

The background of the entire cover is a vibrant photograph of several monarch butterflies with their characteristic orange and black wings, perched on bright yellow wildflowers. The butterflies are in various positions, some facing the viewer and others in profile, creating a sense of natural movement and life.

Organic **Connections**

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THE AWARD-WINNING MAGAZINE OF NATURAL VITALITY

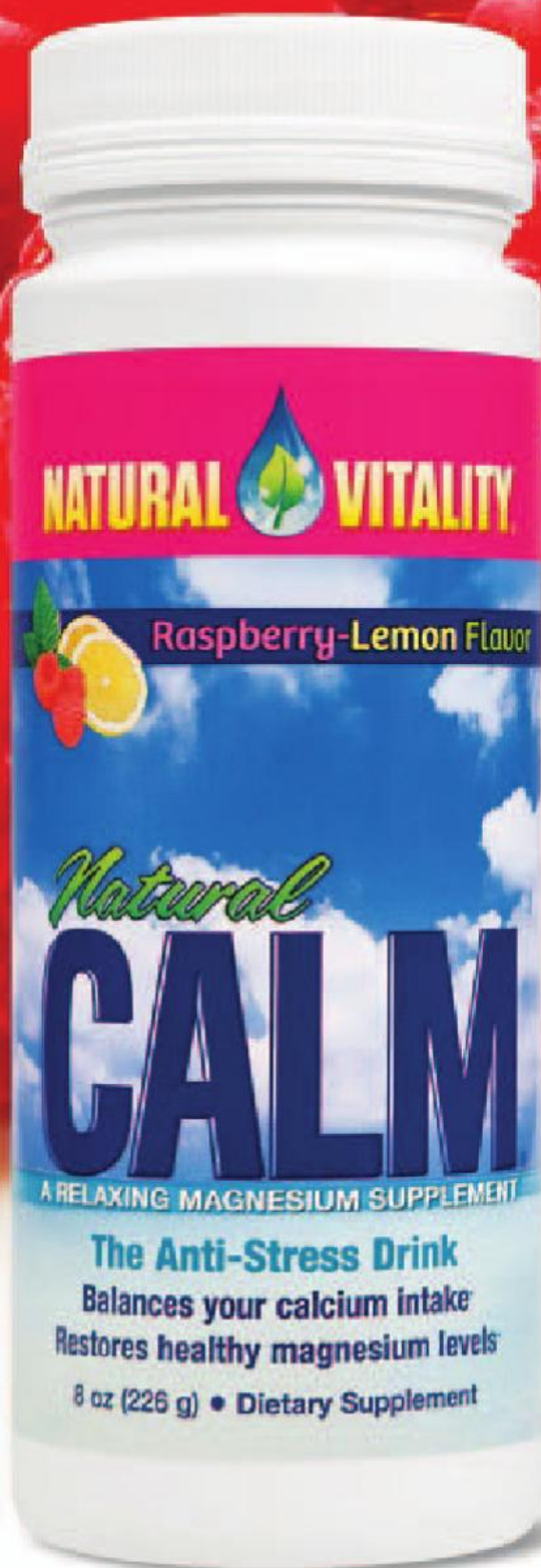
NORA POUILLON
A PIONEER'S
ODYSSEY TO
ORGANIC

PAUL LIGHTFOOT
THE LOCALIZATION
OF PRODUCE

CHEF DAVID KINCH
PARTNERSHIP OF
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Has Mediocre Become the New Normal?

There's a sarcastic saying, "When all else fails, lower your standards." Remember grading on a curve in school? This practice takes the highest score and makes it the "A." Let's say you had a 10-question test. The best student in the class only answered 5 out of 10 questions correctly. That student is assigned an A and the rest of the grades are distributed relative to that "high" score.

Are we grading on a curve in our society? Have we lost sight of factual high standards to such a degree that we are now accepting mediocrity as normal?

What happens, for example, when we shop for produce? What's our expectation? If a fruit or vegetable *looks* good, do we accept the item as normal?

Dan Kittredge, a second-generation organic farmer and head of the Bionutrient Food Association, advises us to trust our sense of smell and sense of taste. Nutrients come from the soil environment, and if they are present in quantity in fruits and vegetables, you can *smell* and *taste* them. A tomato worth buying, Kittredge says, will smell and taste like a real tomato. Your nose and your tongue are excellent nutrient detectors. If produce is sweet (not sugar sweet, but not bitter) and flavorful, the produce is high in what Dan calls "bionutrients." We know these as minerals, vitamins, antioxidants and other nutritious plant components that (if they are there in quantity) make fruits and vegetables such a valuable food source. Have we accepted tasteless or bitter (and low-nutrient) produce as normal?

I recently returned from Italy, where the Slow Food movement originated. Italians have a great respect for food, and eating is a visceral part of the joy of living. They understand fresh, quality ingredients with real taste. Even their airport food is far superior to what we have come to accept.

Average Americans consume 54 gallons of soda each year and the average child's diet includes 34 teaspoons of sugar daily! Is *that* normal? Is it *normal* to eat a diet laden with fat, sugar and salt and look forward to senior years fraught with aches and pains, bone loss and a daily cocktail of "meds"?

In order to improve things, it's necessary to conceive of an ideal and then honestly appraise the situation in which we find ourselves. If we've ceased envisioning ideals and simply—albeit reluctantly—accept dreary as *normal*, aren't we shortchanging ourselves?

What do you think?

Ken Whitman PUBLISHER

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In this issue



Organic Connections magazine is an award-winning publication brought to you by Natural Vitality—a purpose-driven human nutrition company. Our core belief is that you can't be fully healthy in an unhealthy environment. We publish *Organic Connections* to help inspire and educate readers with profiles of people working to make our world healthier and more sustainable. To learn about Natural Vitality's broader mission and our Natural Revitalization environmental action initiative, visit www.naturalvitality.com.

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Nora Pouillon

A Pioneer's Odyssey to Organic

by Anna Soref



When you ask a chef for her sources of inspiration, you'll often hear of another chef's inventive meals. Or maybe it's the story of a visit to France where the flavors of foie gras and truffle-infused sauces were brought to life with a sip of Château Margaux.

Ask Nora Pouillon about her inspiration for a life dedicated to cooking and you'll get a different story. "I was born in Austria during World War II," she relates. "I remember bombs falling everywhere and voices telling you to go to the cellar." People around her lost their possessions, their homes; many died. There was never enough food.

But being born into a war-torn country was a blessing, Pouillon says. Surrounded by so much devastation and suffering, this young girl was instilled with such a profound appreciation for food and life that it would permeate and shape her entire existence.

Pouillon would eventually move to the United States and open one of the world's first restaurants based on local and natural cuisine, which would go on to become the first certified organic restaurant in the US. There, she would serve presidents and first ladies, pen a cookbook, and become one of the most influential figures in the growing organic and sustainable food movement.

But first she had to grow up.

Informative Years

Although Pouillon's family was well off—her father owned a safety-glass window factory—they fled Vienna in the last years

of the war. Driving through zones occupied by Russia, England, France and America, the family finally made it to a farm owned by friends in the Tyrolean Alps. "There, the farmers grew all of their food. It taught me how difficult that truly is," Pouillon recalls. "They got up with the sun and worked until sunset. They had to prepare food for the winter months. There was no electricity and no running water."

The farm was completely self-sufficient. The farmers made everything from the soap to the shingles on the roof. The wheat was grown, then thrashed, then made into flour for baking. Pouillon watched as the cows were milked and cream was churned into butter; sheep were sheered to make wool for cloth.

Pouillon and her family remained safely at the farm for three years. "Those years on the farm had such a tremendous impact on me. It shows just how informative those early years can be."

Her health-oriented parents broke with the traditional Alpine cuisine, which was heavy on meat, cream and cheeses, and this would also influence Pouillon's future.

"My parents were really into exercise and eschewed much of the heavy cuisine like roux and deep frying. My mom made lots of salads and soups. We always engaged in plenty of activities such as skiing, hiking and berry picking; we learned an appreciation of nature," she says. "My dad taught us that your health was the most important thing you had."

After the war, Pouillon and her family returned to Vienna where she began attending French boarding school, at which a different kind of learning occurred than that on the farm. "Here, we were served a three-course meal for lunch. In that 30 minutes, we learned about eating properly with a knife and a fork and having social



conversations with our schoolmates," she remarks. "After that we had an hour-long recess, when we could play in the park surrounding the school."

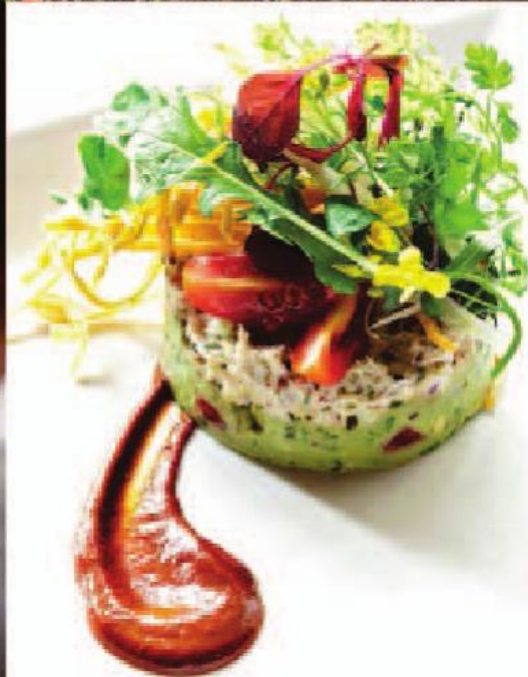
Pouillon would continue to spend summers at the farm with her grandmother, unlike her sisters, who didn't want to engage in such work or be so isolated.

Crossing the Pond

In the 1960s, a newly wedded Pouillon moved to the United States with her husband, a French journalist. Here she observed the differences between the Western European food system and that of America post-World War II.

"At the stores here it was amazing to see all the prepackaged and frozen food. Nothing depended on the season. Pepperidge Farm was like gourmet bread. The produce department was the smallest section in the store."

"I was shocked to learn that people didn't have a relationship with food, and I wasn't accustomed to seeing so much obesity and people having quadruple bypasses and cancer as if it were nothing. The air wasn't good, the water was polluted and tasted like chlorine, and the food was flavorless and



processed. I decided I didn't want to be part of that," she says.

As a mother of young children at the time, Pouillon was shopping and cooking for her family daily. "I started to look for ethnic markets where I could find French bread, good olive oil and cheeses. It was the hippie time and co-ops were forming, which had better products; I cooked at home using these ingredients. I started driving to nearby farms in search of quality products. We had no money at the time and it was an epicurean wasteland in DC then, with only one or two good restaurants. I got really into cooking and we entertained a lot because it was the best way to have social time, given the circumstances.

"I remember once calling up a farmer after seeing an advertisement for farm-raised beef," Pouillon recounts. "The woman told me proudly how the beef was fattened with corn and hormones for lots of marbling and given antibiotics to stay healthy. This was actually my first exposure to chemicals in livestock. I had learned they were being used in crops, but animals I didn't know about until then."

Soon thereafter, Pouillon found another farmer who happily informed her of all the things he didn't do to his cattle. "It was then that I truly started becoming aware of the differences between organic and conventional farming," she says.

As she delved deeper into cooking and discovering sources of untainted ingredients, Pouillon's friends took notice and wanted to learn as well. She began giving informal cooking lessons in her kitchen. She also started a casual catering service where she'd make a dish and drop it off at the customer's house.

To Restaurant We Go

In 1976 Pouillon separated from her husband and had to begin earning her own living. Opportunity knocked when a friend bought a bed-and-breakfast near the White House called the Tabard Inn. She asked Nora to install a kitchen and start a restaurant within the inn. For several years Pouillon ran what was a very rudimentary kitchen, but she developed a following. It wasn't long before she and the hotel manager, Steven, put their heads together and decided to open a restaurant on their own.

"We managed to raise \$150,000 through friends, who invested \$3,000 to \$10,000 each. All the investors had to agree that I would

run the restaurant my way and that it would be as organic as possible; I ate organic at home and couldn't see serving conventional food to my customers."

Restaurant Nora, in DC's historic Dupont Circle, opened in 1979. "People told me I was a crazy lady; I was called completely nuts. The *Washington Post* wrote, 'Nora tells us what we should eat. How does she know?' People were making fun of me. Advice came in like 'Don't call it organic; it sounds like biology class.' I persevered. I couldn't quit." She and her partner Steven, his brother, Thomas, and her staff dug in and worked 24/7. Her children would come to the restaurant after school and do their homework while she cooked.

The odds were against the success of Nora's. In the late 1970s and early 1980s terms like *health food* and *organic* meant hippie food, granola and tofu—certainly not gourmet.

But her focus on quality and freshness began winning her favorable reviews and a loyal customer base. Produce was sourced as locally as possible and then washed with triple-filtered water. Herbs and vegetables were planted in boxes outside the restaurant. Her menu changed daily depending on what was available, an exciting prospect at restaurants even today.

The elegance of the white tablecloth restaurant also broke down preconceived notions of "health food." Museum-quality Amish crib quilts adorned the walls, and tables were set with fine linens and wineglasses.

The critics applauded this new healthy haute cuisine, and the customers came.

First Certified Organic Restaurant

By the mid- to late nineties, becoming certified organic was the next logical step, according to Pouillon: "I was getting almost all the food from organic purveyors." When she began to investigate how to become a certified organic restaurant, she learned that no certification process existed.

Pouillon decided to set about creating those standards. She worked for about two years with an organic certification agency, Oregon Tilth, to establish the rules and standards of what it means to be an organic restaurant. The resulting standard required that 95 percent of the food used, as a certified restaurant, must be obtained from USDA certified organic sources. "This meant obtaining proof of organic certification from all our suppliers," she says. She complied with the lengthy requirements, and in 1999

Restaurant Nora became the first certified organic restaurant in the country.

So why have only a handful of organic restaurants followed suit? "People don't always understand how complicated and time consuming it is," Pouillon explains. "Almost everything has to be organic down to the spices and coffee. It's a lot of work to find certified organic farmers and track down certification papers from 35-plus purveyors every year. This process has to be done each year because the certificates have to be renewed each year."

Although she isn't required to, Pouillon goes beyond having more than 95 percent of the food organic. The restaurant has a sophisticated water purification system, and energy for the entire establishment comes from alternative suppliers; they also compost all of their kitchen scraps. "It's not just about our health but about the health of the environment too," she says.

Outside of the Kitchen

Pouillon's work in the organic and sustainable food movement far exceeds opening one of the nation's first gourmet sustainable restaurants and certainly the first certified organic one. She has served on numerous boards to help achieve initiatives that move the direction of the country toward being more in line with her views of environmental stewardship and good health.

Pouillon's numerous achievements include awards such as Chef of the Year from the International Association of Culinary Professionals, the Genesis Award from Women Chefs & Restaurateurs, and the StarChefs Innovator Award. In 1996 she published *Cooking with Nora: Seasonal Menus from Restaurant Nora* (Random House). She has lobbied to protect Atlantic swordfish, Chilean sea bass and Caspian caviar. She was a founding board member of the Chefs Collaborative and is now on the board of seven other environmental and culinary organizations.

Pouillon can also take credit for bringing farmers' markets to the DC area.

About 15 years ago, Pouillon became aware of the Union Square Greenmarket in New York City and started to talk about bringing such a market to the District. "I couldn't believe we didn't have something like that in DC. It was unbelievable how many people didn't want a farmers' market downtown. They were worried it would be filled with dirty farmers and create traffic."

*The soil is at the heart of our food's nutritional value.
We are just beginning to understand this in the United States,
that the nutrients and microorganisms in the soil
determine the plant's ultimate flavor and health.*



But she persisted and was instrumental in opening the very first producer-only farmers' markets in the nation's capital. Called Fresh Farm Markets, the network has grown to include ten markets. "We will open the eleventh market this year," Pouillon says. "There are so many farmers thriving now who just couldn't make a living before these markets. Farmers are like teachers—they are the most underappreciated profession and make the least."

Through her years of working with farms and farmers, Pouillon has developed a profound appreciation for not just the men and women who work the land but the necessity of healthy soil as well. "The soil is at the heart of our food's nutritional value. We are just beginning to understand this in the United States, that the nutrients and microorganisms in the soil determine the plant's ultimate flavor and health," she says.

In the Shadow of the White House

Existing at the forefront of the sustainable and organic food movement while in such close proximity to the nation's capital,

where so often laws are handed down that go against what she is working toward, how does Pouillon remain inspired? By looking to people for change, not to the government. "The government does not change things. Change has to come through the people," she asserts. "A good example would be cigarettes. Everyone thought the government would never change, but it did and it was through the people."

Pouillon tempers this opinion with a dose of moderation. "You have to give options to people though; people can't all change their lifestyles overnight. And there's nothing wrong with chips, if they are organic, not made with GMOs, and you don't eat a whole bag. We also need Walmart and Costco to offer more organics. Organic can't only be for rich privileged people."

Today Pouillon remains very active in the restaurant. She arrives every day at 12:30 p.m. to sit down with the chef and sous-chef. "We talk about what the farmers will deliver, what we have in stock, and then compose a menu. About 10 percent to 20 percent of the menu changes every day, depending on the availability of products."

Pouillon says there's plenty of payoff in running a restaurant for almost 35 years. "I love seeing guests who ate at my restaurant when they were young and now bring their kids to eat. That my food has inspired them to continue coming and to expose their children to it means a lot. I love that I've been able to inspire other chefs as well—chefs like Michel Nischan and Maria Hines, who have called me up and asked for advice on running an organic restaurant, or José Andrés, whom I introduced to local organic farmers."

If you ask Pouillon if she wishes she had taken an easier route to becoming a chef, she says no. "I am happy that I never went to cooking school but to the school of life. I learned how to think for myself, and I was daring enough to go my own way to serve the food I wanted and inspire lots of people. In the end I was not so crazy."

While it's getting easier to take for granted the farmers' market down the street or the local farm-to-table restaurant, if it weren't for the tenacity and risk taking of organic pioneers like Nora Pouillon, they might not exist. To accomplish and achieve all that takes an abundance of courage and vision. ■

Paul Lightfoot

The Localization of Produce

by Bruce Boyers



No one would likely predict that a midlife crisis would ultimately be the catalyst for a revolution in food distribution. But for Paul Lightfoot, CEO of BrightFarms, that's exactly what happened.

"I spent nearly ten years running a software company that improved the supply chains of retailers and their suppliers," Lightfoot told *Organic Connections*. "I had a 60-mile

Lightfoot's own midlife crisis coincided with a sustainability crisis in our industrialized food system. As stated on the BrightFarms website, 95 percent of food sold in the US travels over 1,000 miles. Modern agriculture is the largest consumer of land and water, and is the cause of the most pollution and 20 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. When energy prices rise, so does the overall cost of food. In an era of acknowledged climate change, it is evident that the old system is working against us.

"The inspiration for BrightFarms grew out of our desire to grow food in the same communities where it's being consumed," Lightfoot said, "a desire to grow food that's fresher, tastier, and better for the environment."

Through BrightFarms' unique approach to

The inspiration for BrightFarms grew out of our desire to grow food in the same communities where it's being consumed—a desire to grow food that's fresher, tastier, and better for the environment.

commute and felt little purpose in my work. I had become a local- and nonprocessed-food zealot in my personal life, and was one of the only software CEOs who did the family food purchasing and cooking.

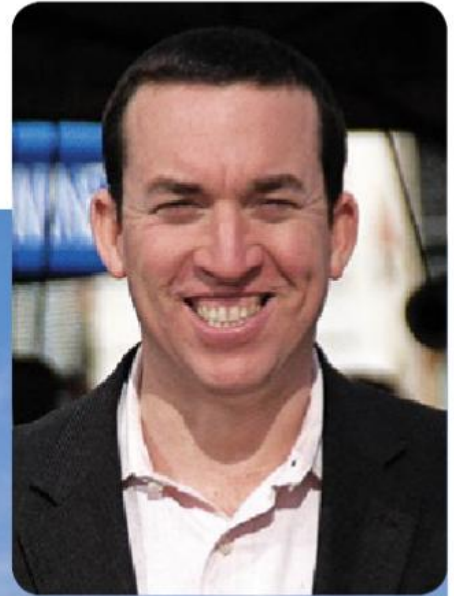
"I had a midlife crisis over the past several years—a great midlife crisis—and I'm still enjoying it every day. I realized that I wanted to apply my retail-supply-chain experience to doing something more meaningful, with more purpose, and in a way that would improve local food supply chains."

the problem, scalable local-produce production is more than theoretical. BrightFarms' plan involves designing, financing, building and operating hydroponic greenhouses at or near supermarkets, eliminating time, distance and cost from the food supply chain. The produce being purchased by consumers is fresher and more flavorful, having been picked at its prime of ripeness. "The first way to ensure great flavor is to deliver the freshest produce possible," Lightfoot pointed out. "Local produce tastes better. We can harvest and deliver

our produce on the same day because our greenhouses are so close to our retail partners."

The hydroponic approach also means considerable savings in growing resources. A fraction of the land and water is used, when compared to conventional farming; for example, tomatoes are grown with up to 7 times less land and 10 times less water. Minimal fertilizer is used, and there is no agricultural runoff. BrightFarms utilizes beneficial insects and integrated pest management to keep harmful pesticides out of the greenhouse.





Additionally, greenhouses employ vents, shade curtains and evaporating cooling systems to precisely control heating and cooling. Supermarkets lose a substantial amount of heat through refrigeration systems and bakery and prepared-food departments. For greenhouses located on supermarket roofs, this wasted heat can be utilized to lower greenhouse operating costs and the carbon footprint.

With the prospect of such greenhouses being situated close to supermarkets, or supermarket distribution centers, the vision

of local produce being easily available and scalable for large numbers of consumers is within the grasp of reality.

Breakthrough Business Plan

The initial idea of putting greenhouses atop or local to supermarkets was met with enthusiasm—but an obvious barrier existed. “The first challenge we faced was figuring out what would work for our retail partners and what wouldn’t,” said Lightfoot. “In the

development stages, we spoke to executives from a major food retailer in the New York City area. They loved the idea, but said that building a greenhouse for them wouldn’t work because they didn’t have the capital or the resources to become farmers.”

This barrier was surmounted when Lightfoot turned for inspiration to the business model utilized in another sustainable technology. “Our business model is based on the innovative model of the late Brian Robertson,” Lightfoot related. “Brian was



a revolutionary and an entrepreneur. He pioneered an innovative business model putting solar power systems on rooftops. Ten years ago, building owners and tenants were unwilling to make the large upfront capital investments to put solar on their rooftops, so the solar industry was stagnant. Brian and his teammates at a rooftop solar company called SunEdison decided to sell *electricity* rather than solar panels. They got building owners and tenants to agree to buy the electricity for a long term at a fixed price, and then the company would use those long-term contracts to finance the construction. Brian and his team put up the capital, built the systems and operated them for the buildings—the buildings merely had to buy the electricity at fixed prices, which they wanted to do. It worked, and Brian and his colleagues spawned what is now a multibillion-dollar industry.

“At BrightFarms, we’re applying that very business model to the produce supply chain. By partnering with supermarkets, we raise the capital and build the greenhouse so that all our retailers need to do is agree to a long-term contract for fresh, delicious produce at fixed prices.”

It means a turnkey solution for food retailers. The design, finance, building and management of the greenhouse are all taken care of by BrightFarms, along with the harvesting and delivery of produce. There is no cost to the retailer—only the agreement to purchase the produce on a long-term fixed-price contract. Stores also gain from carrying fresher, more nutritious produce with a longer shelf life, and by being protected from volatile pricing, inconsistent supply, and product linked to fuel prices. Of course, it also means a drastically reduced carbon footprint for every participating retailer.

Vision to Reality

It was the revolutionary business model that elevated BrightFarms from theoretical plan into action. Several stores have now signed on. Best Yet Market’s Manhattan store is already selling produce from BrightFarms’ greenhouse in Huntington, NY. McCaffrey’s Market signed the grocery industry’s first long-term produce purchase agreement and will now have a greenhouse servicing all of their stores before the end of the year. Homeland Stores of Oklahoma City, OK, recently signed the industry’s second produce purchase agreement and will have a greenhouse at their stores in early 2013.

Probably the most remarkable of these

*Our supermarket partners
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consumers want and deserve it.*

projects currently being undertaken by BrightFarms is a partnership with Salmar Properties to construct the world’s largest rooftop farm. Slated to be located on Liberty View Industrial Plaza in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, the multiacre hydroponic greenhouse will be built on 100,000 square feet of rooftop space and will be used to grow up to one million pounds of local produce per year, including lettuce, tomatoes and herbs. The redevelopment of the building, along with the installation of the rooftop farm, is part of Mayor Bloomberg’s plan to revitalize Brooklyn’s industrial waterfront.

Lightfoot is increasingly being called upon to speak and share his vision, and he recently appeared at TEDx Manhattan.

Technology

The technology being applied in BrightFarms’ greenhouses was developed by mechanical and environmental engineer Dr. Ted Caplow. “BrightFarms stands on the shoulders of Ted Caplow, visionary and pioneer in the field of rooftop sustainable greenhouse development,” Lightfoot explained. “Dr. Caplow is the founder of New York Sun Works, co-founder of BrightFarms Systems, and chairman of its successor company, BrightFarms, Inc.”

The technology developed and tested by Dr. Caplow has been carried over into BrightFarms’ greenhouses. “We grow all of our plants in controlled-environment greenhouses using the highest-quality nutrients available,” said Lightfoot. “This means that we give our plants the ideal environment to thrive in, minimizing stress and disease.

“We also consider the specific climates

that our greenhouses inhabit. Our drive to build sustainable facilities that respect the natural environment—while simultaneously growing fresher, healthier produce—truly shapes our design. Each greenhouse facility will combine technologies that are the most appropriate and sustainable for a given location. In other words, our greenhouses will be customized to each location.”

Grower training is also a vital part of the turnkey solution. “We employ world-class growers to care for our crops and train our employees. Their growing methods—and attention to plant health and nutrition—guarantees high-quality flavor.

“We’re looking for farmers who share our passion for quality produce and dedication to the environment. We grow hydroponically to conserve land and water; we need farmers who are experienced in hydroponics or excited to learn new methods.”

Poised for Growth

More and more, Lightfoot and his team are finding that, despite being part of the industrial food system for so long, supermarkets are very willing to take part in this innovation. “Our retail partners are both innovative and consumer oriented,” he said. “Consumer demand for local produce is at an all-time high. A recent Mintel study shows consumer demand for ‘local’ has surpassed demand for ‘organic.’ Our supermarket partners understand that to stay competitive they have to offer produce that’s fresher, more nutritious and more sustainable, because consumers want and deserve it.”

Many supermarket chains are supplied from large distribution centers. BrightFarms has seen their way clear to service such stores in that regard as well. “Big supermarket chains are ideal partners for BrightFarms’ business model,” Lightfoot said. “We can build greenhouses at supermarkets or distribution centers, and one greenhouse can supply enough produce for multiple stores.”

Lightfoot sees the future in terms of local growing being the complete norm. “My vision for the future includes my daughter being able to shop at her local supermarket without knowing that fresh produce used to be shipped from 3,000 miles away,” he concluded. “Ideally, the barriers between food producers and food consumers will be broken down, and local farmers will shop alongside their customers—buying quality produce they grew with loving care and respect for the environment.” ■

Chef David Kinch

Partnership of Restaurant and Farm

by Bruce Boyers

in the countryside of France, no matter how good it was, you couldn't pick it up and drop it down in midtown Manhattan. Restaurants being a function of where they are is kind of the concept of terroir. It is a reflection of the soil and location that's mirrored in the wine—and I think you can do the same thing with restaurants."

The Farm

In the heart of the San Francisco Bay Area you will find Manresa restaurant. Helmed by world-renowned chef David Kinch—whose unique interpretation of California cuisine has garnered significant attention—Manresa has received two Michelin stars for six years in a row. It was named in the Zagat Survey of 2012 as one of the top five restaurants in the Bay Area. Kinch himself was nominated as 2011 Chef of the Year by *GQ* magazine, and he received the 2010 James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef in America: Pacific region. The list of accolades and awards goes substantially onward.

The flavors expressed by Chef Kinch tap directly into the rich flavor heritage of the local area—a practice he has espoused for many years. Specifically he is embracing what is known as *terroir*—defined traditionally as the flavor reflection in crops (originally wine grapes) of a particular region.

"I became interested in terroir while learning about wine through visiting really great restaurants in France at a young age when I was cutting my teeth as a fledgling cook," Kinch told *Organic Connections*. "I started to understand the concept of terroir with regard to wine, and I realized you could apply the same concept to food.

"I have a theory that there are two common denominators to the world's great restaurants. One is that the cooking is reflective of a certain *individual*; it reflects the unique vision of a chef, an owner—or many different people.

"The other is that it's reflective of where the restaurant is. If a restaurant were out

Chef Kinch's terroir approach is forged through a "farm-to-table" relationship that enables him to serve produce of the local area at its peak of flavor.

Back in 2002 Kinch had been utilizing locally and artisanally farmed ingredients for Manresa, when he began entertaining the idea of growing his own produce. This led him directly to a grower with whom he was already familiar—Cynthia Sandberg of nearby Love Apple Farms—and with whom he would ultimately form an exclusive partnership.

"Cynthia supplied tomatoes to me for one summer and they were really fantastic," Kinch said. "I thought, 'Well, this is great, I



start to grow my own vegetables and cause a degree of separation from other shops. I began talking to growers that I knew, asking them if they could help me. I asked Cynthia,

It's a subtlety of **TASTE**—and probably some people would even claim **NUTRITION**—that, in my opinion, is all about just taking **EXTREME CARE** of the **SOIL** and paying close attention to what's going on in the **PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE** on the farm.

have a tomato grower in season for the next couple of years.' After that first year of getting to know her, I had this concept that I would

and she immediately offered herself and her services to start a small farm because it was something that she'd always wanted to do."



"I'd been getting a lot of good press for my tomatoes," Cynthia Sandberg told *Organic Connections*. "I'd appeared in *Sunset* magazine and in a lot of newspapers and radio shows. One of the interviewers told me about this restaurant in Los Gatos that had just been named one of the top restaurants in the world. When I was dining there on

nearby the restaurant by Cynthia, who is growing them with the knowledge that they're going to be used in Manresa down the road, contributes to this intangible terroir—the reflection of *where* we are that we're trying to pursue."

As part of that pursuit, Manresa's menus are changed daily to highlight the best produce

said. "In the height of summer we'll grow about 300 different cultivars for David. We're sowing and transplanting, harvesting, thinning, weeding, mulching, fertilizing, and lovingly caring for all these plants that we then harvest for him several times a week and deliver to the restaurant."

"There's a lot of product that grows there," Kinch continued. "Of course there are the seasonal items, things that we've grown every year. There are also products that haven't worked out in the past, so there are some that we drop. Then there is experimental product. On a day-to-day basis we have live Google documents where we can check from the restaurant what's available at the farm and what needs to be used up. The farm can see at our end what we need, what we're going through, and how we're changing it on the menu. I use that method, as well as physical walks through the farm, to decide how we put things on the menu."

"We plan about two or three seasons ahead. We sit down with seed catalogues. We talk about past success and failures. Do we want to try something new? Do we want to bend the amount that we grow for the restaurant? Is there something we particularly like that we want to grow more of and use more of because we're excited about it? And so on."

With all the attention being paid to the dining experience, Manresa is influencing other restaurants to source locally or to start growing their own produce.

"David was one of the pioneers in this regard," Sandberg said. "He's had so many restaurants and chefs follow his lead that there is now a huge interest in fine restaurants either sourcing locally or taking it to the next step—like David has—and actually creating their own farm or garden. It's a developing trend and it's going to be a continuing trend."

"I think the benefit is the quality of produce and the fact that you have control of that," Kinch concluded. "I don't get up on a soapbox about it—I don't preach; I don't have 'mission statements' at the restaurant. I like to think that the proof is on the plate. Manresa has become very vegetable-centric—vegetables take front and center on a lot of dishes at the restaurant. I think people see the value of the relationship and I allow that to speak."

For further information on Manresa, visit www.manresarestaurant.com.

To learn more about Love Apple Farms, visit www.growbetterveggies.com.

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my first occasion—having the most amazing meal of my life—David Kinch came out of the kitchen and introduced himself, because somebody had told him that I was a local tomato grower and he likes to source locally. That ultimately led to our partnership."

The exceptional flavors that have brought such repute to Love Apple Farms' produce were certainly no accident. Early on, Sandberg implemented biodynamic principles—the farming methods originally evolved by Rudolf Steiner in 1924—which emphasize the natural interrelationship of soil, plants, animals and insects. In addition to the obvious benefits to the land and produce itself, the difference in taste between crops produced with these methods and those grown in "conventional" industrial agriculture is quite significant.

"It's a subtlety of taste—and probably some people would even claim nutrition—that, in my opinion, is all about just taking extreme care of the soil and paying close attention to what's going on in the plant and animal life on the farm," Sandberg explained.

"It's fantastic," Kinch agreed. "It's a long process that continues to this day, and the soil keeps improving every year. You amend it, you work at it, it gets better and better, and the product that grows gets better and better. The quality is excellent—and it's close by. In addition, you have this intangible element: Cynthia and I are working toward the same goal with the same vegetables."

"But it comes back to this terroir aspect. The fact that I use vegetables that are grown

available from Love Apple Farms. This produce is prepared and served on the very same day it is harvested, bringing the highest possible flavor experience to Manresa's clientele.

The Menu

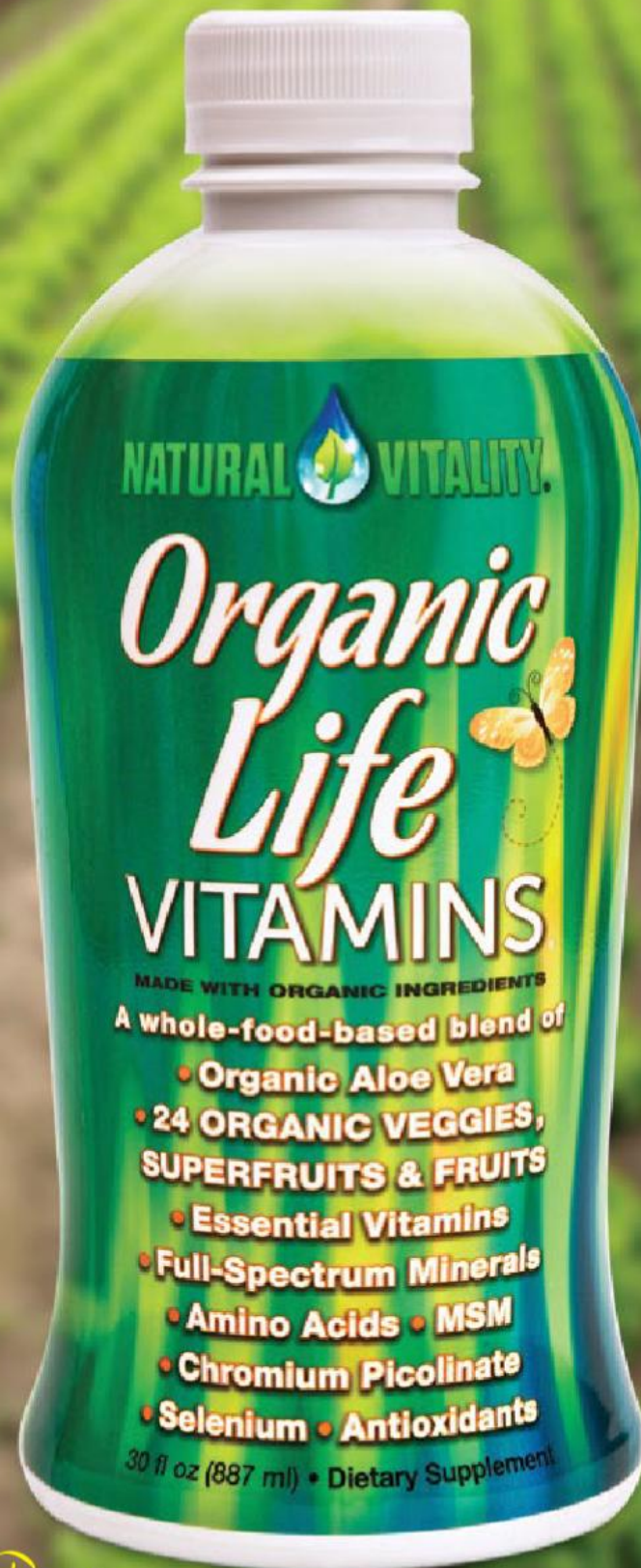
Recent examples from the menu include sea bream and assorted shellfish, sashimi style, with olive oil and chives; a garden green soup, with stone-ground mustard cream and multicolored purées; hazelnut praline with celtuce, quince vinegar and winter mushrooms; thinly sliced wagyu beef, dried tuna and black tea bouillon; and a dish called "Into the Vegetable Garden . . . Their Natural Juices," which incorporates various elements of a plant at different times of its life—roots, stems, seed, flowers, buds, leaves and shoots—as well as edible "dirt" made from roasted chicory root and dried potatoes.

Choosing from either a six-course menu or a tasting menu decided by Chef Kinch, guests can view a list of up to 60 assorted ingredients that might be available from the kitchen that day. All vegetables, several fruits and many other provisions come directly from Love Apple Farms, and Kinch sources his meats from the finest California purveyors. Every ingredient coming into the kitchen meets Kinch's strict standards.

The partnership between Kinch and Sandberg is an ever-evolving process. "Every day our farm is dedicated to growing as many fruits, herbs, vegetables and edible flowers as we can think of on our 80 acres," Sandberg



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