

[Back](#)

---

Article published Oct 20, 2009

## **Twice Bitten: Food & the city**

### **Event promotes local link between farm, food**

By SHARON PARQUETTE NIMTZ

At the final presentation of the downtown Rutland marketing study given by Tripp Muldrow of Arnett Muldrow & Associates, the final point made was this: "We think (and he was visibly thrilled) that Downtown Rutland is positioned perfectly to become a national model for promoting the link between farms and food."

Two important entities in that vision are the Rutland Area Food Co-op as the anchor on the southeast of downtown (Wales Street), and the Rutland Farmers' Market — in the west side Depot Park in the summer, and partnering with the Co-op in the winter.

That is tremendously exciting — that Rutland could be the National Model for this kind of food integrity and sustainability. But more than that — that food plays and will play such a huge role in Rutland's present and future. Not since rail energized the city back in the early-1800s has Rutland had such an exciting purpose. It is true that the Co-op and the Farmers' Market comprise the big heart of Rutland.

Neither of these organizations are new ones — the Farmers' Market gathered first back in the '70s, and the Co-op was formed in '94. Both struggled at first, the powers-that-be ignorant of their potential importance in the case of the Farmers' Market, begrudging them a space to gather; and damning the Co-op with faint amusement and then total forgetfulness. But each forged on and are pulsing away at their vibrant best these days. Very strong links, both of them, in a healthy food chain.

One reason for that resurgence might be the formation of Rutland Farm and Food Link (RAFFL) several years ago, by a small group of people including Tara Kelly, India Burnett Farmer, and Greg Cox, to help the public and its institutions connect with farmers and food processors and to celebrate that connection. One of those celebrations takes place in the theatre space behind the Co-op starting in November, when the Farmers' Market moves indoors to set up every Saturday throughout the winter. Without a hitch, without an absence from the end of the last outdoor market on Oct. 31 to the first outdoor market in May, the Farmers' Market meets and celebrates food and community. Of course, the vibrantly successful summer Farmers' Market — with 80 plus vendors — is successful in it's

own right.

In addition to the Winter Market, RAFFL is working on finding a home for an industrial kitchen in Rutland — a processing facility where value-added food products can be prepared. Too, they're looking for land that will serve as incubator farms, and, well, let's just quote from their web page: The Community Farm & Agricultural Resource Center will serve as an incubator farm for beginning farmers, a research and learning space to cultivate innovative agricultural and marketing strategies, a gathering space to be used for community harvest celebrations and educational programs, a consumer awareness tool and hub for RAFFL program activities and the location for regional agricultural processing infrastructure. In other words, a space in the Rutland area that will serve a very similar function as the Intervale in Burlington.

All of this takes lots of moola, and when Tara Kelly recently became the full-time Executive Director of RAFFL a flurry of copasetic fund-raising events ensued. Perhaps you've gone to one of the localvore dinners at the Marble Museum in Proctor, brought to you under the auspices of the Marble Museum to benefit RAFFL and Dimension of Marble? If not, you should keep your eye peeled for the next announcement of one. Lots of good and innovative food, reasonable price, and great company of farmers, localvores, community leaders and just plain foodies, all gathering together in the gorgeous cavern of marble that is one of our historic natural resources. That all adds up to just tremendous enjoyment and great networking opportunities, too. By that I just mean talking to people who are interested in the same things you are.

But RAFFL's outstanding fundraiser took place this October in the form of The First Annual Twilight in the Meadow — a white-linen sit-down dinner prepared by Sissy Hicks, the former owner of the Dorset Inn (of whom Jane and Michael Stern once wrote, "We see Sissy Hicks as the Alice Waters of Vermont..."), in a dining tent in the middle of a meadow at Milky Way Farm in Ira. Robbie Clark, the owner of the farm was there, milking, feeding the calves, leading tours, as were his supporting parents, Bob Clark and Mary Saceric-Clark. Everyone even remotely connected with RAFFL was serving and sch-moo-zing, petting the calves, watching the cows getting milked, and eating gorgeous food.

It started with appetizers of chicken liver pate' made by Greg and Gay Cox from their Boardman Hill chickens, spread on good rustic whole-grained bread from Naga Bakehouse, and local wines from Lincoln Peak Vineyard. The sit-down portion of the feast started with a creamy, delicate butternut squash soup garnished with a tiny brunoise of Macintosh apples. That was followed by a beet and chèvre salad, lamb-three-ways, roasted vegetables, fingerling potatoes, and finished with sumptuous apple cake and cinnamon ice cream. Raffle results and a small, laid-back auction followed. "In all," Tara tells me, "22 farmers donated their

product — and that doesn't count the 14 specialty food producers that donated jars of salsa etc. for the table favors." Everything was locally sourced and almost everything was donated.

Green fields all around, full moon, lively conversation, and lovely food accompanied by that faint, nostalgic whiff of manure to remind real epicures from whence their food comes.

\*\*\*

So let's make Tripp Muldrow's enthusiastic marketing plan for Rutland's future vitality work — support your Co-op, your Farmers' Market, and support RAFFL in all its endeavors — it's just lots of really rewarding fun — people, food, and oh yes, music!

\*\*\*

### Green Tomato Mincemeat

I grew up with mincemeat pie, but only meat mincemeat, venison or beef neck, always made by Grandma, and I loved it as my absolute favorite holiday — Thanksgiving and Christmas — treat, as I wrote about here. But when I was working on *Tomato Imperative!* I realized that I would have to come up with a green tomato mincemeat. I was inspired by a cover photo of a handsome, rustic, double-crust tart made by Nick Malgieri for a glossy food magazine.

To keep it in line with Grandma's mincemeat, I used suet as the fat for its distinctive flavor, though you may substitute butter if you like. I wanted a sophisticated Italian twist to it which I provided with the addition of pine nuts and sherry.

This is yummy as a chutney accompaniment to a roast. As well, it has an affinity to cream cheese when spread on thin slices of brown bread, or, another time, served in tiny demitasse cups with good thick jersey cream over all for a special dessert. Most wonderfully of all, it is used in the filling of the Italian Green Tomato Mincemeat Tart, the recipe for which you will find in *Tomato Imperative!* But that I will give you later on, closer to the holidays.

Now, though, is the time to take all those last green tomatoes that are cluttering your counter (or buy some quickly at the Farmers' Market) and make them into this sumptuous stuff.

It keeps practically forever in the fridge, but you may can it in pint jars in a boiling water bath for 20 minutes to be safe.

## Green Tomato Mincemeat

Makes about 3 cups, enough for one tart, but can be doubled

- 2 ounces beef suet, chopped
- 3 green tomatoes (1 lb), cored and chopped
- 1 large apple, cored and chopped
- zest and juice of 1 lemon
- zest and juice of 1 lime
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar, cider, or hard cider
- 1 quarter-sized round of fresh gingerroot, smashed and chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 onion, sliced in 1-inch shards
- 1 1/4 cups brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup golden raisins
- 1/4 cup dry sherry
- 4 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted
- More liqueur — sherry, dark rum, or Calvados for preservation

In a large, heavy-bottomed pan, render the suet over medium heat until crackling. Stir in green tomatoes, apple, zests and juices, vinegar, gingerroot, nutmeg, onion, brown sugar, cinnamon, coriander, and salt. Cook over low heat with the cover cocked, stirring often, for about 2 hours, until condensed and syrupy.

Meanwhile, put the raisins to macerate in the sherry.

When the mixture is very thick, correct the seasonings, stir in the raisins, sherry, and pine nuts.

Add up to a cup of liqueur — to taste — and bring back to a simmer for 3 minutes, then put into jars if you are not serving it in the near future. Actually I just dump in the liqueur, stir it up, put it in jars, and then into the fridge.

Bon, as Julia always said, *Apetit!*

Write to Sharon Nimtz in care of the Rutland Herald, P.O. Box 668, Rutland, 05701 or by email to [snimtz@gmail.com](mailto:snimtz@gmail.com) Find archived columns and other food words at [www.thriceshy.blogspot.com](http://www.thriceshy.blogspot.com).

---