



Rick Field of Rick's Picks

KEEPIN' IT LOCAL, FOLKS. Eat My Words!

By Karin Edmondson

Last Christmas I gave gifts of pickles to my friends. A colleague of mine, a talented guitarist who longed (and was energetically plotting) to exit his day job in an audio tape room received a bottle of Spears of Influence. His assistant, an equally talented albeit younger musician (he played the musical saw) got a jar of Slices of Life. Somehow, giving a jar of Rick's Picks pickles all made sense. Pickles have been a proud tradition on the Lower East Side, yet don't seem to incite the same lovingly composed odes to gastronomic joy as say, a plate of sublime smoked herring or a hot melting slice of thin crust New York pizza. Perhaps, fault lies in the roles pickles play...almost always supporting: Sometimes, they're indignantly thrown into a little plastic cup that sits wedged precariously on the edge of a deli plate; other times, they're plopped on top of a hamburger or minced into a relish and slathered on a hot dog. Or, they are thrown by the handful into wax bags to accompany an office load of lunchtime sandwiches and inevitably, forgotten, cast aside. And then, there is the vast empire that is Vlastic...where high fructose corn syrup, calcium chloride and polysorbate 80 are the predominant ingredients.

Rick's Picks is a small (just two people) pickling company with offices on Chrystie Street and a weekly presence at the Union

Square Greenmarket, since they use produce exclusively from Hudson Valley farms. Almost single handedly, Rick Field and his business partner, Lauren McGrath, are slowly changing the way New Yorkers—and forward thinking citizens in twenty-five states (red and blue alike) think about pickles.

Rick Field goes by the title of Pickler and frequently scowls in many of the photos that accompany accolades in magazines ranging from *Saveur* and *Food and Wine* to *O* (Oprah's magazine) and *The New York Times*. A Yale graduate and former television producer/director, Rick talks with gravitas about flavor triangulation in his pickles...“a triangle of three main flavors play off one another. For instance, in the GT 1000s (pickled green tomatoes) the tomatoes contribute the sharp flavor, raisins add the sweet and curry is the one spice note—there is the successful trinity.” There are only three pickled cucumbers in Rick's repertoire: Spears of Influence and Slices of Life, both dill pickles, and the Bee n Beez, his grown-up (dried cherries and coconut flakes impart the sweet) version of Bread and Butter pickles. The other five products are various pickled vegetables. Green beans are elevated two ways: in a soy-wasabi brine in Windy City Wasabeans and in cayenne-dill brine in Mean Beans. Beets are bathed in a brine of rosemary, ginger and lemon juice in Phat Beets. The green tomato, that ubiquitous staple of Southern cuisine, gets an infusion of Yankee ingenuity with exotic notes of curry, turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, allspice and raisins in my personal favorite, the GT 1000s. Red peppers are



*Migliorelli Farm in Rhinebeck provides many of the green tomatoes and dill flowers used in Rick's Picks pickled goods.
Photograph by Karin Edmondson*

pickled with garlic and ginger for an intense smoky essence in Pepi Pep Peps. The recipes are entirely Rick's, some of them results of his own personal bursts of brilliance and others, old family favorites that he tweaked and updated. Rick's origins in pickling date back to childhood in Vermont and later continued with his "screwing around with different brines in his Brooklyn kitchen. Not everything I pickled worked—like the eggplant. I thought there was something to do with eggplant, a niche to fill between baba ganoush and ratatouille. I was wrong in a most profound way." Two new products that do make the cut are Smoke'ra (pickled okra) and Whup Asp (pickled asparagus) that are poised to make their debut any day.

Rick is the creative culinary force behind the pickles. He christens his product with the clever, whimsical names, although Lauren does occasionally exercise her veto power. Rick is also at the Greenmarket every day that it is open, doing the "brutally hard work of lugging pickles around rain or shine, up freight elevators and down hallways. We are trying to take something that was created in a painstaking and traditional manner and scale it up while retaining the original character of the whole thing." Owning a business is rewarding (as a fan letter from Mario Batali attests to) but it also requires constant promotion and interacting with the public (I made his acquaintance one evening last year at the Columbus Circle Whole Foods). Rick recently spent 10 or so days in northern

California to attend the Fancy Food Show in San Francisco and embark on a marketing tour of various regional farmers markets and Whole Foods stores. His daily schedule rivaled those of some rock bands on a promo blitz for a new album. Rick also makes the occasional road trip—"invariably an impossibly lyrical drive through the country at sunrise but a colossal pain in the arse because my tire rims end up scraping the asphalt since my Subaru is not meant to haul 600 pounds of beets"—to his produce suppliers when the transportation logistics snag. (The other option is to resort to tactics the CIA might use in clandestine operations and arrange early morning meetings on street corners for cucumber/cash exchanges.)

Rick purchases the majority of his produce from farmers in the Hudson Valley and Catskill Region. Migliorelli Farm in Rhinebeck supplies the "perfectly sized, dead green and rock hard" green tomatoes and dill flowers. Beets come from Frank Deglary in Florida (New York), all the cucumbers are grown by Rick Peterson in Seneca Castle and the green beans by Luke George outside of Albany. The pickling is actually done at Foodworks, a production facility in Poughkeepsie that Rick visits twice weekly in order to ensure things are progressing to his standards. Rick doesn't have to use dill flowers as they are A) more expensive and B) harder to source; however, "the aesthetics of the jar involve the inside and the outside. Dill flowers impart a lovely, refined dill flavor. They also look really cool in the jar." Ken Migliorelli, the second generation

to farm in New York State—his father farmed the land that is now Co-Op City back when Pelham Parkway was dotted with pig farms—allots an entire field of dill to flower specially for Rick's Picks. The tomatoes he grows for Rick that eventually metamorphose into GT 1000s are the Mountain Fresh varietal which originated down south and are approximately 5x6 inches when mature.

Not only does Rick source his produce in the Hudson Valley, but in 2001 he unexpectedly received a bit of “unsolicited support” at the Rosendale International Pickle Festival by taking Best in Show ribbon. “That was the galvanizing moment, although there is an enormous difference between country fairs and running your own business. That’s where Lauren comes in.” Since 2004, Rick’s Picks was just Rick and Lauren. Now, Rick’s Picks has reached the point where they are looking to hire a third person. Rick’s Picks is sold in every state on the eastern seaboard. Whole Foods shelves in New York City, Westchester and Long Island carry his entire line of “pickled varieties.” Thus far Bluecashew Kitchen Pharmacy (845 687 0294) in High Falls is the sole retailer in the Catskill Region although it is possible that the Catskill Mountain Foundation’s newly expanded Farm Store will soon have some varieties available as well. Pickles can also be ordered through www.rickspicksnyc.com and shipped anywhere in the continental United States. For more information please visit the Web site, call 212 358 0428 or e-mail rick@rickspicksnyc.com.

Local Farm Updates

Cooperstown Cookie Company (profiled February 2005)

The Cooperstown Cookie Company™, founded by Pati Drumm Grady in Cooperstown in 2004, develops and distributes high quality, made-from-scratch specialty cookies, including Classic Baseball Shortbread™. Their cookies are baked by and they share a portion of their profits with Pathfinder Village (www.pathfindervillage.org) a residential facility in Cherry Valley for children and adults who have Down syndrome. A portion of Cooperstown Cookie Company’s profits is shared with Pathfinder Village.

Their regulation baseball-sized cookies and bite-sized bunts now come in your choice of classic shortbread, Mudville Mudball Chocolate Chip Shortbread and the new Boys of Summer Lemon Shortbread. Pairing their rich delicious shortbread with the sun-kissed taste of lemon is a wonderful treat. For more information about the Cooperstown Cookie Company or to place an order, please call 607 547 9146 or visit them online at www.CooperstownCookieCompany.com.

Fleisher’s Grass-fed and Organic Meats (profiled August 2004)

Fleisher’s is a butcher store specializing in local and regional pastured and organic meat and have a wide selection of meats including smoked hams and turkeys, locally-raised geese, pheasants, Cornish game hens, capons, Muscovy ducks, Pekin ducks and guinea hens. Jessica Applestone and Joshua Stein also carry home-made sausages including fantastic breakfast sausages, bacon and

eggs. Fleisher’s is located at 307 Wall Street in Kingston. The store will now be open Thursday and Friday from 11 am to 7 pm and Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm. Fleisher’s will be stocking lots of local organic produce and features an expanded dairy selection along with a wide selection of local dry goods and products. For more information please call Jessica or Joshua at 845 338 MOOO.

Heather Ridge Farm (profiled November 2004)

Heather Ridge Farm is a new farm that is 200 years old and is situated in old dairy pastures and antique apple orchards. Carol Clement and John Harrison specialize in pastured and grass-fed beef, pork, chicken and turkey. Absolutely no antibiotics, hormones or chemicals are used on the farm.

The farm store is open every Saturday from 9 am to noon. Every week they have all grass-fed beef, pastured pork, handmade artisan sausages, pastured poultry, raw honey products and other local farm goods. There is fresh chicken, whole or parts, most Saturdays, and they always have some frozen. The monthly fresh chicken pickup days for reserved chickens will be Friday, July 14 from 3 pm to 7 pm and Saturday, July 15 from 9 am to noon. It’s not too late to reserve chickens monthly from now through October to stock your freezer for your own supply of these wonderful birds.

They begin harvesting new pork and beef in July and continue through the fall. Lamb is available late fall. If anyone is interested in ordering a side of beef, pork or whole lamb, contact Carol at 518 239 6045 or e-mail carol@heather-ridge-farm.com You can also stop by the Catskill and Saugerties farmers’ markets on Saturdays and visit Heather Ridge Farm’s booth there.

Also for sale are: wool throws and blankets locally made by Carol’s friends at Sap Bush Hollow Farm in Warnerville; organic raw honey and Irish-style Lemon Honey: Cinnamon Walnut Honey topping and Orange Pecan Honey topping; culinary herbs; eggs, and turkey, pork and chicken brines made with Carol’s own honey, herbs, spices and sea salt. Baked goods from Wholesome Baked Goods (their neighbors the Alois’s), local cheeses (Nettle Meadow’s luscious Kunik, a cow-goat brie-like cheese, as well as Brovetto’s fresh mozzarella and their Harpersfield cheese in assorted flavors), maple syrup, candles and soaps are also available.

Carol & John have added a few new members to their farm family...two adult female llamas and one male now grace their fields along with a young male offspring. Come up the hill and take a look! Heather Ridge Farm has also been approved by the Department of Agriculture & Markets to work with the first mobile meat processing unit in New York State. They are the fourth farm in the state that has qualified. Carol and John believe that this will give them more control over the part of the process that has been off-limits or, at best, difficult, and as a result, they will be able to offer better service and quality in their products to their customers.

Heather Ridge Farm’s pure raw heather honey was recently named the Best Honey in the Hudson Valley region by *Hudson*

Valley Magazine! Heather Ridge Farm is located at 989 Broome Center Road in Preston Hollow. For more information and directions, please visit their Web site at www.heather-ridge-farm.com, call Carol or John at 518 239 6234 (office) or 518 239 6045 (store) or e-mail them at HeatherRidgeFarm@aol.com. Heather Ridge Farm is open by appointment as well. Visa, Mastercard and Diners Club are now accepted!



The counter at the newly-reopened Hobart Market

Hobart Market Smokehouse (profiled September 2004)

Sal and Cheryl Cottone have reopened their popular market in Hobart featuring Sal's handmade charcuterie and wide varieties of produce and artisan foods from local producers including Brovetto's cheeses and their own free-range eggs. Hobart Market Smokehouse is a USDA processing facility that stills does custom processing for farmers in the area. Folks should call in advance for any custom processing or assistance with meat harvesting services. Retail store hours are Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm and they welcome special orders (customers can call or e-mail by noon on Wednesday for a weekend meat order), mail order and wholesale accounts. Sal's charcuterie is also back in Fairway market in New York City. The Hobart Market is located on Route 10 (Main Street) in the village of Hobart. For more information please call them at 607 538 1733 or visit their redesigned Web site at www.hobartmarket.com.

Lucky Organic Chocolate and Biscuit Co.

(profiled February 2006)

Chocolatier Rae Stang dreams up and then creates magical dark chocolate confections and bon bons (almond sour cherry or cashew peanut butter) and truffles such as Chimayo chile or blood orange tangerine grapefruit or port wine or fresh mint (she grows the mint herself). What's more, her chocolate is organic and fair trade as well. Rae's grand opening is of her brand new Lucky Chocolates Factory & Store happens in mid July at 1534 Route 212 in Saugerties, 3.5 miles northeast of Woodstock and 8 miles west of Saugerties. For more information, call her at 845 246 7337.

Sap Bush Hollow Farm (profiled November 2005)

Sap Bush Hollow Farm is a farm that raises animals entirely on pasture. Two generations of the Hayes family are committed to practicing management-intensive grazing with absolutely no chemicals, hormones or preservatives. Fresh grass-fed chicken and retail cuts of grass-fed beef, lamb and pork are available. They also have superb artisan sausages handmade on the farm. For more information and directions please visit their Web site at www.sap-bush.com. Sap Bush Hollow Farm is located at 1314 West Fulton Road in Warnerville.

Skate Creek Farm (profiled July 2005)

Skate Creek Farm, located in beautiful Delaware County, raises animals entirely on pasture. For more information about the farm, or to request a newsletter with other events and a complete product list, please visit www.skatecreekfarm.com, or send an e-mail to amy@skatecreekfarm.com. Skate Creek Farm is located at 1496 County Highway 12 in East Meredith.

Stoneledge Organic Farm (profiled September 2003)

Certified organic produce from Stoneledge Farm, LLC, is available Saturdays at the Catskill Region Farmers Market on Main Street in the town of Catskill and at the Saugerties Farmers Market in Saugerties. For more information, please call Pete or Deborah Kavakos at 518 622 3003.

Stone and Thistle Farm (profiled August 2004)

Stone and Thistle Farm is a livestock farm nestled in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains. Tom and Denise Warren raise their lamb, goats, pigs, cows, chickens and turkeys on rolling mountain-side pastures without any antibiotics, hormones or chemicals.

Stone & Thistle Farm has been selected by *National Geographic* and I Love New York as a unique tourist destination and a showcase of sustainable farming. The farm was featured in the first-ever National Geographic Geo-Tourism Map Guide to Appalachia in the April 2005 issue of *National Geographic Traveler*. For a copy of the Map Guide, call I Love New York at 800 CALL NYS or visit www.iloveny.com. The map is also available at www.nationalgeographic.com/appalachia.

Kortright Creek Creamery was recently selected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to receive \$27,200 in funding from the 2005 Value Added Producers Grant to process and market grass fed and certified organic goat milk yogurt. See www.usda.gov for more information.

Have you ever milked a goat? Do you want to find out why hens lay brown eggs? How soft is a lamb's wool coat? How can we use piglets to roto-till the garden? What is a wattle on a goat and why do they have them? What is a heritage breed? What makes a farm grass fed or organic? Find the answers to these questions and more when you visit Stone & Thistle Farm and Kortright Creek Creamery on a farm tour Sundays in July at 1 pm. A fee of \$4 per person is charged for tours. Pasture raised, organic chickens at



*Barber's Farm will participate in the School of Country Wisdom's fourth annual farm tour day in July.
Photograph courtesy of the Schoharie County Chamber of Commerce.*

\$3.50/lb are also available. The Farm Store is open seven days a week from 11 am to 6 pm, and sells retail cuts of grass-fed and organic lamb, goat, beef, pork and poultry; eggs; organic raw and pasteurized, grass-fed goat milk; goat milk fudge; lambskins; wool products; local honey; maple syrup; baked goods; beeswax candles; goat milk soap, and herbal products.

Stone and Thistle Farm will also be at the Oneonta Farmers' Market on Main Street from 9 am to 2 pm every Saturday through October. Stone and Thistle Farm and Kortright Creek Creamery is located at 1211 Kelso Road in East Meredith. For more information, call them at 607 278 5773, e-mail them at stoneandthistle-farm@starband.net or visit their Web site at www.stoneandthistle-farm.com

Walton Farmers Market

Kate and Dan Marsiglio of Stonycreek Farm have helped to organize a new farmers market in Walton on Fridays from 4 pm to 7 pm. The market is located in the Robinson Bros Auction Parking lot on the corner of West and Delaware Streets in Walton. They have local organic produce, fresh eggs, pasture-raised broiler chickens and pork, fresh goat cheeses and aged cow cheeses, jams, jellies and baked goods. They are also looking for more vendors. Please contact Kate Marsiglio at katemarsiglio@mac.com or visit www.stonycreekfarm.org for more information.

Schoharie County Farm Tour Day

Saturday, July 15

Our Barn Doors are Wide Open Day

Schoharie County is holding its 4th Annual farm tour day on Saturday, July 15 with participating farms in Middleburgh, NY. Free tours will be offered at Barber's Farm from 10 am to 2pm (vegetables and greenhouse plants—30-minute guided and narrated hay wagon rides departing on the hour for a trip through the fields, tastings of red potatoes with butter and garlic). At Crossbrook Farm, the Prokop Family will operate tours from 10 am to 2 pm (tour of greenhouse calf-raising facility, heifer facility and milking parlor/ tastings of dairy products), and Red Maple Farm will be open for tours from 9 am to 5 pm (llamas, chickens, donkey, Clydesdale horses, Scottish Highlanders, Scottish black faced sheep). Find directions, details and a "Save Your Gas" group tour offer at www.SchoolofCountryWisdom.com.

**Got a hot tip on a Catskill area farm? Please feel free to email me at KarinaEdmondson@yahoo.com with any questions or leads on a local farm that you think more people should get hip to.*