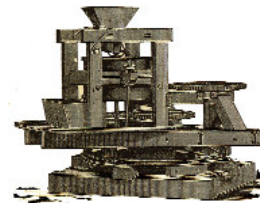


GRIST FOR THE MILL



Summer is here, and everything is a blitz. A blitz of bluefish churns the water at the Shinnecock Canal. Customers blitz the counter at the local coffee shop. Partygoers blitz the parking lot, the buffet table, the bar, the dance floor, and then the parking lot.

The East End's fields have begun to groan with their own blitz of produce. In terms of sheer tonnage, the real glut of crops doesn't come until after Labor Day, when mounds of potatoes, corn, and cabbage pile high. In terms of variety, however, summer brings a welcome splash of color and flavor, particularly after a cold, wet spring that set many farms and home gardens back several weeks.

As a good reminder of the timely nature of these pleasures, we've become fond of the Italian word *scorpacciata*, which roughly means eating a particular food in copious amounts during its period of local perfection. In other words, get it while the gettin's good, which becomes that much easier as the list of seasonal ingredients bulges. (See this list and the first in a series of cornucopia arrangements created by Sag Harbor artist Jill Musnicki, p. 26).

Our advice? Indulge without guilt.

But food hedonism doesn't always come easy. At their fruit farm in Cutchogue, the Wickham family struggles to choreograph the frenetic dance of cherries, raspberries, peaches, apricots, nectarines, blueberries, pears, apples, melons and other drip-down-your-face pleasures that begins in July and snowballs into August (p. 30). Poet-farmer Scott Chaskey describes the double-edged sword of planting tomatoes (p. 32). Some years, he would rather abandon the crop. His farm members wouldn't allow it, because without the tedium of planting and staking and picking, there is no tomato tasting.

In other cases, this abundance is fragile. Long Island's lobster population is still recovering from a barrage of insults that included warmer water temperatures, pesticide pollution, and years of putting too many pots in the water and pulling too many lobsters from the pots. Jim King has been fishing the Sound for four decades and, although it might sound contradictory, he thinks the recipe for a return to abundant harvests is to exercise some restraint (p. 12).

Of course, summer on the East End isn't complete without a torrent of charity balls and fundraisers. Many of the causes are worthy and admirable, but we invite readers to explore a few in particular. On July 30, the East End Community Farm (EECO Farm) hosts its annual Blue Moon Ball to raise money for a new—and much needed—tractor, as well as the farm's programs to expose school children to growing, harvesting and cooking organic food. The following week, the Peconic Land Trust holds its third annual "Through Farms and Fields Tour" of many of those farms the Trust has worked so hard to protect. This year, the Corcoran Group is sponsoring the event, as part of a ground-breaking, if not surprising, collaboration to educate the real estate firm's staff and clients on the merits of land preservation. We hope other real estate firms will follow.

Finally, the weekend before Labor Day, thousands of people will converge on the inaugural Hamptons Wine & Food Festival. There's no doubt the East End needs more food festivals. But we'd like to see a more proletarian event akin to this nation's county fairs, where big men rev their tractors, kids display prize farm animals, and attendees sample seasonal pies. The high price-tag of the Hamptons Wine & Food Festival means that its attendees will largely be non-local, as will much of the food and wine the Festival is serving. *Edible East End* will be hosting "the local program" at the festival, and we hope in future years a local flavor will consume the entire affair.

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EDIBLE EAST END

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