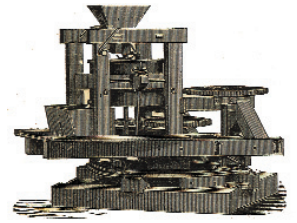


GRIST FOR THE MILL



Apparently, during a snow storm, a herd of buffalo becomes invisible. The falling snowflakes cling to the animals' coarse overcoats, mask them in white, and erase them from the landscape. You can only hear their low rumble. The site of a disappearing herd isn't just beautiful. It's also about survival: the camouflage conceals the herd from any roaming predators.

For generations, survival has been a major preoccupation during the winter on the East End. (Especially before the advent of supermarkets and long-distance food shipping.) Cold, damp days mean that fishing, farming, gardening, and food gathering in general become more precarious. Fish school offshore and out of reach. Raking clams on a blustery January morning burns many times the calories of raking clams on a balmy August afternoon; the clams are deeper, the water's colder, and the wind bites more. Farms go into hibernation.

The weather becomes more harsh and erratic. This past season, after a summer drought left fields parched and shrunk the harvest of everything from tomatoes to cabbage, the heaviest rainfall in the last century pounded the parched fields, flooding out homes, roads, and remaining crops. Wine grapes, which enjoyed months of unprecedented, near-perfect conditions, were left stranded in the storm, just days before many vineyards planned to pick them. Some grapes were damaged, but 2005 may still emerge as an unforgettable vintage (see p. 17).

In the interest of coping with such uncertainty, winter cooking turns to stews, chowders, and dishes that warm us (see p. 24), as well as ingredients that keep well in the field or in storage, like winter squash, potatoes, and apples. For the Halseys who grow apples on Mecox Bay and sell them at the Milk Pail in Water Mill, the harvest, cider-pressing, and donut-making pick up just as other farmers are taking a breather (see p. 32).

Three East End foods seem particularly suited to a dark winter night—clam pie, bread, and beer. Some grew out of a need for survival, like Bonac clam pie, a dish of thrift that exquisitely reflects the East End's winter bounty (see p. 12). The winter brews from the Publick House in Southampton (see p. 20) and the warm, crusty loaves baked at Breadzilla in Wainscott (see p. 26) seduce us whether or not we eat to survive. They are comforting partly because they were shaped by human hands.

This issue of *Edible East End* also introduces a new term and a new alliance. Convivium is the Latin word for banquet. It's also the name the Slow Food movement uses to describe its local chapters. Edible Communities and Slow Food U.S.A. have recently formed an alliance based on our shared goals of celebrating local foods with the people around us. We encourage you to learn more about the East End convivium of Slow Food (slowfoodlongisland.org).

Of course, as the weather changes, the East End's social scene also morphs. Beachfront extravaganzas and backyard barbecues make way for intimate dinner parties, neighborly potlucks around wood stoves, and other convivial events. We hope that this issue of *Edible* can help make those evenings just a bit cozier.

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EDIBLE EAST END

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