





ONE MAYN- ER'S MEAT

By Peter A. Smith / Photographs by Jonathan Levitt

A PARTIAL INVENTORY OF THE KITCHEN AT SALT WATER FARM: GLASS CANNING JARS, OYSTER AND CLAM KNIVES, FORAGED MUSHROOMS, A GRANITE KITCHEN ISLAND WITH A WOLF SIX-BURNER RANGE AND GRILL, A WOOD-BURNING BRICK OVEN, A KEGERATOR, SHELVES LINED WITH BACK ISSUES OF GOURMET AND SAVEUR, TWO BOSCH DISHWASHERS, TWO VIKING BAKING OVENS, TWO AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD DOGS (MOXIE AND MOOSE), A COMPLETE SET OF LE CREUSET COOKWARE, A COLLECTION OF ALL-CLAD, A COLLECTION OF ANTIQUE CAST-IRON PANS, AND A BIG, COMMUNAL DINING ROOM TABLE.

SINCE THE SPRING, ANNEMARIE AHEARN HAS BEEN HOSTING RECREATIONAL COOKING CLASSES INSIDE A VINTAGE POST-AND-BEAM BARN THAT HER FAMILY IMPORTED FROM WISCONSIN. THE AHEARNS' LONG, SLOPING PIECE OF OLD FARMLAND JUST NORTH OF CAMDEN OVERLOOKS A FIELD OF LUPINES, SAILBOATS AND LOBSTER BOATS, AND THE ISLAND-DOTTED PENOBSCOT BAY.



The group rakes blueberries at the home of Ken Shure and Liv Rockefeller near Bald Mountain in Camden. | Raked blueberries and Ken Shure's antique blueberry winnower | Belted Galloway cattle grazing at Aldermere Farm in Rockport | A crudite platter with fresh farm butter at Salt Water Farm





In late August, five Brooklyn chefs descend on the farm. One parks his rental car, a red Mustang, on the lawn. There's a 300-pound pig waiting in the fridge. On the schedule for the week: how to make sausages, how to make headcheese, how to pickle cucumbers, how to rake wild blueberries, how to make pizza in a wood-fired oven, and how to kill, eviscerate, and pluck chickens.

"This is very different than anything that's been done in midcoast Maine," Ahearn says. "What's hip in the food world right now are the lost arts of butchering, smoking meats, distilling, and brewing."

For one week in August, Ahearn's world in Lincolnville resembled the current epicenter of the burgeoning preindustrial food revival: Brooklyn, New York. Only here, salty sea breezes mingle with the smell of roasting pork shoulders without the interruption of car alarms, hookers, or dudes on tall bikes. The kegerator cools Andrew's Brewing Company's beers instead of Sixpoint Craft Ales, and the chefs are foraging chanterelle mushrooms, catching mackerel, and harvesting urchins rather than raiding the shelves at Sahadi's.

On Thursday night, Annaliese Griffin, an editor at *Brooklyn Based*, an online newsletter, pulls pork butt shoulder-to-shoulder with Dennis Spina, chef at Roebbling Tea Room in Williamsburg, and Jill Meerpohl from Vinegar Hill House in Dumbo. A cassoulet and a porchetta roast in the wood-fired oven, and buttery piecrust jammed with blueberries raked earlier in the day bakes in a convection oven. ("I can't have my cholesterol tested for a week," one family friend says over dinner.)

On Friday, Ahearn is planning a classic lobster bake with steamer clams, corn, cornbread, pasta salad, oysters, and cocktails.

"Then what?" asks one of the attendees, Mike Kessler, a middle-aged guy from New Jersey.

"We're going to feed you. You're going to eat yourself silly," chef Carolyn Fidanza tells him. "Then, we're going to open up the fridge and have you do all the work."

These kinds of farmstays, or "haycations," where guests pay for the chance to get their hands dirty, are common in Europe and are just starting to catch on in the United States. *New York Magazine's* Grub Street blog dubbed Salt Water Farm's event a "Summer Camp for Foodies." The event gave chefs an excuse to go straight to the source. And the New Yorkers who came up for the food were star struck by the faces behind Brooklyn's

neighborhood hotspots: Egg, Marlow & Sons, and Roebbling Tea Room. The students ranged in skill, but they had one thing in common: a devotion to food.

"It has a very cool, young, urban energy," says Liv Rockefeller, a Camden resident who came out for the event. "It's fun to watch young chefs cook by the seat of their pants. And I think that it will be very liberating for me to try to bring that energy into my home cooking. This is also a chance for me to step out of my very busy summer life and really be on vacation right here where I live."

Other August guests include a couple who travel regularly on culinary tours, a filmmaker working on a documentary about Florida's Cracker Cowboy culture, a pair of costume designers who worked on the film *Julie & Julia*, a recent graduate of the French Culinary Institute, and a guy who claims to cook only nine days a year. This is Salt Water Farm's first big event. It sold out in two days.

"Mainers have traditionally trotted out the good old New England staples like brown breads and apple pies," says Sandy Oliver, a food historian on Islesboro. "People came here and enjoyed the authenticity of what they encountered. We were sort of the last outpost of New England cookery."

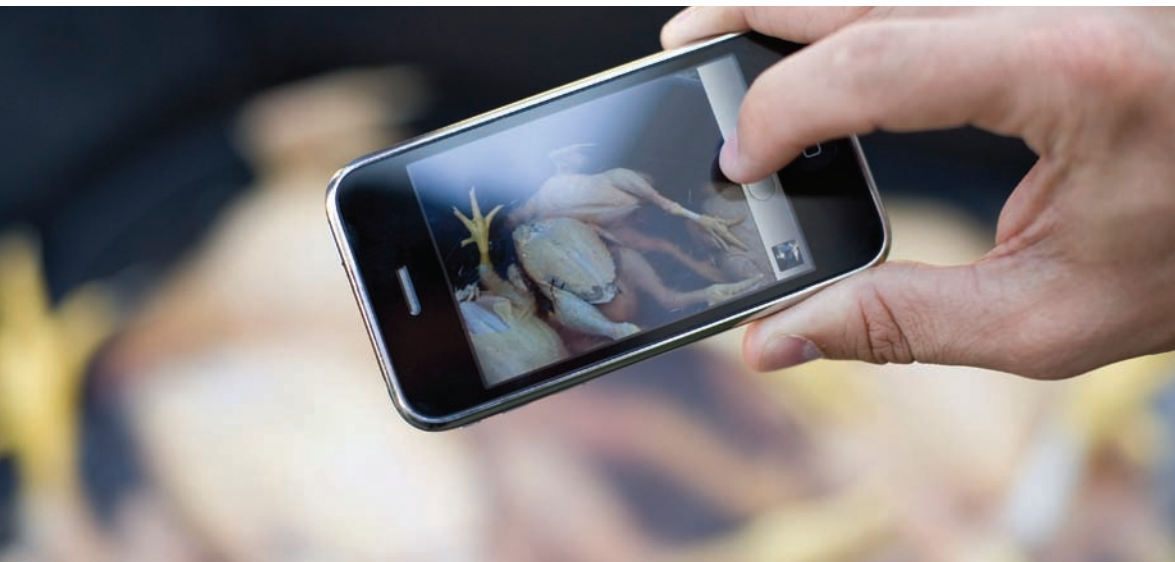
For many, that is still the case.

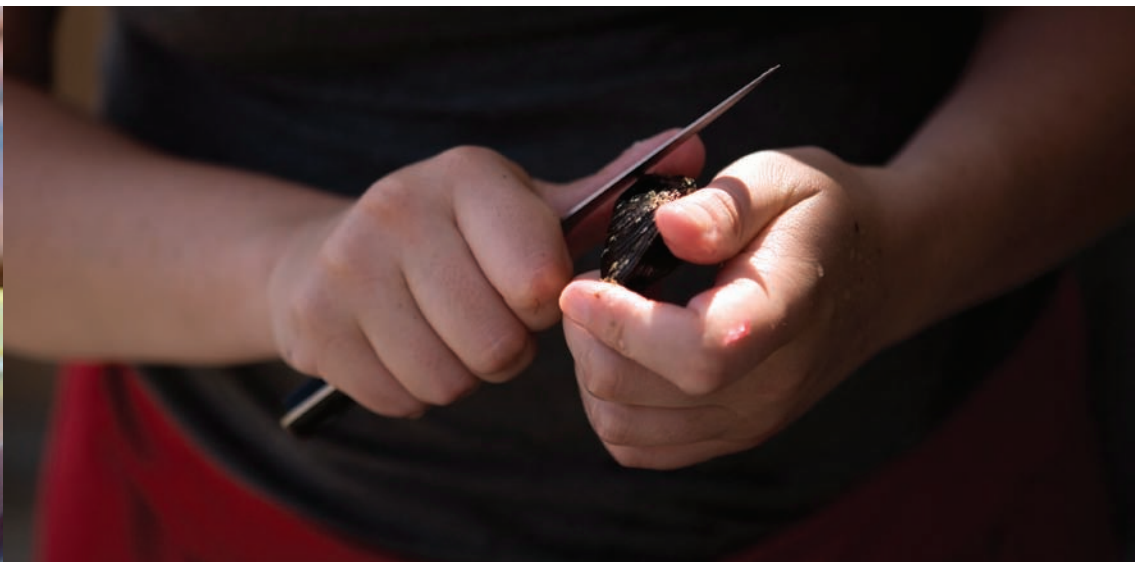
The first thing I notice about the little white Bimmer that Ahearn picks me up in: the stink. I thought maybe she had caught some mackerel, maybe yesterday, and forgotten about it, but she tells me the bait smell is from smoked salmon rolls that she prepared for our lunch. Like many cooks, Ahearn is inspired by travel but looks locally for meat, produce, and seafood. While salmon isn't being farm-raised on her oceanfront, Ahearn has high hopes for rope-grown mussels, a few lobster traps, and a full-fledged farm. For now, though, she's still meeting local foragers and fishermen and doesn't want to impose on anyone else's territory. "It's all new to me," she says. "I don't want to rush into anything."

Ten years ago, Ahearn liked traveling east from Milwaukee with her family on three-week summer vacations—at least she liked the first two weeks, when they went to sandy beaches in Rhode Island. She wasn't as crazy about week three, the week in Maine—when they all traded flip-flops for muck boots and began swatting black flies. Maine seemed like just a family obligation.



Butcher Brent young stands by the chopping block. He's holding a handmade Swedish hatchet. | J. Patrick Manley, a local mason, built a pair of wood-burning brick ovens for the kitchen at Salt Water Farm. | A guest captures the chicken slaughter on his iPhone. Guests blogged about the event and posted photos online. | Pork, slow, slow cooking on the grill | Mussels were harvested from islands in Penobscot Bay.





But by the time she had graduated from Colorado College and worked her way through cooking school at the Institute for Culinary Education in Manhattan, Ahearn had changed her mind. There she was, taking the F train from her Cobble Hill apartment to a private cooking gig in Central Park West—and she felt like reading about compost and soil. She decided it was time to move back to Maine.

“THE PEOPLE IN MAINE ARE GREAT CHARACTERS. THEY’RE BIZARRE AND QUIRKY AND LOVE WHAT THEY DO.”
—ANNEMARIE AHEARN

“Maine has a culture that is unlike any other state in this country,” she says. “People here are incredibly practical and open-minded, but not overbearing or in your face. They’re very patient. I think the long hard winter instills that quality. I like it. It’s not who I am, but I aspire to be more like that.”

In April, Ahearn moved into an apartment above the kitchen and established some asparagus beds. She planted creeping thyme around the granite patio and created a terraced kitchen garden with beach plums, squash, and culinary herbs. “Everything has a very new look to it,” she says. “It’s year one.”

The rest of the 17 acres have been mapped out with fruit trees, chickens, pigs, and maybe even some hops and barley. The only thing with a finished feel is the kitchen with its brick fireplaces and shiny stainless steel. After all, the kitchen is the center of her nascent brand.

“I have been watching the *River Cottage* series lately and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall sort of started out like this,” she says. “His cooking classes got popular and now they’re online. It’s a great show. The landscape here isn’t that different from England. So I’ve thought about doing a cooking show. I’ve had a little practice on camera and I would love to do something for the winter.”

Later, I ask Ahearn if she’s planning to make the plunge into the heart of nose-to-tail cooking, getting the freshest of fresh meats by killing an animal to eat. She says she isn’t sure. Earlier in the summer she had a hatchet and a stump, and was ready to cut the heads off some chickens, but she decided against it. Killing them seemed like it would have been too gluttonous—too much for their precious lives.

On the back porch in August, there’s a thick, rich smell of roasting meats. The porchetta melts in everyone’s mouths. Whole chickens marinate in the fridge. I look at Ahearn. She has on a nice white dress. There’s no blood on her hands. Not yet at least. +

**Salt Water Farm | 25 Woodward Hill |
Lincolntonville | saltwaterfarm.com**



Shots of vodka before the chicken slaughter | The group gathers for lunch on the granite patio overlooking the bay outside the Salt Water Farm kitchen

Opposite: Butcher Tom Mylan formerly of Marlow & Daughters | Butcher Brent Young will help Mylan at The Meat Hook | Chef Millicent Souris of egg | Dennis Spina chef at Roebling Tea Room



THE BREW MASTER

By Annemarie Ahearn



My friend Pete Raymer is a life-long construction worker and a reformed alcoholic. He has a quick wit and a dirty mind.

He says, “You want to meet Andy? Known Andy my whole life! I’ll introduce you.”

Andy Hazen is the owner of Andrew’s Brewing Company in Lincolnville, and word has it, he’s a tough one to crack.

Pete looks at me, one eye wandering mischievously, “You like to drink? I gave it up years ago. But boy, oh boy, would I like a sip of that stuff.”

I explain to Pete that I’m trying to support the local brewers, vintners, and distillers so Andy’s brew seemed a logical place to start.

“You gonna have a party or something?” He says.

“Yeah, and you’re invited Pete,” I say.

“Boy oh boy! A girl like you makes me want to drink again,” he says.

I begin to blush. A mosquito sticks me right on the back of the neck. I slap it and say, “These damn things just can’t get enough of me.

Pete takes this opportunity to cross the line. He says, “Look at ya. I’d suck on you too.”

Now my cheeks are as red as my mosquito bite.

Pete calls Andy and tells him I’m coming. The headquarters for Andrew’s Brewing Company is in Andy’s ever-expanding garage in Lincolnville. It’s on High Street—surrounded by farms and hay fields. The company started as a hobby and has grown from there. I approach the door. Three golden retrievers announce my arrival.

“Hello?” I call out nervously.

A barrel-chested man with a surly expression on his face suddenly appears and stands squarely between me and the brewing equipment. It’s Andy. He says not a word.

I say, “My name is Annemarie and I’ve opened a cooking school in Lincolnville Beach.”

I feel like I’ve regressed 20 years. It’s like I’m selling Girl Scout Cookies.

I say, “I’m Pete’s friend.”

Andy’s shoulders relax and his face lights up.

“Ah. You should have said so. Come on in,” he says.

I follow his lead around the bottling machine, a sort of Rube Goldberg affair. The cement floors are damp with condensation, and the smell of yeast hangs heavily in the air.

“You tried all our brews?” Andy says.

How could I say yes to that question and possibly deny myself a flight of beer at 10:30 a.m. on a Monday morning?

“No sir,” I say.

Without delay, he heads into the walk-in-cooler with an empty pint glass and emerges with it half full of the Pale Ale. Then he brings out the Golden, then the Stout and then the Brown.

We discuss the virtues of each. I can’t remember the last time beer tasted this good. In about ten minutes, I’ve put back nearly 2 pints. I feel wobbly.

Andy goes on and on about the brewing process and gives me the full tour. Then we talk about the weather, then pets he’s had over the years, two of which are displayed prominently on his beer label. My inquiry about kegerators brings on a thorough discussion of refrigeration systems and CO² levels.

We chat about living in Maine year-round, and how the area has changed over the years. We talk about a slug problem he’s having.

I have to go. I step back toward the door, but Andy starts in on Maine’s brewing and distribution laws. With one foot out the doorway, I nod graciously.

Andy reaches out his hand. He’s smiling from ear to ear. “It was nice meeting you. I think we can get you a good price for your beer.”

I thank him, get in my car, and sink into the seat with a sigh. Andy knocks hard on the window and yells, “You take care now. I’ll keep em cold for ‘ya.”

Tough to crack, easy to open. +

Andrew’s Brewing Co. | 353 High St. | Lincolnville | 207.763.3305

