concise requirements for inclusion in the club.

1. Grapes must be grown organically. Biodynamic and Fukuoka methods are subsets of organic, and equally valid. (Frank Cornelissen, who makes some astonishing wines on the side of Sicily's Mount Etna, is a big proponent of Fukuoka.)
2. No added yeast. Commercial yeast contributes a lot of flavor, so true fidelity to terroir requires only indigenous yeasts.
3. No sulfur prior to or during fermentation. 10-20mg/l of sulfur before bottling is sometimes acceptable, but ideally there should be none.
4. No fining or filtration of any kind. Sterile filtration makes for great shelf stability, but it strips the life out of wine.

These are useful guidelines, but they mostly address what's left out, all the chemicals and techniques that may not be used. The rules miss the spirit, the artisanal handwork present in great wines. Besides their fascinating flavors, that diligent attention to every stage of production is what connects these wines to the cooking in the restaurant.

At the end of the day, though, what matters most in a wine is the taste and the pleasure it brings. These wines are uplifting, lip smacking, and have a peculiarly compelling quality that make it hard to reach for something made conventionally once you've been bitten by the natural bug. It's a lot like having to put on trunks after becoming accustomed to swimming naked. In addition, unsulfured wines are far easier on the body; they feel better, are more uplifting, and, most importantly, given how easy they are to drink, tend not to cause hangovers.



DOMAINE DE L'OCTAVIN

Alice Bouvot and Charles Dagand both studied conventional winemaking, but now they're at the forefront of the natural revolution. Their Domaine de l'Octavin, in the Jura village of Arbois, represents the continuation of Jean-Marc Brignot's legacy (he no longer makes wine). Though their vineyards are different, they learned his methods at his side and practice scrupulously organic and biodynamic techniques. Like many of the best natural producers, they consider themselves farmers first, and they're better farmers than Brignot. His techniques wedded to their horticultural skill make for some impressive beverages.

Since 2009, they have used no sulfur at any stage. Their wines taste alive, with bracing acidity and playfully syn-copated layers of fruit and funk that dance around that tart axis like druids around a menhir. Octavin wines are the opposite of the international style, which overwhelms with thick layers of dark fruit and tannin disguising high alcohol; they're translucent—their lack of fining and filtration imparts an almost iridescent, lit-from-within quality—and refreshingly food-friendly at around 12 percent alcohol. They go with everything, and they never get boring; there's no bottle fatigue. "It's hard to resist grabbing an Octavin," Zev says when describing what he brings home for dinner from work every day.

FISH & GAME IS OPEN FOR LUNCH ON SATURDAY & SUNDAY. We serve a slightly abridged and lower priced version of the dinner menu.

NORTHERN CHEFS ALLIANCE PLAYS WITH FIRE FOR CHARITY! 10 of North Americas most famous chefs get together on Fish & Games Farm to Cook a Fire Roasted Feast on August 17th. F&G's Kat Dunn has curated a list of the East Coast's best Bartenders to provide guest with seasonal libations and Natural Wine guru Zev Rovine has generously donated the wine, all sans soufre, so you can drink guilt and hangover free! <http://friendsofthefarmer.com/northern-chefs-alliance/#.U5X3MZSwL7h>

JUNE 24TH FISH & GAME BRINGS THE HUDSON VALLEY bounty to NYC for an exclusive one-night only dinner at the James Beard House. <http://www.jamesbeard.org/events/udson-valley-bounty>

JUNE 28TH-29TH FISH & GAME'S JORI JAYNE EMDE WILL BE AT HUDSON RIVER EXCHANGE SUMMER MARKET SELLING her bitters, jams, soap and other magical elixirs under her label Lady Jayne's Alchemy along with other local Artisans at the HRE Summer Market, organized in part by our own Stella Yoon.

JULY 12TH IS CHATHAM SUMMERFEST! Lady Jayne's Alchemy and Fish & Game will be there, celebrating our little town and reveling in the summer sun!



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PETER BARRETT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER BARRETT
DESIGN BY STELLA YOON

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STEVE'S EXISTENTIAL CRISIS CORNER

How mmm

Any times have I mistake nthe sound
of wind through the leaves as rain

*Typed on his Samsung Galaxy phone upon
waking up in the grass at Blue Heron Farm.*

HEATHER BUCKHOUT - KAT DUNN - JORI
JAYNE EMDE - AARON ENFIELD - WALTER
GROHS - STEVE HERNANDEZ - ZACH KALAS -
MATTHEW LEWIS - JUSTIN LINQUIST - MAX
MACKINNON - PATRICK MILLING SMITH - ZAK
PELACCIO - KEVIN POMPLUN - MIKE RICE -
TRISTAN SCHIPA - VERITY SMITH - MOHAMMAD
UDDIN - ALEX VAN ALLEN - STELLA YOON

FISH



&



GAME



*ALL I WANT TO DO
IS TO MAKE LOVE TO YOU
IN THE FERTILE DIRT*

-- BILL CALLAHAN "SPRING"