

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

August 2023

Reinventing the rainbow



Priscilla Koch, owner of The Urban Farmhouse, infuses Bragg's Apple Cider Vinegar with fruit, herbs and spices to make color and flavor combinations that are deliciously drinkable, intensely nutritious and amazingly versatile.

Drinking vinegars, also called shrubs, are an ancient remedy for stomach upset. Fun and versatile in cooking and cocktails, they are also tasty enough to sip by the spoonful to aid digestion.

ON WHAT INSPIRED HER TO START HER BUSINESS: "I was having digestive issues, and my doctor wanted to write me a prescription, but my husband suggested taking apple cider vinegar instead. I tried it but couldn't stomach it. Then I read an article about shrubs, which were these beautiful jewel-toned liquids. I thought, I can do this! It took me nine months to perfect my first flavor — pear, vanilla and ginger. What I make is so much fresher than what you can find in the store; there's no sugar, salt, extra water, fake flavorings,

"When I talk about reimagining capitalism, I mean rediscovering a very old idea, which is that the market works best when prices reflect real costs, and the firms who compete in the market don't get to set the rules."

— Author Rebecca Henderson



IN STORE NOW: Shrubs are keto and vegan friendly and can be used in every part of the meal, from appetizers to desserts. Priscilla's blog at TheUrbanFarmhouse.co includes recipes for dressings, sauces, cocktails, mocktails and meat glazes. Her spicy "fire" shrubs are especially popular. (\$14.39 per 9-oz jar; hot honey, \$11.79.)

extracts or dyes added to any of these. I get my ingredients locally whenever possible, including plums from Kokopeli farms in Colorado and apricots from Austin Family Farms. For me, it's not about the money. This product helped me, and I firmly believe with my whole heart it can help somebody else too."

Pueblo chile grower prepares for busy harvest



Supplier Profile

Long-time Ranch Foods Direct produce supplier Shane Milberger, owner of Milberger

Farms, is a first generation Pueblo farmer who started his business 35 years ago and gradually grew it into one of the largest in the area. He's seen a lot of changes over that time, many of which make doing business more difficult. "I'm old school," he admits. "I wish I was farming in the '30s with the lifestyle they had back then."

WHAT HE GROWS: The two main crops at Milberger Farms are asparagus in the spring and chiles in the fall. In between, the farm grows a number of "fill ins" such as broccoli, onions, radishes and zucchinis.

BRING ON THE CHILES! The first Pueblo chiles are harvested by the end of July and roasting begins as early as mid-August. By September, chile-roasting season is in full swing. It's an intense time: the farm typically roasts 28,000 bushels of chiles in a four-week period. "I smell up the whole neighborhood," Shane jokes. The chiles are roasted in a packing shed southeast of town and then go into an on-site flash freezer; the freezing process only takes seven minutes from start to finish.

His team of around 20 works long hours to get the chiles processed while keeping up with all of the other tasks required at the farm and on-site store.

CHANGING MARKETS: "The big companies don't respect local as much as they used to," Shane says. "All they look at is who has the cheapest price." The proposed Safeway / Albertsons-Kroger merger will likely only add to the pressure, he said. "Foreign farms can raise it cheaper, and the regulation isn't anywhere close to what our regulations are here," he said. Business is more impersonal now: he used to sell directly to large

stores but was eventually forced to turn his wholesale accounts over to a broker. Meanwhile, organic products — once an important specialty item — are harder to sell as huge farms and overseas producers flood the market. Organics cost twice as much to produce but sometimes sell for a lower price than conventional. "It works, but not as well as it once did. At one time it was good to get into, but now it has transitioned to where maybe it's not as important as just being local," he says.

ON WHAT HE WANTS CONSUMERS TO KNOW: "If they only knew what goes into getting all of this done — what it takes to pick that zucchini, and to fight off the bugs and the weeds — if there was more understanding of what we do from start to finish, maybe there would be more respect for the product and for local growers. Whenever we train new employees, they are always amazed at what it takes to do this. You've got to have a passion for it. What I grow is not a crop to me — it's my baby."

DID YOU KNOW? Mexican chile imports have increased more than 25 percent in the last six years, according to inspection officials, while U.S. production has declined.

Meet long-time customer Steve Hench

Steve helped judge the honey entries at the recent Pollinator Fest in Manitou Springs.

ON WHY HE SHOPS

AT RFD: It's absolutely the best quality meat. My wife Karen is there all the time; she's the one who does most of the shopping. I've sold my honey there in the past.

ON BEEKEEPING: I was eight years old when my father, who had bees, gave me a hive, and said 'Here, these are yours.' In those days, you could probably make a living keeping bees, but not today. I grew up in central Pennsylvania where it was common to see buckwheat honey that was so dark it was nearly black. By comparison, the wildflower honey typically found in Colorado is very light, almost translucent. I came to Colorado to study geology. Since then I've worked all over the world doing petroleum exploration, but this is where I love to be. I've been keeping bees in the Pikes Peak region now for 20 years. In the United States, the winter losses of honey bees are now up around 40 percent, which if you were raising cattle you'd go broke! I've had as many as 25 colonies in the past, but I'm down to half a dozen hives now. It's difficult here because of the short season, and the aridity of the area. Many people get discouraged when they lose their bees. It is challenging, it does take patience, but I always recommend to people that they stick with it, find out why they had a problem and try to do things differently next time.



Peach caprese burger

1 pound ground beef
1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
12 ounces sliced mozzarella
1/3 cup parmesan cheese
1/4 cup flour
2 eggs, beaten
2 tbsp olive oil
1/2 tsp salt and pepper
Colorado peaches, sliced
1 tbsp honey
4 burger buns



Divide the meat into 4 sections and form into 4 patties (or make 8 slider size burgers). Place the patties on a plate. Drizzle the burgers with 2 tbsps balsamic vinegar. In a large bowl, combine flour, parmesan, salt, pepper and a dash of cayenne pepper, mixing thoroughly to combine. In a small bowl, lightly beat the eggs. Take each slice of fresh mozzarella and coat it in the beaten egg, then dredge it through the bread crumb mix, pressing on both sides to adhere. Repeat with the remaining slices. Meanwhile, drizzle the peaches with honey. Preheat the grill or a grill pan to medium high heat, and once hot, season the burgers with salt and pepper and then grill until desired doneness. Cover with foil to allow the burgers to rest while you fry the mozzarella. Add 1 teaspoon of olive oil to a skillet and sear both sides of the peaches for 1 to 2 minutes until just warmed, but still somewhat firm. Add the remaining olive oil to the skillet and when hot, fry the coated mozzarella, turning carefully once or twice, until golden and cheese begins to melt but still retains its shape, about 1 minute on each side. Top each burger with a slice of fried mozzarella, a couple of slices of caramelized peaches and some fresh basil leaves, then drizzle with extra balsamic to serve.

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Natural Meat Market

Two retail locations in Colorado Springs!

Flagship store: 1228 E. Fillmore

719-623-2980

Food hub: 4635 Town Center Drive

719-559-0873

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Upcoming events at the food hub

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LOCAL VENDOR MARKET

Saturday, August 12



**NATIVE, NATURAL,
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Peak to Plains land-
scaping was designed
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Save the date

Ranch Foods Direct
Town Center

September 16th, 2023 12-6pm

Pikes Peak Permaculture Fundraiser

- * Live Music
- * Food Trucks
- * Educational Booths



- * Kids Activities
- * Silent Auction
- * Door Prizes
- * Local Vendors