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PLUS: Missoula chefs dish on their favorite restaurant meals, a Q&A with Clark Fork Charcuterie's Stephen Hodgdon, and Mission possible at Lower Crossing Farm



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Feast

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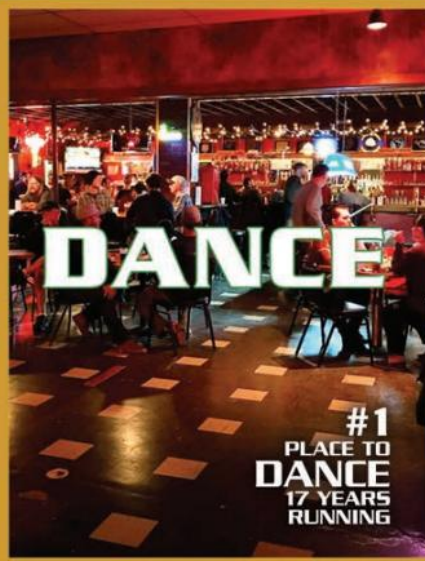
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Welcome to the first spring *Feast*, a second helping of everything that makes Missoula such a great place to eat.

Until now, we've brought you this magazine once a year, in the fall, so it's exciting to get a chance to publish in spring as well, at the beginning of the local growing season, a time when we all can look forward to planting gardens, open-air farmers markets and drinks in the sun.

Local producers and ingredients are the foundation of what makes eating here special. Small farms like Lower Crossing, which raise and butcher animals, grow vegetables and make their own hot sauce. Prepared products like those from Clark Fork Charcuterie, which transforms local meats into sausages using recipes with roots a continent away. And the indigenous traditions of preparing bison, the original big game, which sustained people in northwest Montana for many years before cattle were ranches here.

Obviously we're nothing without our beer, and there's a new cooperative model brewing in Ronan. A new Missoula kombucha maker is also fermenting cooperation with a worker-owned business model. And a one-woman bicycle compost pick-up service is peddling sustainability.

These are just some of the stories we're privileged to bring you in this issue, which showcases everything from artisanal cocktails to local chefs' spring recipes.

While Missoula proper has the highest concentration of bars, restaurants and markets in the area, we're happy that this issue reaches out to offer a taste of food from all around our part of the state. So welcome out of hibernation and back to the table to help us share this first spring *Feast*. ✕

Susan Elizabeth Shepard



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CYCLE OF LIFE

Soilcycle's human-powered compost pick-up

Caitlyn Lewis tows a sleek aluminum trailer behind her Raleigh bike, which is outfitted for the icy February streets with studded tires. One of her friends used to use the trailer to move his dogs around, but instead of pet crates, Lewis pulls two large garbage cans on her rounds collecting compost. Her Missoula business, Soilcycle, is a human-powered, bike-enabled compost-pick-up service.

Lewis came to Missoula from Idaho Falls to attend graduate school and wanted to start a business after graduation. Now she's working hard on her start-up while also tutoring and teaching a developmental writing course on campus. Last summer, Lewis brainstormed the idea for Soilcycle with a friend she had met when the two were both Missoula Bicycle Ambassadors, but the friend wasn't able to go full time as a partner when it came time to



photo by Cathrine L. Walters

launch. "So it fell into my hands," Lewis says. "I've taken it and literally rolled with it."

Customers pay a monthly fee of \$10 for monthly pickup or \$24 for weekly pickup. Lewis is

also working to establish drop-off locations so customers who live outside of her collection areas can drop their buckets of compostables at a central location. For now, she divides the city into

different zones. Each pickup takes her about 10 minutes as she parks, empties her customer's food scraps and other organic waste from the containers she supplies (reused five-gallon

FERMENTING JUSTICE

The cause behind the kombucha

Brewing kombucha started as a hobby for Drew Holman. Now the ceramicist-turned-entrepreneur sees his fermented tea as a vehicle for economic justice.

By Holman's accounting, the story behind Missoula's new kombucha company — Back to the Mother — goes back about three years. Holman was working at the Good Food Store at the time, and noticed a high volume of California kombucha going out the doors. All that kombucha came with a hefty carbon footprint, so he set out to turn his home-

brewed kombucha into a local option for Missoula's masses.

"I actually put out a Craigslist ad, no joke, to see if anybody was interested in joining me on my project," Holman says. "I slowly ended up getting some really interesting folks coming out of the woodwork."

Instead of proceeding with what Holman describes as a "pyramid hierarchy," he and his associates endeavored to create a "horizontal hierarchy" — in other words, a worker-owned cooperative. The process wasn't easy. Montana code doesn't pro-

vide a legal pathway for the incorporation of such organizations. Holman tapped Josh Davis, a five-year veteran of the worker-cooperative field, to help come up with a business model that would fit state law while achieving the group's goal of wage equality. Back to the Mother now has four worker-owners, Holman says, and is bringing on a fifth.

The same spirit that drove Back to the Mother's owners to craft an equity-based business model is also driving how they package their product. The company purchases its bottles from Bayern Brewing, which has

been recycling glass with a commercial bottle-washer for nearly six years. Holman says Back to the Mother plans to set up drop-off locations for used bottles at various spots around town. He sees kombucha as an avenue to a vibrant and healthy lifestyle, and says it's important that the product reflect those values at an environmental level.

"Our long-term goal is to acquire land and move into a real sustainable model instead of having all our frozen fruits shipped in by outside companies," Holman says, explaining that they eventually hope to



photo by Cathrine L. Walters

food buckets donated by local businesses), wipes out the bucket and puts it back on their porch or driveway. At the end of the week, Lewis hauls all the compost she's collected to Garden City Compost for processing.

There are now two compost pick-up services in Missoula. There were none just six months ago. Soilcycle and Missoula Compost Collection both began compost pickup in the fall of 2017. "I actually met with Sean

[Doty, owner of MCC]. We were bouncing ideas off each other, and so I think it's really great that there's more than one service," Lewis says. "It was hard at first to launch at the same time, but now that we both have our own separate missions and ideas, I think the more the better."

Lewis stands out just by making her rounds. "It's kind of this spectacle. I've had people take pictures of me, so that's good," Lewis says. "I've also had people stop me in the middle of the street. They roll down their window and yell at me, which is kind of fun." ✕

Susan Elizabeth Shepard



photo by Susan Elizabeth Shepard

grow their own ingredients. "We want to minimize the carbon footprint until it's zero."

Holman jokes that Back to the Mother might look like "an inflated hippy-dippy hipster movement," but he insists the company's values are integral to the endeavor. Corporations like Walmart "sponge off of us," he says. "But if we can organize ourselves and reevaluate how we do business, how we interact with our communities, how we manage our impact on the planet, then we can really improve the human condition for everyone." ✕

Alex Sakariassen

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*Clark Fork
Charcuterie's
Stephen Hodgdon*

by Susan Elizabeth Shepard • photos by Cathrine L. Walters

Last summer, Stephen Hodgdon started selling fresh sausages at Missoula farmers markets, and serving cooked ones from a cart, under the banner of Clark Fork Charcuterie. Over the fall and winter, Hodgdon's charcuterie found a new partner in Clark Fork Custom Meats, an unrelated but coincidentally named meat processor in Plains that can process meat for wholesaling. Using animals from Arcadia Farms in Trout Creek and the Lyon Ranch in Drummond, Hodgdon is producing fresh sausages and cured meats that are now available in Missoula grocery stores

We talked to Hodgdon about the work required to process wholesale meat, the different kinds of sausage he sells and how to

describe mortadella to someone who's never seen it.

Feast: Who's the producer you're working with now?

Stephen Hodgdon: I'm working with Clark Fork Custom Meats out of Plains.

They are a state-certified meat processor and by going through them, I can then wholesale to grocery stores and restaurants, whereas doing it myself, before, I was not certified by the Department of Livestock. I didn't have my own facilities to do it in. It would have been virtually impossible to do wholesale on my own without building up my own plant.

They're really great. There's a lot of helping

out other people in your industry, because when you grow the smaller meat producers, we're all in it together up against the big name-brands and industrial food supply. Of course it's not all altruistic. I'm paying them to make sausage for me, and I want it to be to their benefit as well. It needs to be if they're going to do a good job and do a consistent product, and I totally trust they will, so I'm excited.

And they have nice machinery that is relatively new that makes the process much more efficient. People can look on my social media and see videos of their sausage stuffer that can do 60 links a minute automatically. It increases my efficiency 15- to 20-fold. In the long run, this shop can do 800 pounds a day of sausages.



What types of sausages are you going to be selling?

I think there's an interesting distinction to make about sausage types. There are different textures you get in different sausages, and that plays into the mouthfeel and experience. There are fresh sausages, which is what people think of when they think of Italian sausage or breakfast sausage — a coarser grind that is much closer to just blending ingredients with meat. You're going to feel that pop in the casing, the chewiness of it, when you're eating that.

And then you get into the finer-ground products, which become emulsified, which are generally known as emulsified sausages. This is what a hot dog is, and it's what bologna is. Weisswurst is the one I'm happiest about of the emulsifieds, for just a pure sausage. This is a classic German sausage with lemon and parsley, and it's generally eaten before noon in Germany.

What varieties will be in stores?

Weisswurst, bratwurst, loukaniko (a Greek sausage that's highlighted by orange peel and Mediterranean spices), a sort of mildly sweet breakfast sausage that's got dried apple in it, and mortadella.

Are people at the markets familiar with mortadella? How would you explain it to them?

Yeah, I would say there are plenty of people who do know what it is. The short answer is, "It's like bologna, just better." It's basically a large-diameter sausage with a different spice



profile. There's pistachios in this version, and that's kind of a classic version, and then there's larger chunks of fat, and that is classic mortadella. Health nuts be damned, there are literally large chunks of pork fat. It's all cooked and it works as a texture.

What plans do you have for the spring and summer? Are you still going to take the cart out?

This summer is probably going to be limited to farmers markets and a couple of special events. I'll stick with the Missoula Farmers Market and then I will try to have a stand selling just sausage at the Clark Fork Market. The big thing is really the wholesaling.

Which stores will be carrying Clark Fork Charcuterie?

Missoula Fresh Market on Broadway and the Good Food Store.

Do you still do any work in a kitchen in Missoula? Or is everything done in Plains now?

Everything's there. Except I will be utiliz-

ing a commercial kitchen here in town for farmers market cleanup and some meat storage.

Department of Livestock certified plants fall under state inspection, which is what's required to sell wholesale. They are way more rigorously enforced when you're under wholesale inspection, versus city and county.

There's only a handful of meat plants over here [in Missoula]. There's a reason meat costs a lot and has to be transported, and Missoula County hasn't been the place people have chosen to set up shop. I chose to go the contracting route with a local producer, where we can still maintain our values doing it this way. My goal all along has been to try to be a part of bolstering the local food chain.

It just seems to make sense, and is more appealing, and it's why I've enjoyed starting this business. Hopefully this can be a robust long-term company that supports local farmers and the preservation of local land and ensures we're not using all of our carbon footprint for food transportation. ✕

Clark Fork Charcuterie can be found at clarkforkcharcuterie.com and on Instagram @clarkforkcharcuterie.



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BEST zester

story and photos by
Cathrine L. Walters

The chef: Aimee Elliott, chef instructor at Missoula College's Culinary Arts Program

The gadget: Microplane zester

Feast: *What's your favorite gadget to use in the kitchen?*

Elliott: I've chosen the Microplane zester. For me, it's really important that kitchen equipment has multiple purposes. A Microplane can be used for zesting, for grating and for doing little chores like cutting or mincing garlic and ginger. It is incredibly sharp, and the fineness of the grate, or the zest, is just much better than a traditional zester or grater. And it's cool because I've researched it, and the Microplane is actually made from the rasps of woodworking. So the Microplane

company still makes the woodworking tools that they use for rasps, and it's the same exact design. It's just this one is for kitchen use, and the other one is used for woodworking.

Feast: *Is it something you use frequently?*

Elliott: I use it all the time, yes. Instead of mincing garlic with a knife, if you use the Microplane, it will get a really fine mince. It's a lot easier and faster and less to clean up. To grate cheese, hard cheeses will be pillowy and soft and beautiful instead of a hard flake if you grate it. And, obviously, zesting oranges and other citrus, you won't get the pith in it, it will just take off the very edge, the actual part of the zest you want. You can go too deep but it's harder to do that with a Microplane. It just gets a really fine zest instead of a big piece. ✕



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The bright glow of dandelions emerging in springtime is an important seasonal milestone for many creatures. For bees, the golden flowers are an important source of early season nourishment in the form of pollen and nectar. For lawn keepers, the appearance of those persistent weeds marks the beginning of another frustrating summer.

basic tastes: sweet, salty, umami and sour, each of which is triggered by a specific agent (glucose, sodium chloride, glutamate, and citric or acetic acid, respectively).

Bitter is the only basic taste that helps us avoid eating things. The consensus explanation is that the ability to detect bitterness evolved as a way of avoiding poisonous plants. Most toxic plant compounds are bitter-flavored, and the reason so many different substances taste

dandelions included, in springtime, bitter as they may be. Spring greens have long been thought to act as a tonic, helping the body cleanse and recharge its micronutrient levels after long, plant-deficient winter diets.

Before agriculture, when virtually all the plants our ancestors ate were wild, humans had to deal with dietary bitterness on a daily basis. And perhaps it did their bodies good.

But as humans began cultivating wild plants and selecting

come from phytonutrients called anthocyanins, powerful antioxidants that show great promise in fighting cancer, lowering blood pressure, slowing age-related memory loss, and even reducing the negative effects of eating high-sugar and high-fat foods, Robinson writes."

Not all people perceive bitterness the same way. In 2006 a gene was discovered that codes for a taste bud that makes carriers more sensitive to certain bitter compounds.

THE BITTER FRIEND

How to get the goods from dandelions

by Ari LeVaux

While dandelions can be stubborn adversaries, they can be valuable friends as well, and not just to bees. Humans use every part of the plant, making wine from the petals, tea from the root, and salad and juice from the leaves. Each section of the plant delivers different nutrients and compounds with antioxidant, antibiotic and even anti-carcinogenic properties. But despite their nutritional attributes and sweet smiles, dandelions are so bitter that few people will touch them.

Many of the most nutritious plant foods we eat are also the most bitter. Bitterness, like sweetness, is a taste that multiple substances can trigger, in stark contrast to the other four



bitter is that there are many different toxins to avoid.

These compounds are not toxic by accident, but as part of the plant's survival strategy. But many of these toxins are also beneficial to humans. As the saying goes, the dose makes the poison, and the same goes for a substance's medicinal qualities.

The medicinal value of many bitter compounds is hardly news. Many of the bitters commonly used in mixed drinks were once used as medicine. Similarly, cultures worldwide traditionally forage for greens,

for desired traits, bitterness was given the boot, writes Jo Robinson in *Eating on the Wild Side: The Missing Link to Optimum Health*. "Early farmers favored plants that were relatively low in fiber and high in sugar, starch and oil."

Along with bitter flavor, deep pigmentation is also a telltale sign of nutrient density. "The most nutritious greens in the supermarket are not green at all but red, purple, or reddish brown. These particular hues

One such trigger is glucosinolate, found in members of the cabbage family including Brussels sprouts and broccoli, but not in the chicory family of bitter greens, which includes escarole, endive, radicchio and dandelions.

According to one study, people who are sensitive to bitterness have a higher body mass index, suggesting that their aversion to bitterness tilts their diet toward sweet foods, rather than veggies. Another study found that people who taste less bitterness intensely are more likely to be beer drinkers.

I'm no mixologist, but the long history of bitters in mixed drinks makes me wonder what



“Spring greens have long been thought to act as a tonic, helping the body cleanse and recharge its micronutrient levels after long, plant-deficient winter diets.”

would happen if one were to pour a shot of dandelion leaf juice into a Bloody Mary, which normally contains Angostura bitters, along with other bitter donors like celery and olives. Indeed, part of the Bloody Mary’s magic lies in how the drink combines bitterness with every other basic taste: sweet, sour, umami and salty.

The blog Disco Ginferno offers a Dandelion Black Jack recipe in which roasted dandelion root is used as a substitute for coffee, with a dandelion flower garnish. Meanwhile, a beautiful gin and tonic-like cocktail, Impending Bloom, was created by Chicago bartender Sean Patrick Riley. It makes use of Dr. Adam Elmegirab’s Dandelion & Burdock Bitters, which claims that dandelion and burdock bitters were created in the 1300s by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Dandelion wine has a poetic ring to it, and I love Ray Bradbury’s book by the same name (which has absolutely nothing to do with dandelion wine). But in my experience, dandelion wine generally tastes like

any other homemade wine. Not very good, in other words. And it’s painstaking to make, as you need a ton of dandelion flower petals.

These petals do make the liquid look pretty, but I’m happy looking at a field of dandelion



flowers, preferably buzzing with bees. And I’m happy chopping dandelion greens into my salad or my stir-fry. When I drink my dandelion, it’s usually juiced, along with carrot, ginger and apple. Balanced with the sweetness of apple and carrot and the spicy bite of ginger, the bitterness belongs. ✕



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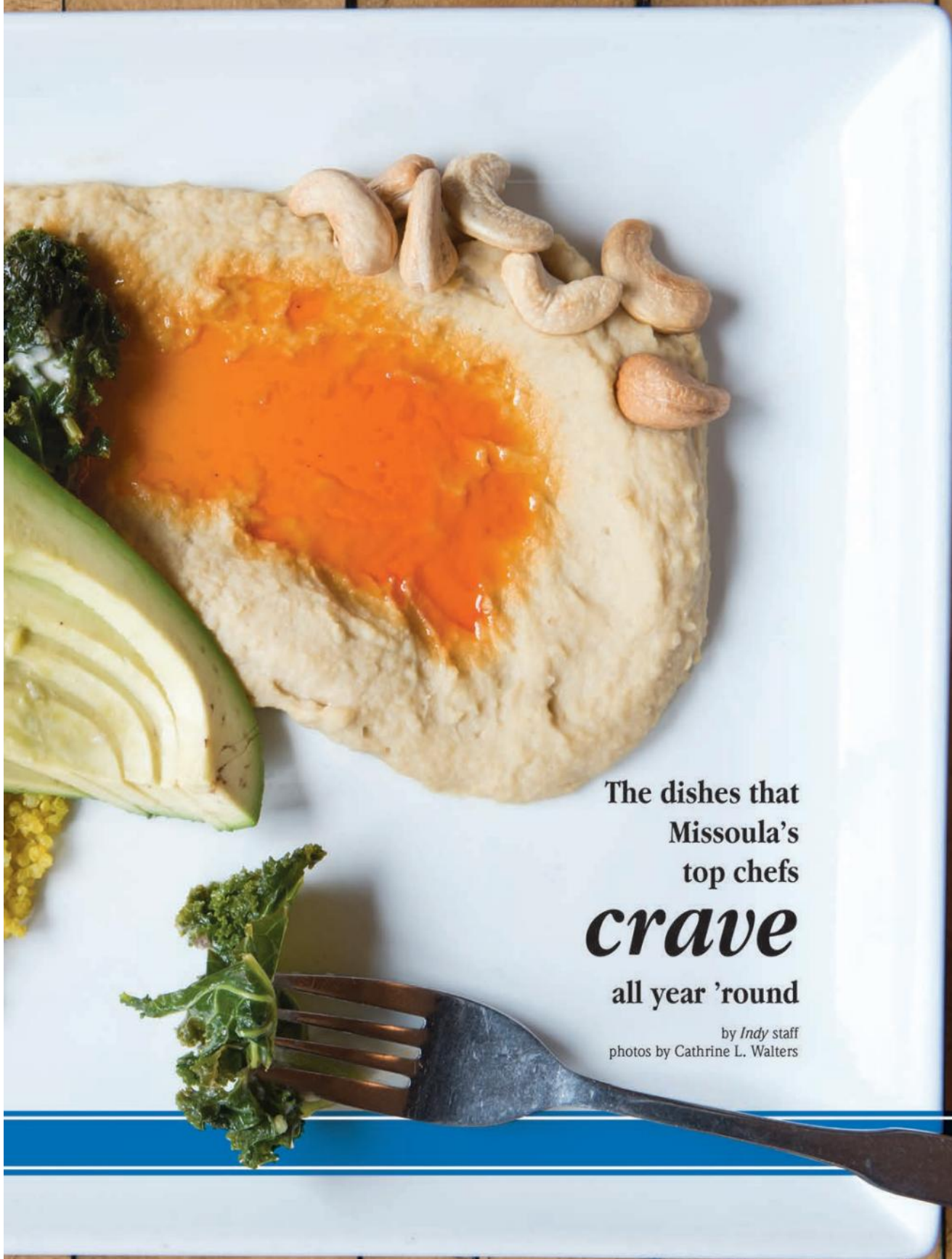
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*Chefs'
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The dishes that
Missoula's
top chefs
crave
all year 'round

by *Indy* staff
photos by Cathrine L. Walters

photo by Cathrine L. Walters

Over Thanksgiving last year, we asked a gaggle of Missoula chefs to choose their favorite area dishes, those plates that make for a grateful palate, and the ones they're most thankful for year-round. There was nothing holiday-specific about their choices, so we're presenting them here as an anytime guide to the local specialties that some of Missoula's most discerning palates crave.

APPETIZERS

STEAMED CLAMS WITH ANDOUILLE SAUSAGE AND FENNEL at Mission Bistro (Stevensville). *Favorite of Noel Mills, James Bar*

Chef Mills doesn't hem and

how long regarding his go-to appetizer. Heck, he gets it every time he's down in Stevensville, if not for the clams then for the Redneck-brand sausage. "It's all mixed together in a broth," Mills says. "And it comes with bread for dipping."

THE SAMPLER at Double Front (which includes mac and cheese wedges and fried cream corn bites). *Favorite of Jim Anderson, Scotty's Table*

Anderson is particularly nuts about the fried creamed corn, which he recommends you dip in maple syrup. "Usually if I go there, someone's always like, 'creamed corn? That's awful,'" he says. "But fried creamed corn, how can you go wrong?"

JUMBO LUMP CRAB CAKES at Red Bird. *Favorite of Theo Smith, Masala*

"I just really love crab cakes," Smith says without hesitation, "and they do it amazingly simply, the way crab cakes should be." He's quick to add that the pickled vegetables Red Bird uses are a nice flavor complement.

BEEF TARTARE at Plonk. *Favorite of Burke Holmes, the Notorious P.I.G.*

Montana-raised tenderloin adorned with a one-hour egg, mustard cream, wasabi arugula, pickled onion, fried capers and potato crisps. Holmes calls it a cool riff on a well-known dish, just edging out his



photo by Cathrine L. Walters



photo by Cathrine L. Walters

other favorite, the foie gras torchon. Plus, Plonk scores bonus points in Holmes' book for consistently solid service.

SOUP

BEEF PHO at Vietnam Grill.
Favorite of Burke Holmes, the Notorious P.I.G.

Holmes goofs around the category at first, saying he's torn between brews from Draught Works and Kettle-House. Then he gets serious. "The beef pho is one of my favorite things to eat in town," he says. "We're lucky to have an authentic version of that dish in Missoula."

BREAD

RYE LOAF at Kiln Breads.
Favorite of Kim West, Tia's Big Sky

At Tia's, home of roasted chicken and tacos, the rotisserie oven is always turning. Coincidentally, West shares a non-culinary-oven ceramics background with another food business in town. "Kiln Breads, I think they're doing amazing breads. They're cooking the bread in the kiln. I think their rye, they just hit all the different flavors at the right levels," West says. "They put such great energy into it, and the bread has such amazing texture."

COCODRILLO at Le Petit Outre.
Favorite of Andrew Martin, Finn & Porter

Le Petit may be an obvious choice, but Martin thinks the bakery deserves all the praise it can get. "I feel like Le Petit is

one of those things that we take for granted in Missoula," he says. "We are so lucky." The Cocodrillo comes to mind first, what with its golden, crusty, sesame-studded exterior and a soft interior made from a blend of Montana semolina and bread flours. "It goes great with everything," Martin says.

SALADS

THE SPECIAL at Biga Pizza.
Favorite of Kim West, Tia's Big Sky

When West was asked for her favorite salad, she didn't hesitate. "I love Biga's salads. The combinations are always amazing," she says. "I usually get the special, and the combinations on the special of the day are usually pretty dang good, and switch up all the

time." What's a particular aspect that stands out to her? "They do a champagne dressing with the candied pecans and the goat cheese."

MEDITERRANEAN GRILLED OCTOPUS SALAD at Red Bird.
Favorite of Walker Hunter, Burns St. Bistro

"When it comes to salads, I'm one of those people that will leave the house with every good intention of going out, getting a nice salad for a meal and feeling good about my choices, only to find myself staring down the barrel of a reuben with a side of onion rings 20 minutes later," Hunter says. "There is one place, however, where the road to hell is paved with greens and delicious grilled octopus, and that place is Red Bird." Prepared by chefs Matt Cornette and Dominick Martin, the Mediterranean Grilled Octopus Salad features potato, cucumber, fennel, arugula, fresh herbs, marinated Vegetable Giardiniera Red Wine Vinaigrette and, of course, the grilled octopus. "It is a delight," Hunter says. "Tangy and fresh."

SIDES

LOADED BAKED POTATO at Lolo Creek Steakhouse.
Favorite of Walker Hunter, Burns St. Bistro

When it comes to picking a side dish, Hunter is all about keeping it simple. His choice: the loaded baked potato at

Lolo Creek Steakhouse. “It’s a classic,” he says. The potatoes are large with oil-crisp skins, topped with butter, sour cream, sliced green onions and crispy bits of bacon. Grill cook Luke Smith says the potato has been a staple side at Lolo Creek since it opened, and it reflects the restaurant’s meat-and-potatoes style. In other words, at the steakhouse, no one’s looking for some kind of fusion baked potato twist. “We keep it in perspective,” Smith says. “What we do, we do well, and we do it right.”

KIMCHI from House of Ferments. *Favorite of Bob and Cindy Laundrie Marshall, Biga Pizza*

“Chefs don’t have time to eat!” Bob says. But he admits he’ll wolf down full jars of kimchi in his car whenever

he finds a minute. The kimchi comes from House of Ferments, a Hamilton-based company run by fermentologist Erin Belmont and production assistant Matt Galiher that makes fermented food and drinks. Belmont follows a kimchi recipe she learned from a Korean fermenter at a workshop. The ingredients come from farm-

ers in Missoula and the Bitterroot Valley.

“I think that’s one of the most important things, is starting with really quality ingredients,” Belmont says. She also says Bob Marshall has been one of her best advocates, helping her get her jars onto shelves at the Good Food Store. “And one of my best customers,” she adds.



photo by Cathrine L. Walters

ENTREES

THE CHRONDO BURGER at Flipper’s. *Favorite of Theo Smith, Masala*

Normally, hot and creamy would be words we’d associate with Masala’s ever-popular butter chicken. But Smith flips them around on us in describing this Hip Strip casino classic — and he throws “crunchy” in for good measure. “It’s the unique decadence of onion rings, jalapenos and pepperjack,” Smith says. “It’s an amazing combination with spice to it.”

GREENS AND BEANS at Scotty’s Table. *Favorite of Jenny Lynn Fawcett, Poppy bakery*

Poppy bakery owner Jenny Lynn Fawcett creates shimmering mirror cakes, elegant coffee cakes, tiny colorful cheesecakes and other rich desserts that look like art and taste like heaven. What is it like to be

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surrounded by so much sugar? Well, you eat your vegetables. Fawcett craves the Greens and Beans at Scotty's Table, a tried and true vegetarian favorite made with pan-seared kale, hummus, quinoa, dried cherries, cashews, avocado and cashew vinaigrette.

"It's an entree and a salad," Fawcett says. "And it's amazing."

INDIAN GYRO at Thomas Meagher Bar. *Favorite of Bob and Cindy Laundrie Marshall, Biga Pizza*

The Thomas Meagher Bar has all the classic fare you'd expect from an Irish-style pub — Irish poutine, pasties, meat pie — plus, dishes from around the world and American items like burgers, nachos and wings. But they also have vegetarian and gluten-free menus, and that's where the Marshalls sate their hunger. Cindy's favorite dish is the Indian gyro. It's made of flat-bread filled with malai kofta (house-made paneer cheese, potato, green pea and chickpea balls), golden curry sauce, feta, mixed greens, tomato, red onion and cucumber. "It doesn't feel vegetarian," she says. "I've been

craving meat since I've been eating vegetarian, and it's absolutely delicious."

RIBS at the Notorious P.I.G. *Favorite of Andrew Martin, Finn & Porter*

Ribs are hard to mass produce — at least the competition-grade racks that make your mouth water. Barbecue joints often have a bad habit of overcooking their meat. But a good rack, Martin says, won't be falling off the bone, and will have some texture to it. The Notorious P.I.G. does it just right. "It tastes like he just made one rack of ribs, not 100 that day," Martin says.

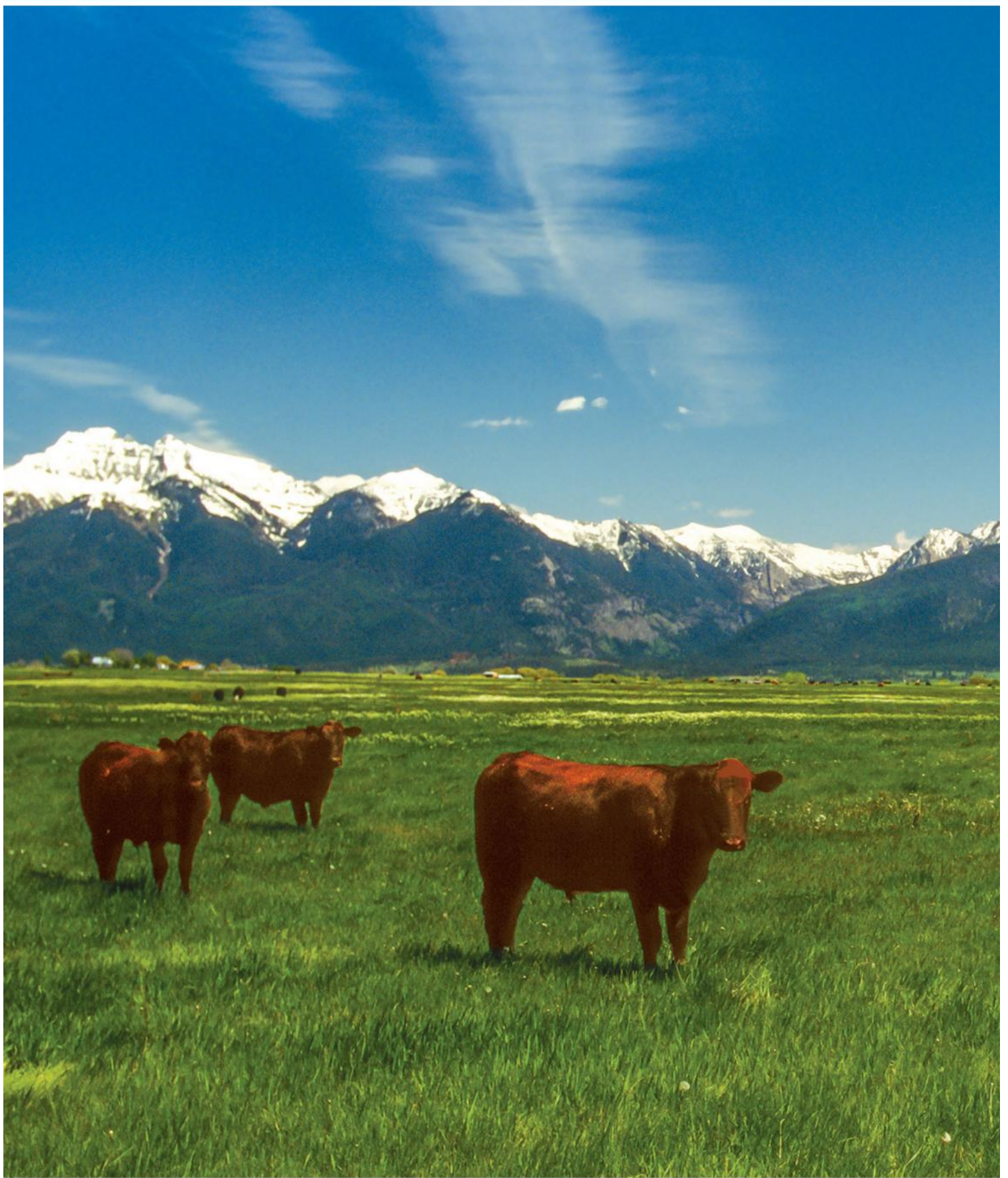
DESSERTS

MOLTEN LAVA CAKE at the Depot. *Favorite of Noel Mills, James Bar*

This is a longtime personal favorite of Mills', and he wastes no time explaining why. "It's been consistent for years," Mills says. "It's a rich, almost flourless chocolate cake that's liquidy in the middle. It's like fudge when you cut it open." Oh, Mills continues, and it comes with raspberry sauce. ✕



photo by Cathrine L. Walters



MISSION

MAKING IT WORK AT LOWER CROSSING FARM

POSSIBLE

by Nick Davis



The Mission Valley just might be the most easy-beautiful spot in western Montana. Roughly halfway between the population centers of Missoula and Kalispell, it's easy to get to. And the beauty — well, it pretty much gobs-macks you every time you summit the grade between Ravalli and St. Ignatius on Highway 93.

That beauty is so easy, in fact, that most people are content to consume it from their vehicles as they traverse the corridor. After all, with the exception of the National Bison Range, the majority of Mission Valley's obvious attractions sit alongside the highway.

Diverge from the main road, though, and things get in-

teresting in a hurry. The beauty of the near-10,000-foot peaks remains, and the human color sprawling across the valley floor comes into focus.

"It's a really eclectic place," says valley resident Jesse Hadden. "There are native folks, weird new-agey hippies, Amish, German Baptists, salty-dog Big Ag folks. Everybody on my road is doing farming of some kind, and we all help each other out."

Despite his own unmistakable weird new-agey hippie streak, Hadden, 33, possesses a measure of salt that belies his age. His face lights up when he talks about Lower Crossing Farm (LXF for short), a decidedly small-ag labor of love and

personal conviction now entering its third season as a commercial entity. "The physical act of farm work is very satisfying to me," says Hadden, the farm's owner and butcher.

Hadden operates the 110-acre farm on the Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) model. CSA farms rely on subscribers to accommodate their emphasis on quality over quantity, using a significant portion of subscription funds to cover operating costs during the work season. But though subscriptions contribute to one of the principal goals of the CSA model — to connect farmer and consumer on a far more personal level than a large commercial farm ever could —



photo courtesy Tommy Martino/Missoulian

Hadden's chief motivators as a CSA farmer are more philosophical than financial.

"When we think about food, it's the foundational vector by which folks establish health and the way we interact in our environment," Hadden says. "How we relate to our food is reflective of how we relate to our communities, our landscapes, and to capital itself."

As a rancher, Hadden raises cows, pigs and chickens. Subscribers order partial or full shares of individual animals (or multiple animals, in the case of chickens), and in the process become owners (or co-owners) of those animals, which are birthed, reared and slaughtered

at LXF. Ownership status is key, since federal regulations require animals owned by their rancher to be processed at a USDA-certified slaughterhouse. Subscriber ownership qualifies LXF for a custom exemption from that rule, and Hadden can finish and process the animals on site, which he argues results in a superior product in both ethics and taste.

"We practice field slaughter on our animals, which means they die as they lived, free-ranging and happy," he says. "Studies show that animals that die under stressful conditions commonly associated with commercial meat production produce an inferior meat."

Hadden learned full-cycle

animal rearing five years ago as a farmhand in New York. "It was my first experience with the cycle of birth to slaughter to animal product," he says. "I fell in love with that idea, that you could be present for every stage of the animal's life." After slaughter and gutting, the animals are hung in the LXF butcher shop, where they dry-age in near-freezing temperatures for one to three weeks.

Hadden's particular brand of CSA farming is as attentive to its environment as it is to socioeconomic and ethical concerns. He is a disciple of the grazing practices championed by the Savory Institute, founded by Allan Savory, a farmer and wildlife biologist from Zimbabwe. Savory



photo courtesy Tommy Martino/Missoulain

“When we think about food, it’s the foundational vector by which folks establish health and the way we interact in our environment.”

theorized that grasslands coevolved with large herds of megafauna, which would only partially graze prairie, pasture and savannah habitats before moving on. Hadden believes grasslands in the middle and western United States similarly coevolved with bison, and he tries to mimic that model with his livestock.

“A big part of my day during the season is management-intensive grazing,” he says, explaining that he moves LXF’s customers’ cows, using microplots and mobile electric fencing, from pasture to pasture every 24 hours. “The ideal is to leave no less than six inches of plant height on grazed plots, which means any given plot

will recover to be grazed again in about a month. The result is soil with far better water retention and carbon sequestration capacities than overgrazed land.”

As might be expected, meat from LXF is not inexpensive compared to the cuts you can find in grocery stores. Subscribers pay \$4.50 per pound



hanging weight (bones and all) for beef and pork. That translates to between \$6 and \$8 per pound of finished product, though Hadden notes that price includes not only ground meat but also sausage and high-end steak cuts as well.

“It’s a gentrifier’s dilemma at a certain level,” Hadden acknowledges, “but I have to cater to the available market to make it work. Having a sustainable business will also allow me to expand our work helping others with incubator and community-oriented projects.”

You don’t have to be an LXF subscriber to discover the merits of its products. Hadden sells meat, eggs, pickles, fermentations and hot sauces at various farmers markets, including the Missoula Valley Winter Market held every Saturday at the Sen-

ior Citizen Center on Higgins Ave. (Meat sold at markets was slaughtered off-site at a certified slaughterhouse and processed by Hadden at LXF.)

Hadden and his partner Jaimie Stevenson also grow vegetables (mostly onions, potatoes, cabbage, peppers, tomatoes and garlic) at LXF, which they sell wholesale through the Western Montana Growers Co-Op. And Stevenson owns and manages the Take It or Leave It food truck, which makes regular appearances at the Clark Fork Market and other Missoula locations during the season.

“It’s a joint project between she and I, and we feature a single entrée every night that is locally sourced from LXF and our vegetable-farmer friends,” Hadden says, noting that entrees

cost \$10-\$12. “Our selection is entirely dictated by what we have ready or ripe on any given week.”

Hadden hopes to grow Lower Crossing Farm into an operation that affords both a decent living and, eventually, the opportunity to make its food available on a larger scale to customers on modest budgets.

For now, he and Stevenson are content to grow their farm in the same sustainable and conscientious manner they grow their livestock and vegetables, and to keep trying to make a difference in the valley they’ve come to call home.

“Everyone up here gets along really well,” Hadden says. “The Big Ag folks — I think that they think I’m crazy. But they’re all really nice.” ✕



photo courtesy Tommy Martino/Missoulain

A ROOM OF HER OWN



German pretzels, cakes and more at Alpenstüble

story and photos by Derek Brouwer

Stüble is a German term for a small room. Sylvia Allen describes the stüble in her childhood home, in Germany's Black Forest region, as the cozy space where her family would spend time and eat meals together.

Cozy isn't the first word that comes to mind as you approach Alpenstüble, if you even notice it. Allen's bakery in Stevensville, along Highway 93, is set back in a small shopping center next to a Conoco.

But inside, the bakery is brimming with its owner's warmth and personality. Allen's

mother's bundt cake pans hang behind the counter, next to a sign that reads "Hausgemachtes von der Chefin" — "homemade by the chef." There's a cuckoo clock on the wall. Rather than tables, customers sit at two benches made from reclaimed wood.

The decor's centerpiece is a wall mural depicting pastoral German countryside, but the mountains in the background are actually part of the Bitterroot range. The merger is a visual representation of the journey that led to this one-of-a-kind old-country outpost on the remains of the American frontier.

Alpenstüble is the realization of a dream Allen envisioned 13 years ago. She had moved to the U.S. in the 1980s with her then-husband and two children. One of her daughters, Melissa, was diagnosed with a developmental disability, and Allen turned her attention to preparing her daughter for adulthood. Alarmed by the lack of available support services and job training, Allen resolved to start a restaurant where employees with disabilities could learn practical skills in a nurturing environment. She put together a business plan, found a space for the business in Oregon

— and then the ambition crashed for lack of financing.

Allen waited another seven years until, in 2015, she and Melissa drove to Montana and decided to settle in the Bitterroot. Two weeks later, Alpenstüble was born, first at farmers markets and then, in 2016, at its current Stevensville storefront.

The bakery continues in the spirit of Allen's original idea. Melissa runs the register and helps bake, and while the business doesn't operate as a formal job program, Allen has hired other adults with disabilities as employees. Her philosophy, she says, is to focus on what her employees can do, rather than fixate on what they can't.

"I want to be that stepping stone [so they can] go out and do their own thing," Allen says.

Alpenstüble's signature treats are its traditional pretzels, which are dense and chewy, closer to a bagel than the spongy stuff most places around Missoula serve. Allen says they're a hit during the summer with carb-craving bicyclists cruising by on the nearby Bitterroot Trail. Allen bakes a full line of tarts, scones, sweet pastries, cakes and breads, as well. Most of the recipes were handed down through her family. Beyond baked goods, Allen serves traditional German lunches on weekdays and hosts special three-course dinners, by reservation, every other Saturday.

"It's all authentic German. That's what I'm all about," Allen says.

She's also committed to using local ingredients, which is why one of her signature custom cakes, a Black Forest Cake, is topped with Flathead cherries. Allen likes to tell the stories behind her dishes, adding to Alpenstüble's homey charm. As does the laptop set up to display a slideshow of the menu. Some personal photos of Allen's home made their way into the slideshow — accidentally, she says, but also fittingly.

As she describes the crocks on a shelf, also from home, Allen recalls one of her last conversations with her late father. "Don't ever forget where you're from," he told her. "That's what makes you unique." ✕



FOOD TRUCKS

of missoula

story and photo by Micah Drew

WHAT YOU'RE EATING: Relatively diverse fare for a food truck, including options with roots in Mexican, Asian and American-influenced cuisines. Sandwiches, curries and burritos are regular menu staples.

WHO'S MAKING YOUR FOOD: Siblings Jennifer and Collin Henning have long shared a passion for cooking. Both describe growing up in a family rich with food-centered gatherings, and their brother owns a restaurant in Bozeman. Last May they pulled the trigger and opened the Chameleon, their self-contained kitchen on wheels. Because the mobile kitchen is full-service, Chameleon is set up to do on-site catering, and can change up its menu on a dime.

BESTSELLER: The most popular dish is the taco trio (your choice of slow-roasted pork, chicken, carne asada or sauteed veggies tacos — try them with habanero-pineapple salsa). Collin's favorite is the cajun sandwich (grilled chicken, andouille sausage and peppers), and Jennifer's favorite is the Singapore bowl.

PRO TIP: Call ahead, 214-1372, and place your orders for pick-up.

PRICE RANGE: \$5–\$9.25

WHERE TO FIND IT: Located at 1616 S. 3rd St. outside the Town & Country Lounge and open 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. After Memorial Day weekend, the Chameleon will be based in front of the former Milltown Market, and usually travels to Seeley Lake on weekends. Follow the Chameleon on Facebook for update info: @thechameleon406

WORD ON THE STREET: The menu is pretty expansive, with vegan and gluten-free options available, and alternate menu items can be requested. Also, be sure to ask about the daily special, which the Hennings usually tailor to their own cravings — often some sort of nostalgic comfort food like beef stroganoff. Seasonal drinks and baked goods also make special appearances. ✕





THE CHAMELEON

Missoula, MT



RONAN HOPS ON THE BEER BANDWAGON

Craft breweries aren't a new trend
— but co-op pubs are

by Summer Goddard/Valley Journal

*This story is part of the Montana Gap project, produced in
partnership with the Solutions Journalism Network.*

About 12 miles south of Flathead Lake, the town of Ronan is a community based largely on agriculture. With several schools, banks, a golf course and an active business community, Ronan is home to an estimated 1,871 people, according to 2010 U.S. Census information.

But while it boasts a variety of businesses, including a telephone company, a movie theatre, a café, a thrift store, a bowling alley and a hospital, many Main Street storefronts remain empty. Roughly a third of Main Street buildings are vacant or in disrepair.

Through several public listening sessions held with economic developers in 2016, community members identified the revitalization of Main Street and increased business development as priorities for their town. With a cooperative development center on Main Street, eventually the idea of a cooperative brewery emerged.

A year and half later, 100 or so people gathered at a Ronan bar on a Saturday night as would-be owners of the Ronan Cooperative Brewery. The Ronan Valley Club buzzed with energy on Dec. 2 as friends, neighbors and strangers connected over cold drinks and an idea. The gathering was the first public event of an ownership drive currently underway for the proposed brewery. "I was kind of wondering what would happen," steering committee member Gail

Nelson said as he surveyed the room with a smile. "I'm excited by this."

Gail's wife Barb Nelson, who serves on the steering committee as chairperson, agreed. "You can feel the excitement in the room," she said. "I think we can do it. I really do."

GROUNDWORK

Brianna Ewert, cooperative development program manager for Lake County Community Development Corporation's Cooperative Development Center, provides technical assistance to Ronan Cooperative Brewery's steering committee.

Ewert, who's been involved in the project from day one, said the idea for a brewery came about early in Ronan residents' discussions with economic developers.

A year after identifying Main Street revitalization and business growth as priorities for Ronan, a public meeting was held and survey conducted to gauge community interest in a co-op owned craft brewery. Both revealed a broad base of community support for the project.

A nine-member steering group formed soon after to determine feasibility, write a business plan and structure the cooperative.

Following a feasibility assessment in which costs, potential profits and customer base (including local residents and tourists) were analyzed, the Ronan Coop-

erative Brewery filed an intent to incorporate with Montana's Secretary of State. Incorporation will be finalized once a phase-one goal of \$75,000 in shares sold is met. On Feb. 10, members met to elect a board of directors and vote on bylaws after surpassing that goal.

"The idea behind the Ronan Cooperative Brewery is to bring together a strong craft beer movement to help in the revitalization of our community," an ownership information brochure states.

Two classes of shares, common stock and preferred stock, are being sold. Common stock costs \$250 per share. All members purchase one share, which gets them one vote. Additional shares do not garner additional votes. Preferred stock, offered to common stock members, is sold at \$100 per share. Preferred stock yields a member more of a share in the return if the brewery becomes profitable.

Upon incorporating, a meeting would be called for members to organize, elect officers and approve bylaws. The newly elected board of directors would then transition to managing operations.

THE ECONOMICS OF CRAFT BREWING

Montana has 68 craft breweries — independent entities that produce relatively small amounts of traditional or innovative beers, according to 2016 data compiled by the Brewers Association. It

ranks second in the nation for breweries per capita. The state's craft beer production has increased at a rate of roughly 13 percent per year since 2010, the association says.

That growth has produced economic impact. Kyle Morrill, a senior economist at the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research, says that 1,044 additional permanent year-round jobs, more than \$33 million in additional income for Montana households, \$103 million in additional sales from businesses and organizations and an increase to the state's population by 280 people are attributable to brewer operations. "Craft brewing represents a sizable, grass-roots industry to the Montana economy," he wrote. "Furthermore, brewpubs often appear in historically industrial neighborhoods, reinvigorating and reimagining properties left vacant by passing industry."

Montana's brewers are poised for further growth: During last spring's legislative session, the production cap was raised from 10,000 to 60,000 barrels a year.



A NEW PHENOMENON

Cooperatives are organizations owned collectively by members who share in profits or benefits. While craft breweries aren't a new phenomenon, co-op owned breweries are. There are only a handful in the United States.

In addition to serving as the local cooperative development program manager, Ewert has been a member of several cooperatives and is currently working to finish her certification as a cooperative development specialist.

Cooperatives, she said, have a large economic impact both on a national and state scale, generating \$650 billion and \$1 billion in revenue respectively.

the three-year anniversary of Bathtub Row Brewing in Los Alamos and, according to general manager Douglas Osborn, "things are going very well."

So well, Osborn said, that the brewery continues to grow at a rate of 10-20 percent annually and is on track this year to hit \$700,000 in sales.

After two and a half years in operation, the brewery will begin to pay back its loans this December and is on track, Osborn said, to become debt free within the next three to five years.

Production-wise, the brewery operates at almost full capacity, and at times can't make enough beer for its customers. "It's a good

putting up a pizza place right across from our parking lot."

Osborn readily admits that there are both advantages and drawbacks to cooperatives.

There are times when it's cumbersome, he said, to work through problems via committee. By the same token, he said, having a lot of people to rely on for help or to bounce ideas off is a benefit. He also credits low employee turnover to the co-op model of ownership, as employee-owners have a more vested interest in the brewery's success. "Overall, it's a huge plus," he said.

Bathtub Row Brewing offers two different kinds of member-

"My vision for the role of the brewery is to be a destination point. There's so much potential. It excites me that other people see that as well."

As a whole, cooperatives tend to return more money to the local economy and generally generate more jobs for the same amount of sales, she added, and, according to research done in Canada, co-ops have twice the survival rate of corporate businesses.

As opposed to a corporation's mandate to maximize profits, the end goal of a cooperative is to serve its members. Ewert credits this critical difference in structure, of membership deciding how its needs are best served, as the reason cooperatives tend to be more resilient.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Los Alamos, New Mexico, is one place the co-op model of brewery ownership seems to be working. April 2018 will mark

problem to have," Osborn said. "We're far past the original projections."

During times when it can't produce enough beer, Bathtub Row purchases beer from other New Mexico craft beer distributors. In fact, Osborn said the brewery has great relationships with its competitors.

Though Bathtub Row doesn't serve food, patrons are welcome to bring food in with them or purchase meals from nearby restaurants, or from vendors who set up hot carts at the brewery.

The brewery, which employs 15-17 people, also seems to have sparked growth for other nearby businesses. "The Mexican restaurant next door is doing very well since we moved in," Osborn said. "And they're

ships: annual and lifetime. Annual members pay \$50 a year and don't get to vote, but do get discounts on beverages and merchandise. Lifetime members pay a one-time fee of \$250 and can vote on brewery business.

Osborn estimates that of Bathtub Row's 1,300 or so members, half are annual and half are lifetime.

In order to accommodate its membership, the brewery rents out the local theater to review annual financials. A board of seven directors holds monthly meetings with the general manager and head brewer to oversee operations.

According to Osborn, Bathtub Row has about \$40,000 worth of shares left to sell before it runs up against the limits of its charter.

ON THE HORIZON

A successful Dec. 2 ownership drive poured new money and energy into Ronan's Cooperative Brewery.

More than \$26,000 was raised and 48 new owners signed on, tipping the total in shares sold to \$52,350. As the business plan is currently written, once \$150,000 in owner investment is reached, that money would be used as leverage for additional loans.

As of mid-December 2017, the total of all funds raised, including development funds that have been awarded to the project, was more than \$75,000. The number of Ronan Cooperative Brewery owners was 125.

While there isn't an official target date, steering committee chair Barb Nelson believes the brewery could be operational as early as September 2018.

LCCDC Food and Ag Pro-



gram Coordinator Rosie Goldich said she was encouraged by the number of Main Street business owners who attended the Dec. 2 event. "It's nice that downtown Ronan is here, represented tonight," she said. "We've had amazing community support for this project."

While most in attendance were Ronan residents, some came from neighboring towns, and at least one man made the trek from Missoula. Toby Hubbard, former owner of the University Motors Honda dealership in

Missoula, said he heard about the event through Facebook.

Looking for an investment opportunity after selling his business, Hubbard said he regarded investing in Ronan's Cooperative Brewery as a way to "help the community and make a little profit at the same time."

He added that he understands the importance of community-building and believes that, "If you help people get what they want, you'll get what you want."

Hubbard purchased both common and preferred stock shares of

the Ronan Cooperative Brewery. Gail and Barb Nelson said they look forward to the brewery benefiting both its members and the community as a whole. They signed on to the project because they want to see Ronan's Main Street revitalized.

The couple remembers a different Ronan, one with a thriving Main Street in the '70s that was home to clothing, hardware, furniture and drug stores. "My vision for the role of the brewery is to be a destination point," Barb said. She added that she'd like to see the return of other businesses to Main Street, including another restaurant that is open later hours.

She anticipates the brewery will be a gathering place for many community groups with a welcoming atmosphere for all, including families. "There's so much potential," she said. "It excites me that other people see that as well." ✕

**MAKE DATE NIGHT
MORE DELICIOUS.**

Mustard Seed
ASIAN CAFE

A close-up photograph of a terracotta bowl filled with yellow couscous. The dish is garnished with fresh vegetables including sliced tomatoes, cucumbers, and bell peppers, along with several large, vibrant green basil leaves. The bowl sits on a dark wooden surface, and a woven placemat is visible at the bottom. The background is softly blurred, showing more greenery and a metal container.

Spring Recipes

Couscous Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 cup couscous
3/4 cup boiling water or vegetable stock
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
1 tbsp salt
1/4 tsp ground cumin
1/2 cup unsalted pistachios, toasted, roughly chopped
3 green onions, finely sliced
1 fresh jalapeno, minced
1 1/2 cup arugula, torn

Herb Paste

1/3 cup chopped parsley
2/3 cup cilantro
2 tbsp tarragon
2 tsp dill
2 tsp mint

Lemon Tahini Yogurt Sauce

1/2 cup Greek yogurt
2 1/2 tbsp tahini
1 small garlic clove, minced or grated on a Microplane
Juice of one lemon

Directions

Place couscous in a large bowl and cover with boiling water or stock. Cover and let steam for 10 minutes.

•
Meanwhile, sauté onion in the olive oil on medium heat until golden and soft. Add the salt and cumin and mix well. Let mixture cool down slightly.

•
For the herb paste: Place all ingredients in a food processor and combine until smooth.

•
Add the herb paste to the couscous and mix well with a fork to fluff the couscous. Add the cooked onion and spice mixture, pistachios, green onions, jalapeno, and arugula. Mix gently.

Sauce

Mix all ingredients together with a small whisk or a fork. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to a day.

•
Drizzle on the couscous salad, or use as an accompanying sauce for grilled or roasted fish and/or vegetables.

Courtesy of Aimee Elliott, Chef de Cuisine, Blackfoot Café and Chef Instructor, Missoula College's Big Sky Culinary Institute

Black Bean Brownies

(gluten, dairy and soy free)

Ingredients

1 can (15.5 oz.) black beans, rinsed and drained
3 large eggs
3 tbsp vegetable oil
1/4 cup cocoa
1 pinch salt
1 tbsp vanilla
3/4 cup sugar
1 tsp instant espresso (optional)
1/2 cup chocolate chips (optional)

Directions

Preheat oven 350 degrees. Lightly grease 8x8 inch square pan.

•
Combine black beans, eggs, cocoa, salt, vanilla, sugar and espresso (if desired) in blender until smooth and pour into prepared baking dish.

•
Bake until top looks dry and edges start to pull away from sides, about 30 min. Sprinkle with chocolate chips if desired and spread over top.

Courtesy of Kelly Moore, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, Missoula County Extension

Peach-Feta Flatbread with Balsamic Onions & Fresh Basil

Serves 2

Things I had in my refrigerator: 1/2 batch pizza dough, a small carton of French goat's milk feta, 1 ripe peach and a handful fresh basil. Hence, this recipe.

Ingredients

extra virgin olive oil
1/2 red onion, sliced thinly
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
flour for rolling dough and dusting pan
1/2 recipe pizza dough
4 oz. crumbled feta cheese
1 ripe peach, pitted and sliced into thin wedges
salt and pepper to taste
fresh basil, torn

Directions

Preheat oven to 475 degrees F and lightly flour a baking sheet or pizza pan.

Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a medium nonstick pan over medium-low heat. Add the onions and allow to caramelize for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Once onions have caramelized, drizzle the balsamic vinegar over them, stir to absorb and cook for one more minute. Remove from heat and set aside.

On a lightly floured surface, roll dough out into a 10-inch circle and transfer to the prepared baking sheet.

Use a pastry brush (or clean hands) to generously cover the dough with olive oil. Scatter the feta evenly atop the oiled dough.

Arrange the peach slices and onions on top of the feta. Season liberally with salt and pepper.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until dough is golden-brown and peach slices and feta have a bit of color.

Top with the freshly torn basil, cut into wedges and serve.

Courtesy of Gabi Moskowitz, editor in chief and author of The BrokeAss Gourmet Cookbook and Pizza Dough: 100 Delicious Unexpected Recipes.



Grilled Chicken & Avocado Spring Rolls

Serves 2 as an entree, or 4-6 as an appetizer

These plump little spring rolls make an ideal picnic lunch, nestled in an airtight container with an assortment of take-along dipping sauces (peanut is my favorite). Feel free to try these with grilled salmon, beef, pork, shrimp, tofu or tempeh — they'll take on just about any protein source.

Also, if you're feeling too lazy to make the chicken yourself, frozen grilled chicken from the grocery store or even shredded store-bought rotisserie chicken will do just fine.

Ingredients

1/4 cup soy sauce
3 tbsp brown sugar
a few grinds of black pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 small (1") piece ginger, peeled and minced (about 1 tbsp)
1 lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs
2 tsp vegetable oil
10 8-inch Vietnamese rice paper spring roll wrappers
1 handful fresh mint
1 ripe avocado, peeled and sliced
2 carrots, shredded
1/4 red onion, sliced very thinly

Directions

Whisk together the soy sauce, brown sugar, pepper, garlic and ginger. Place into a large bowl.

Add the chicken thighs and mix well to coat. Cover bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 20 minutes, or up to 2 hours.



Heat the vegetable oil in a large, heavy-bottomed frying pan over medium-high heat. Cook the chicken thighs with their sauce for 4-5 minutes on each side, until cooked through and browned on the outside. The sauce should thicken and form a glaze. Remove the cooked chicken from the pan and transfer to a clean plate to cool. Once the chicken has cooled, use two forks to shred it into long, thin pieces.

Gently wet a spring roll wrapper under a faucet or in a bowl of water. Remove carefully and blot lightly on a dish towel. Lay on a clean, flat, dry surface and allow to soften — about 30 seconds. As the wrapper softens, arrange the ingredients in the center in the following order: 2 mint leaves, topped with a few shreds of chicken, topped with a slice of avocado, topped with a few pinches of shredded carrots and a few slices of red onion.

Roll up the wrappers very gently, tucking in the ends, being careful not to break the wrapper. Don't worry if they break — it can take some practice, and broken spring rolls are still delicious.

Serve the rolls cut on the bias with sweet chile sauce or peanut sauce for dipping. ✕

Courtesy of Gabi Moskowitz, editor in chief and author of The BrokeAss Gourmet Cookbook and Pizza Dough: 100 Delicious Unexpected Recipes.

Dish

RESTAURANT LISTINGS



photo by Chad Harder

Bravo
Catering

It's Science!
BRAVOCATERING.NET

DISH

Black Coffee
blackcoffee Roasting Co.
ROASTING CO. SINCE 2010
525 E. Spruce
541-3700

Black Coffee Roasting Company is located in the heart of Missoula. Our roastery is open M-F 6:30-5:30, Sat. 7:30-4, Sun. 8-3. In addition to fresh roasted coffee beans we offer a full service espresso bar, drip coffee, pour-overs and more. The suspension of coffee beans in water is our specialty. \$

Bravo Catering
224 N. Higgins Ave.
541-4900
bravocatering.com

CATERING Bravo! Catering is a full-service, fully mobile catering company servicing Northwest Montana and beyond. Chef/Owner Ryan Boehme brings 22 years of restaurant experience to the world of catering. Chef Ryan and his staff will work with you to present the most creative, seasonal and regional dishes in Montana. \$\$\$



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Chameleon Mobile Kitchen
1616 S 3rd St W (through May)
8340 Hwy 200 E (June-Sept)
214-1372

Our menu features slow-roasted meats and fresh seasonal veggies paired with diverse sauces and salsas made from scratch. Tacos, burritos, hot sandwiches, bowls and pasta. We also offer daily specials, seasonal drinks, and house-baked goods. We are fully equipped and self-contained for on-site public and private events and offer drop-off catering. Call ahead for pick-up. Online menu available on Google Maps. Mon-Thurs 11:30 am - 9 pm. Fri-Sat 11:30 am - 11 pm. \$\$

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DISH



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541-FOOD

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hobnobonhiggins.com

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PLONK

Plonk
322 N Higgins
926-1791
plonkwine.com

Plonk is an excursion into the world of fine wine, food, cocktails, service and atmosphere. With an environment designed to engage the senses, the downtown establishment blends quality and creativity in an all-encompassing dining experience. Described as an urban hot spot dropped into the heart of the Missoula Valley and lifestyle, Plonk embodies metropolitan personalities driven by Montana passions. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$



Ruby's Cafe
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Spring in a glass

Missoula mixologists share their don't-miss seasonal cocktails

The Red Light District
Broadway Inn Bar and Grill

“We consider our cocktail menu one of the best-kept secrets in town,” says Broadway manager Dave Jenks, as a packed room on a Wednesday belies the idea that it’s any kind of secret at all. During the spring and summer, the Red Light District is one of Jenks’ favorite drinks. He and his brother Jeff invented it at a bar they owned in Sitka, Alaska. “It’s an extremely refreshing cocktail with a strong grapefruit and slight floral presence that packs a punch — so be careful, they catch up to you quick.”

What you need

- 1.5 oz Aperol
- 1 oz Beefeater gin
- 1 oz St-Germain
- 3/4 oz. fresh-pressed lime juice
- Dash of simple syrup

How to make it

The drink is shaken, and can either be served up, or on a large rock garnished with a lime twist.

photo by Cathrine L. Walters



Bumble Bee

Montgomery Distillery

Montgomery Distillery's downtown tasting room offers a menu of cocktails made with the distillery's own spirits, but it also has a full Temperance Menu that makes it welcoming of designated drivers and others who prefer not to partake. "As our cocktail menu features a variety of flavors and techniques from the pre-Prohibition era, so does our 'temperance' or nonalcoholic corner of the menu allude to similar methods, sans spirit," says bartender Philip Schaefer.

What you need

1 oz. Housemade Wüstner Brothers honey shrub (equal parts honey and apple cider vinegar, reduced into a syrup). Montgomery sells this by the bottle in its tasting room, as do many liquor and grocery stores.

1 oz. fresh-squeezed lemon juice

5-6 oz. soda water

How to make it

Build in a Mason jar over ice, stir and garnish with a healthy sprig of rosemary.

Spanish Gin and Tonic

Rumour

Rumour's head bartender, Sean Kautz, says he created the Spanish Gin and Tonic after discovering Wheeler's Gin from Santa Fe, New Mexico. "It's the best gin I've ever tasted," he says, noting that the botanicals in the spirit — osha root, white desert sage, cactus flower, hop flowers and juniper — give it a unique flavor profile. Kautz adds spices that complement the gin and make for an aromatic drink to be savored. "I suggest not drinking it with straws. Enjoy the profile of the drink and get your nose into it," he says.

What you need

- 1 1/2 oz Wheeler's gin
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- Pinch coriander seeds
- Pinch cardamom seeds
- Star anise
- Pinch juniper berries
- 1/4 – 1/2 oz. lime juice
- Tonic water

How to make it

Add the spices to the gin, then add the lime juice. Finish with tonic water and ice. ✕



photo by Cathrine L. Walters

BISON

Wonder Food of the West

by Mariah Gladstone



Given America's current obsession with "Indigenous superfoods," it seems like the right time to share the secret of Blackfeet superiority: bison. As powerhouses of the Northwestern Plains, this animal was credited by the Pikuni with providing everything from our traditional lodges to our clothing to our impeccable physiques. Every part of Blackfeet life was saturated with the presence of the bison. (Even as a child, I had a stuffed bison rather than a teddy bear.)

OK, to be fair, every tribe within hunting distance of the Great Plains relied heavily on

consumption of certain foods, the environmental impact of our agricultural products is of equal importance. Native grasslands comprise more than 40 percent of North America's natural landscape. The grasses serve as powerful carbon traps that remove CO2 from the atmosphere and return it to the soil through the root system. Through tens of thousands of years of continuous grazing by these ruminants, grasses and grazers developed a symbiotic relationship that is vital to the health of both.

Grasses across North America produce roughly one-third more growth each year than

bison are technically undomesticated, these instincts have not been bred out of them. Unfortunately, animals that were transplanted from the old world have long lost much of that natural behavior, and will commonly stand and graze in one spot, or lounge around stream beds and ponds. Cattle can be as destructive to the landscape as knapweed, though the former are less tolerant of Montana winters.

Unfortunately for bison, being both sacred and fueling indigenous dominance caused them to be a target. In the words of Army Lieutenant Colonel Richard Irving Dodge, "Every buffalo dead is

"While bison is catching on as one of the healthiest meats you can buy, both for yourself and the earth, America has a long way to go to revitalize this local and sustainable food."

bison. However, in the Blackfeet food pyramid, bison formed the base. Prior to colonization, 90 percent of Pikuni calories came from this mammal. In real numbers, that means the average Blackfeet man consumed 2.5 pounds of bison jerky per day (that's 7.5 lbs of fresh meat). While it was supplemented by a seasonal selection of fruit, roots, greens and other wild game, bison provided year-round supercharged nutrition.

Three ounces of bison meat contains 93 calories and 1.8 grams of fat, compared with 200 calories and 8.7 fat grams in the same amount of beef. It is lower in cholesterol and higher in nutrients, including beta carotene, protein and omega-3s. With macros like that, it's no wonder other tribes avoided beefs with the Blackfeet. (See what I did there?)

While it is easy to consider how humans benefit from the

will naturally decompose. This excess growth chokes the soil and prevents healthy plant growth. Bison graze pastures, removing the choking cover and creating a healthier ecosystem.

Bison evolved as herd animals, with large, tightly packed groups moving quickly across the land. Grasslands thus evolved to thrive under conditions of brief severe grazing, hoof action and manuring followed by periods of rest and recovery. As bison graze, their hooves stir the soil, helping bury seeds and creating small divots in the earth that capture precious moisture. They are essentially edible aerators.

Today's bison still graze in herds, moving across the land and only briefly stopping by watering holes, minimizing the damaging impact of hooves along riparian areas. Because

another Indian gone." An estimated 20 to 30 million bison once roamed the North American landscape. This population was reduced to just 1,091 by 1889. Through systematic recovery efforts, these animals are making a rebound, though they are essentially extinct in the wild (save for the herds in Yellowstone National Park). Today, approximately 500,000 bison live across the continent.

While bison is catching on as one of the healthiest meats



you can buy, both for yourself and the earth, America has a long way to go to revitalize this local and sustainable food. Demand leads to innovation, especially in the world of culinary arts. Buying from producers that raise grass-fed bison sends a message of readiness across the agricultural sector.

Though bison were once critical to life on the plains, their benefits are now undervalued. According to the National Bison Association, approximately 61,300 bison were slaughtered for sale in the U.S. in 2016. When compared to 125,000 animals slaughtered per day in the beef sector, we find that Americans are missing an op-

portunity for a more sustainable and nutritious alternative. As a local food with ancient roots, this wonderfood has enormous potential to make the climb from “ironically exotic” back to “Montana staple.”

Though Blackfeet have been forcibly torn from our traditional chow, we (and many other tribes) are working to expand buffalo herds and processing facilities. Slowly but surely, we are revitalizing our foodways. From bison ribs on the grill to Tanka bars in the back-

pack, movements are being made. Some have even gone so far as attempting to decolonize the Indian Taco by using bison, bringing the total number of indigenous ingredients to one. As a city Indian, I’ll keep buying my bison at the local grocery store while I wait for more restaurants to catch on. ✕

Mariah Gladstone is a food activist and the founder of Indigikitchen.

BUTTERNUT BISON LASAGNA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb ground bison
- 1 large butternut squash, peeled and cut into 1/2 inch slices
- 1 15 oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 onion (or wild onion), minced
- 1 tsp garlic powder (or wild garlic)
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- olive oil (or sunflower or avocado oil)
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- fresh mozzarella (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat your oven to 400 F.

Add bison to pan on med-high heat and cook until browned, about 6 minutes.

Add the tomato sauce, basil, garlic and onion, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Turn heat down to low and let simmer for about 10 minutes.

To prepare the lasagna: alternate layers of butternut squash slices with layers of the meat sauce in a baking dish. Keep making layers until you’ve used all of the ingredients.

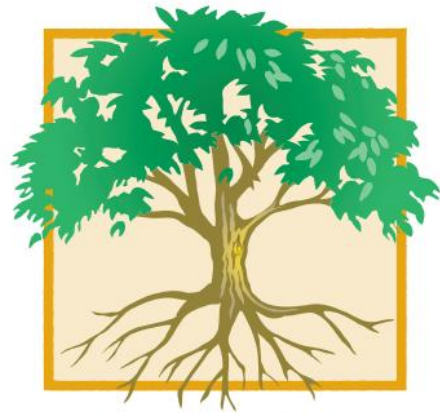
Optional: top with fresh mozzarella (not indigenous) and basil. Bake for about 60 minutes (or until the squash is soft). ✕



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