

| AMERICA'S BEST NEW FOOD TOWN |

FOODTOPIA

HOW A HANDFUL OF ORGANIC FARMERS, WORLD-CLASS
CHEESEMAKERS AND A LOCAVORE RESTAURANT TRANSFORMED
ONE POOR, RURAL TOWN INTO A FOODIE MECCA

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Cheese at Jasper Hill Farm



Claire's Restaurant

For a town of 3,200, just south of the Canadian border and one of the poorest rural regions in America, Hardwick has become an unlikely food mecca. Named to *Conde Nast Traveler's* 2009 "Hot List," Claire's Restaurant (above) is an outpost of food culture there. Co-owner, lawyer and maître d' Kristina Michelsen seats and sometimes sings for the largely local clientele (for her CD, visit eatingwell.com/foodtopia), many of whom chipped in to help start the place. The food is pretty much all local, too, much of it produced within 45 miles, including the beans (see our dilly beans recipe, page 58) and greens, which come from farmer Pete Johnson of Pete's Greens (below, left), and several world-class, award-winning cheeses, which are aged at Jasper Hill Farm's new cave. For a map of Hardwick and its food, see page 55.

Pete's Greens



Quick Chile Dilly Beans

continued from page 54 I am reminded of that as I arrive at Jasper Hill Farm's gleaming new \$2 million cheese cave in Greensboro, eight miles away. The jaw-dropping 22,000-square-foot cave—said to be the finest of its kind in North America—is the labor of love of brothers and farmers Andy and Mateo Kehler. As I walk through the seven vaults, I crane my neck to look at tall racks of aging cheeses that are stacked to the arched ceiling and turned by hand each day. Jasper Hill's own cheeses are here—they make a mouthwatering slow-ripened soft cheese they call Constant Bliss, as well as Bayley Hazen Blue, a spectacular natural-rinded blue cheese that landed the brothers on the *NBC Today* show. *Wine Spectator* recently named two of Jasper Hill's cheeses among the top 100 cheeses in the world. Also making that list were Cabot Creamery's Clothbound Cheddar, Vermont Ayr and Grafton Clothbound, which are all aged at Jasper Hill.

The Kehlers intend their cheese cellar to be a center for a budding artisanal cheese industry that serves the whole region, providing opportunities for local dairy farmers to become cheesemakers. For those new to cheesemaking, Jasper Hill will provide technical expertise as well as cave space to get them started. I mention to Andy Kehler the plight of the dairy farmers in my community, noting how dairy farmer Rosina Wallace bemoaned how she must ship her milk hundreds of miles away to be processed. Andy listened and replied, "That's exactly the kind of farmer we need. Have her call me."

Just up the road in the rolling hills of Craftsbury, I find Pete Johnson of Pete's Greens and his girlfriend, Meg Gardner. They are inside one of four movable greenhouses, hunched over trays of bright green sprouts, delicately slicing shoots with a razor knife. Pete's Greens is a four-season organic farm that until six years ago provided food to fancy restaurants in Boston and New York. But Pete, a raffishly handsome man with a shaggy crop of blond hair and five-o'clock shadow, tells me he no longer wants to send his food far away. In the past three years he has flipped from selling three-fourths of his produce out of state to selling that same amount in state. Most of his business now is his Good Eats CSA, which combines offerings from his farm with those from a number of different farms and food producers. Good Eats has about 250 local members. A 17-week share of vegetables and locally produced goods, such as yogurt, milk, tofu, bread and fruit, costs \$44 per week. Is there interest? Good Eats makes up half the farm's business, and Pete says his farm and most other local producers can barely keep up with the demand for local food.

"It's gratifying to know and please the people who are eating our food," he says as he slices off a pinch of radish sprouts and hands them to me. "Try it," he urges. A spicy, zingy sensation lights up my tongue. Pete chuckles as I pucker in pleasant surprise. His farm is renowned for its specialty and heirloom vegetables, from numerous varieties of kale and fingerling potatoes to dandelion greens and garlic scapes. Claire's Restaurant chef and co-owner Steven Obranovich is a regular customer.

Pete insists that thinking local is thinking big. "I think we are just at the beginning of what I hope will be a revolution in how we feed ourselves," he tells me from among his sprout beds. "My vision is of a village- or multi-village-based food system where most of what the people here eat is from here, with some key local trading. I think it has the potential to be really efficient, create a lot of good jobs and small businesses, and create incredible community, which is something we've lost."

How will Hardwick measure success? Andrew Meyer, who still looks the part of a preppy Senate staffer, considers my question as we stand next to a vat of soy curd that is being slowly and rhythmically *continued on page 82*

Beet Carpaccio

H X W L ↓ C H ↑ F H ♥ H

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MINUTES | TOTAL: 1 1/2 HOURS

TO MAKE AHEAD: Prepare through Step 1, cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Once hard to find, beautiful varieties of beets, such as pink-and-white-striped 'Chioggia,' electric-yellow 'Golden Detroit' and ruby-red 'Moneta' are more readily available thanks to seed companies like High Mowing Organic Seeds. Seek them out at farmers' markets or supermarkets that stock local, in-season produce. Here paper-thin slices of multicolored beets are presented carpaccio-style. Their sweet earthiness melds with the complex flavors of blue cheese. Try Jasper Hill Farm's Bayley Hazen Blue, made just a few miles from Hardwick in Greensboro, Vermont.

3 medium beets (about 1 pound), such as red, golden and/or Chioggia

12 1/2-inch-thick slices baguette, preferably whole-grain

4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

1/4 cup crumbled blue cheese, at room temperature

1 teaspoon chopped fresh herbs, such as dill, savory or tarragon

1/4 teaspoon salt

Freshly ground pepper to taste

1. Place beets in a large saucepan and add enough water to cover by at least 2 inches. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook until a fork inserted into a beet comes out with little resistance, about 40 minutes. (Overcooking will make the beets more difficult to thinly slice.) Drain and let stand until cool enough to handle.

2. While the beets cool, brush baguette slices with 2 teaspoons oil. To toast, preheat oven to 350°F. Arrange the slices in a single layer on a large baking sheet and bake, turning once halfway through, until toasted but not browned, about 14 minutes. (Alternatively, grill the bread over medium heat, turning once, until lightly toasted, 2 to 3 minutes.)

3. Trim both ends of the beets and rub off the skins with your fingers. Slice as thinly as possible, using a mandoline or sharp knife. Arrange the beet slices on a large platter or on 6 salad plates. Sprinkle blue cheese, herbs, salt and pepper over the beets and drizzle with the remaining 2 teaspoons oil. Serve with the toasted baguette.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS.

PER SERVING: 132 CALORIES; 5 G FAT (1 G SAT, 3 G MONO); 4 MG CHOLESTEROL; 19 G CARBOHYDRATE; 5 G PROTEIN; 4 G FIBER; 330 MG SODIUM; 177 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Folate (15% DAILY VALUE). *continued on page 58*

Hardwick farmers have figured out how to grow delicate greens, beets and other produce year-round at prices that are affordable for locals. Access to fresh, healthy produce like the ruby-red and golden beets in this delicate carpaccio may be one reason Vermonters consume more fruits and vegetables per capita than residents of any other state in the U.S. and why the state is one of the healthiest in the nation.



Beet Carpaccio

Quick Chile Dilly Beans

H X W L D C H H

ACTIVE TIME: 40 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 1 DAY | **TO MAKE AHEAD:** Refrigerate for up to 1 month. | **EQUIPMENT:** 2-quart canning jar or similar-size tempered glass or heatproof plastic container

Late in summer, glorious canned goods like dilly beans are up for judging at county fairs in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom and are sold at every farmers' market. Some traditionalists would say that dilly beans are best after a month or so of marinating, but you can get that long-marinated taste in just one day with this quick technique. Any type of green bean can be turned into dilly beans, but super-thin, French-style beans, such as the variety named 'Tavera,' stay tender and are less likely to be stringy or tough. (Photograph: page 52.)

- 1 pound green beans, trimmed
- 3 cups water
- 2 cups distilled white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 1 tablespoon pickling spice
- 1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
- 1/2 teaspoon dried dill seed or 4 fresh dill seed heads
- 2 shallots, peeled and sliced, leaving root end intact
- 1-2 small fresh red chile peppers, quartered lengthwise
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced lengthwise

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Place a large bowl of ice water next to the stove. Cook green beans until tender-crisp, 3 to 4 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the beans to the ice water to cool. Drain.

2. Meanwhile, combine 3 cups water, vinegar, salt, pickling spice and peppercorns in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil and stir until the salt is dissolved. Let boil for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand for 10 minutes to cool slightly.

3. Place dill seed (or dill seed heads), shallots, chiles and garlic in a 2-quart canning jar (or similar-size tempered glass or heatproof plastic container with a lid). Place the beans in the container. Carefully pour the hot vinegar solution through a sieve into the container. Make sure all the beans are submerged in the

liquid. Cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate for 1 day to marinate the beans.

MAKES ABOUT 5 CUPS (DRAINED) BEANS.

PER 1/2-CUP SERVING: 16 CALORIES; 0 G FAT (0 G SAT, 0 G MONO); 0 MG CHOLESTEROL; 4 G CARBOHYDRATE; 1 G PROTEIN; 1 G FIBER; 156 MG SODIUM; 65 MG POTASSIUM.

Claire's Mixed Green Salad with Feta Vinaigrette

H X W L D C H F

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 15 MINUTES

 The salad greens grown at Pete's Greens, "Vermont's Four Season Organic Vegetable Farm," in Hardwick have a cult-like following all around the state. Pete's mix includes zesty greens, such as tatsoi and mizuna, as well as a colorful variety of baby lettuces. This salad was inspired by one served during the peak of summer at Claire's Restaurant. We tossed ours with super-sweet and beautiful 'Black Cherry' tomatoes. (Photograph: page 59.)

- 8 cups lightly packed mixed salad greens or arugula, any tough stems removed
- Feta Vinaigrette (recipe follows), divided
- 2 cups sliced cucumbers
- 1 1/2 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- 5 radishes, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup very thinly sliced red onion

Toss greens (or arugula) in a large bowl with half the vinaigrette. Mound on a large platter. Arrange cucumbers, tomatoes, radishes and onion on top of the greens. Drizzle the remaining vinaigrette over the salad.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS, ABOUT 1 1/2 CUPS EACH.

PER SERVING: 165 CALORIES; 16 G FAT (3 G SAT, 7 G MONO); 6 MG CHOLESTEROL; 6 G CARBOHYDRATE; 3 G PROTEIN; 3 G FIBER; 189 MG SODIUM; 415 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Vitamin A (50% DAILY VALUE), Vitamin C (35% DV), Folate (23% DV).

FETA VINAIGRETTE

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 10 MINUTES

 Chef Steven Obranovich of Claire's Restaurant & Bar in Hardwick likes the

soft crumbly sheep's-milk feta from nearby Bonnieview Farm for this recipe. He cautions that the subtle briny notes of feta can sometimes be overpowered by too much lemon or an olive oil that's too fruity. Saltiness varies from feta to feta too. Add the ingredients a little at a time and taste as you go.

- 3 tablespoons sunflower oil or canola oil
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, preferably mild-flavored
- 1/4 cup finely crumbled feta cheese
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper, or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste

Place sunflower (or canola) oil, olive oil, feta, cider vinegar, red-wine vinegar, lemon juice, pepper and salt in a blender and puree until combined. Adjust seasoning with additional lemon juice, salt or pepper, if desired.

MAKES ABOUT 3/4 CUP.

PER TABLESPOON: 69 CALORIES; 8 G FAT (1 G SAT, 3 G MONO); 3 MG CHOLESTEROL; 0 G CARBOHYDRATE; 0 G PROTEIN; 0 G FIBER; 83 MG SODIUM; 4 MG POTASSIUM.

Parsley Smashed New Potatoes

H X W H F

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 40 MINUTES

 Freshly dug, true "new" potatoes are so creamy and flavorful they hardly need any additional ingredients to make them spectacular. Here we tumble them with a bit of butter, tangy yogurt, scallions and just-chopped fresh parsley. If new potatoes are not available, use any small red potatoes. (Photograph: page 59.)

- 2 pounds new or baby red potatoes (1- to 2-inch diameter), large ones quartered
- 2/3 cup low-fat plain yogurt
- 2 scallions, cut in half lengthwise and finely chopped
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 3/4 teaspoon salt

White or freshly ground black pepper to taste

1. Bring 1 inch of water to a boil in a large saucepan fitted with a steamer basket. Add potatoes, cover and steam until very tender when pierced with a fork, 20 to 25 minutes. (Check the water level near the end of steaming to be sure the pan doesn't boil dry. Add more boiling water as needed.)
2. Meanwhile, combine yogurt, scallions, parsley, butter, salt and pepper in a large bowl.
3. Mix the cooked potatoes into the yogurt mixture, breaking them up with a fork until they crumble apart and lightly clump together.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS, SCANT 1 CUP EACH.

PER SERVING: 159 CALORIES; 4 G FAT (3 G SAT, 0 G MONO); 12 MG CHOLESTEROL; 27 G CARBOHYDRATE; 4 G PROTEIN; 3 G FIBER; 321 MG SODIUM; 779 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Vitamin C (30% DAILY VALUE), Potassium (22% DV).

Tomato-Herb Marinated Flank Steak

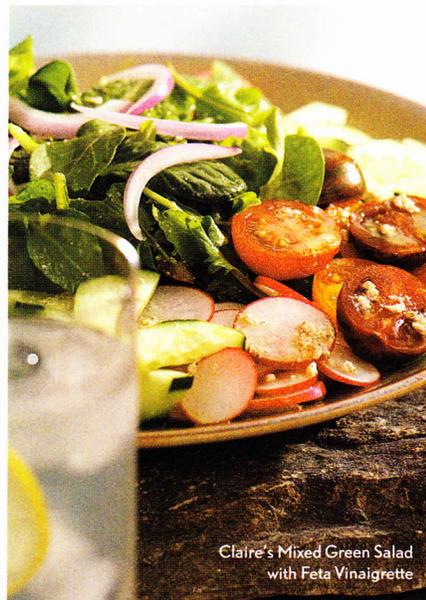
H X W L ↓ C H ♥ H

ACTIVE TIME: 35 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 4 HOURS 35 MINUTES (including 4 hours marinating time) | **TO MAKE AHEAD:** Marinate steak for up to 24 hours.

In this recipe, we make a dual-purpose sauce from garden-fresh tomatoes, shallot, marjoram and rosemary. We use half the sauce to marinate the steak and use the other half as a basting sauce. Pasture-raised, grass-fed beef is gentler on the environment, free from growth-promoting hormones and typically lower in fat and calories than grain-fed beef. Marinating grass-fed beef for a full day helps make it tender. Look for it at natural-foods markets or find it online.

- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- 1 shallot, peeled and quartered
- 1/4 cup red-wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh marjoram
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 1/2 pounds flank steak, preferably grass-fed, trimmed

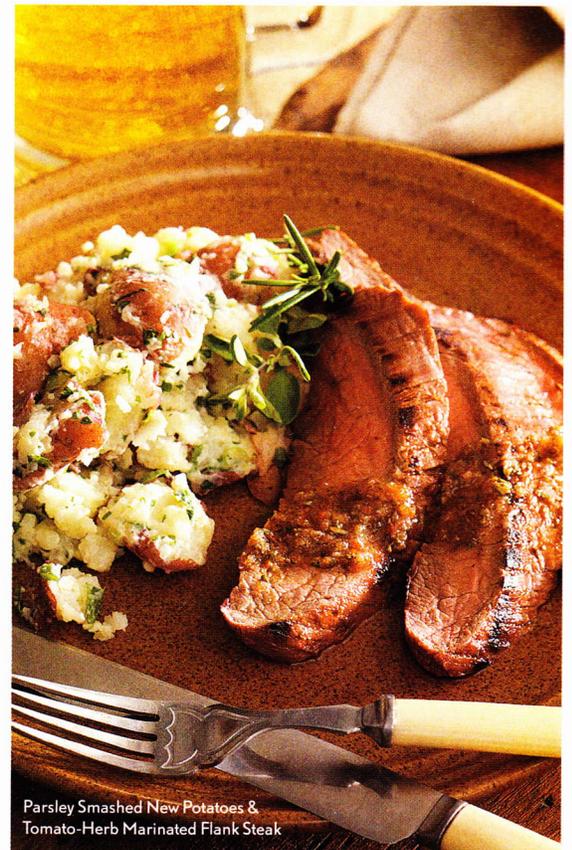
1. Puree tomato, shallot, vinegar, marjoram,



Claire's Mixed Green Salad with Feta Vinaigrette



Raspberry Spoonbread



Parsley Smashed New Potatoes & Tomato-Herb Marinated Flank Steak

rosemary, salt and pepper in a blender until smooth. Set aside 1/2 cup, covered, in the refrigerator. Scrape the remaining puree into a large, sealable plastic bag. Add steak and turn to coat. Refrigerate for 4 hours or up to 24 hours.

2. Preheat grill to medium-high. Remove the steak from the marinade (discard the marinade). Oil the grill rack (see *Tip*, page 79). Grill the steak 4 to 5 minutes per side for medium-rare or 6 to 7 minutes per side for medium, turning once and brushing the cooked side with some of the reserved sauce. When the steak is cooked, turn it over again and brush with more sauce. Transfer to a clean cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes. Thinly slice the steak crosswise and serve with any remaining sauce spooned on top.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS.
COST PER SERVING: UNDER \$4

PER SERVING: 169 CALORIES; 7 G FAT (3 G SAT, 3 G MONO); 47 MG CHOLESTEROL; 1 G CARBOHYDRATE; 24 G PROTEIN; 0 G FIBER; 275 MG SODIUM; 440 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Zinc (29% DAILY VALUE).

Raspberry Spoonbread

H ↑ F

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 1 1/2 HOURS

A traditional Southern favorite, spoonbread is a typically savory dish that's like a cross between a soufflé and cornbread. Here we transform the simple ingredients into a comforting dessert with the addition of summer's best raspberries and pure Vermont maple syrup. Any type of cornmeal will work, but we love the texture that stone-ground provides. continued on page 82