



THE VINEYARD'S BOUNTY:

GREENS AND BLOSSOMS FROM NORTH TABOR FARM

As Martha's Vineyard wakes from winter, thousands of people ferry over to sunbathe, swim and relax. The spring sun warms the dunes and Atlantic breezes stir the reeds. But perhaps the best part of the island is still locked deep underground, in the thawing soil of North Tabor Farm. Above ground, it's business as usual as this family farm prepares for their tenth season.

Rebecca Miller and Matthew Dix are worried. Their two pregnant goats, Esmerelda and Angelica, haven't eaten since they arrived on the farm four days ago. They are the latest additions to fifty chickens, two cats, one dog and a mule named Zeb.

"They're nervous. They're annoyed by the dog and really just want to go *home*," says Rebecca. The goats seem to think that "home" is back to their herd of fifty in the hills of western Massachusetts. It's going to take some time for them to understand that North Tabor Farm, tucked away in Chilmark, on Martha's Vineyard, is their home now. It might feel weird at first, but they're just going to have to get used to the salty sea air blowing through their beards.

The Dix-Miller family is excited about their new friends, but the goats will need time to settle in and nurse their kids, and it will be a while before the farm can add fresh goat cheese to their agricultural repertoire. But really, there's no rush. Running an organic family farm takes patience—a commitment to



OPPOSITE: *North Tabor's greens (and reds) flutter in the island breeze. ABOVE: Rebecca Miller and her daughters marvel at the season's new growth. Rebecca says her children love the flavorful greens much more than ordinary lettuce.*



rants of Martha's Vineyard are bursting with North Tabor produce. Under the care of the Dix-Miller family, the salad greens, heirloom tomatoes, berries, potatoes, mushrooms and a bounty of fresh flowers prosper under the island sun. North Tabor Farm grows only enough to supply their community—and since Martha's Vineyard is an island, that community is strictly bounded by the sea. If you want a taste, you'll just have to visit the Vineyard.

The season unfolds

Early spring might be off season for Vineyard tourists, but Rebecca and Matthew are already getting into the swing of things. Though the ground outside is still a bit frosty, the warmth inside North Tabor Farm's three greenhouses encourages a bountiful selection of salad greens (a family of veggies totally unrelated to lettuce) to take root. On the heels of winter come early sprouters like sorrel, New Zealand spinach, and mâche, followed by exotica like tatsoi, mizuna, nasturtium leaves and “wrinkled crinkled crumpled cress” (its real name, Rebecca assures me). Many of these “greens” aren't green at all; red Russian kale, *hon tsai tai*, with its red stem and tiny yellow flowers, and amaranth, with its delicate fuchsia leaves, are all prized for their good looks as well as their tangy taste.

The island's appetite for North Tabor Farm's ripe, sun-warmed tomatoes is sated until midsummer by the heirloom Moskvich tomato, which is ready for harvest the second week of July. This early riser is also the only North Tabor tomato that is actually red; the rest are decked out in patterns like the green and yellow stripes on the tart green zebras, yellow and red on the sweet striped Germans, and dusky pink and deep



ABOVE, TOP: Fresh flowers in magenta and violet combine to make a gorgeous bouquet. BOTTOM: Martha's Vineyard is an easy journey from Boston or New York City.

Mother Nature's pace, and no one else's.

Rebecca and Matthew purchased their six acres of land ten years ago, (or “seasons ago” as Rebecca phrases it) with assistance from a program that helps young families buy land and property on the exclusive island. At the time, they had little more than a love of fresh flowers, a commitment to conservation and a devotion to the fragile beauty of Martha's Vineyard. Today, along with their three young children, they lease ten more acres of land, and give back tenfold what the government helped them buy a decade ago.

All through the growing season, which lasts from April to late November, the markets and restau-



ABOVE, TOP: Flowers on their way to the market. BOTTOM: The girls socialize with some of the farm's fifty chickens. The animals on North Tabor Farm are as much a part of the Dix-Miller family as the people.

violet spots on the Cherokee purples.

When the potatoes are dug up in July, they defy all expectations in a gorgeous array of taut, fresh fingerlings that seem worlds away from the lumpy ovals heaped in bins at the grocery store. Russian banana, French fingerling, purple Peruvian and rose finn apple potatoes make a salad like no other.

Fresh flowers, melons, blueberries, garlic and 500 oak logs sprouting with shiitake mushrooms round out the acreage, making the home cooks, chefs and diners of Martha's Vineyard feel as pampered by the island's bounty as the sunbathers and windsurfers.

North Tabor Labor

The gorgeous yield is the product of the Dix-Miller family's dedication and commitment to notoriously difficult farm work. And since the farm uses only organic growing methods, the workload multiplies. No chemical pesticides are used, so the delicate greens need to be covered with a special fabric to keep the flea beetles at bay, and all the farmed acres need to be constantly weeded to stop the bugs from getting too comfortable. But growing organic food goes beyond a commitment to health, flavor and freshness. It's also about replenishing

From Farm to Market

The ten-ounce bags of famous North Tabor greens basking at the market did not get there on their own. Here's what really goes into those Vineyard salads.

First the greens need to be cut, which is done by hand with scissors. As the greens are snipped away, they go into buckets and then rest in the shade until the harvest is done; usually a couple hundred pounds are picked at one time.

Next, the greens get "hydro-cooled." Three giant tubs of icy-cold water await the greens, which move from the first to the second to the third. By the time they leave the last bath, the greens are sparkling clean. They're scooped out and put into clamming buckets (which function as giant colanders) and then move on to be mechanically spin-dried. The greens must be as dry as possible before packaging.



ACCOMMODATIONS

Three of the Vineyard's most renowned inns feature North Tabor Farm produce in their dining rooms. Each is an ideal choice for an island escape.

The Beach Plum Inn & Restaurant 50 Beach Plum Lane, Menemsha 508-645-9454

Set on seven quiet acres, and boasting gorgeous harbor views and a four-star dining room, the tiny Beach Plum Inn charms all who stay there. The Inn's eleven rooms (six of them in private cottages) depart from the B&B feel, with televisions, phones, air conditioning and other modern amenities. Visit www.beachpluminn.com for more information.

Lambert's Cove Country Inn Off Lambert's Cove Road, West Tisbury 508-693-2298

Lambert's Cove makes its home in a 200-year-old farmhouse secluded away on seven and one-half acres of pristine grounds and gardens (apple orchard included) with a beach just a short walk away. All of the Inn's fifteen romantic guest rooms come with private baths. Breakfast in the cozy dining room is sure to get you up at a reasonable hour. Visit www.lambertscoveinn.com.

Mansion House Inn, Health Club & Spa 9 Main Street, Vineyard Haven 800-332-4112

Two years ago the original Mansion House, built in 1794, burned to the ground—a tragic loss to Vineyard Haven, the island's busiest port. But after an extensive restoration, the Inn is perhaps better than ever, with thirty-two rooms offering amenities such as fireplaces, soaking tubs and plasma TVs, as well as a full health club and day spa. Zephrus, the Inn's acclaimed restaurant, is worth a trip alone. Visit www.mvmansionhouse.com or www.zephrus.com for more information.

A trip to Martha's Vineyard during the summer season takes a little planning. Visit www.mvol.com for travel resources.

resources to ensure the future of the land and of the livelihood.

The Dix-Millers are always rotating crops, and they make their own compost. Every year their soil is tested to pinpoint exactly which nutrients need replenishing. But no detail of conservation, however small, is ever overlooked, and this is a big part of why Rebecca and Matthew succeed, and why their neighbors on the island feel good about where their food comes from.

The shiitake logs, for example, need to be soaked during the summer to help the mushrooms grow. The water used for this task is the water left over from washing the salad greens. After the logs are thoroughly soaked, the water is transferred into the frog and goldfish pond.

Amaranth is another success in conservation. "Amaranth is a big deal around here," says Rebecca. "First we use the pink leaves for our salad mixes, and then we let the plants go to seed. Then we have the gorgeous red flowers for our arrangements, and, finally, the chickens eat the seeds."

While organic farming is a challenge in itself, harvesting is a whole new world of labor. The greens, for example, are all picked by hand—lit-



erally snipped away with tiny scissors. It might sound like fun and satisfying work, but consider that the farm produces about 400 pounds of the tender leaves a week over a seven-month period. Combined with harvesting about 250 pounds of fragile tomatoes, plus sundry potatoes, mushrooms, flowers and other produce each week, the Dix-Millers definitely have their work cut out for them.

But for a family lucky enough to have the support of their community, the work is nothing compared to the rewards. “The Vineyard is small,” says Rebecca. “Everyone knows everyone else. I feel safe, and most importantly, I know the kids are safe—everyone looks out for each other. Matthew works four ten-hour days at the Martha’s Vineyard Land Bank and then works the rest of the week on the farm. The kids love working outside and always help with harvesting—they’re so involved in everything here. We are a family farm.”



Where to find North Tabor Farm produce

To sample North Tabor Farm’s produce, you’ll have to get yourself to Martha’s Vineyard—hardly a chore for anyone who enjoys playtime! Rebecca and Matthew welcome visitors, but because the farm is also their home and workplace, you must call ahead: 508-645-3311.

You can also purchase the goods at the island’s farmers’ markets, held Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 A.M. to noon, from the second week in June to Columbus Day. The market is held in the Old Grange Hall in the center of West Tisbury. Or enjoy it at many of the Vineyard’s fine restaurants.



BEACH PLUM INN'S PAN-SEARED STRIPED BASS WITH WARM ARUGULA, SMOKED APPLEWOOD BACON AND TEARDROP TOMATOES

SERVES 6

Serve the striped bass with crisp potato-leek cakes.

For Rosemary-Balsamic Vinaigrette

- 1/2 cup Pinot Noir or other dry red wine
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon minced rosemary
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

For striped bass

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 6 7-ounce striped bass fillets
- 1/3 cup canola oil
- 2 1/4 cups yellow teardrop tomatoes, whole
- 2 1/4 cups red teardrop tomatoes, whole
- 6 bunches arugula, picked over and washed
- 1/2 cup Rosemary-Balsamic Vinaigrette
- 1 pound smoked applewood bacon, cooked until crisp, then diced

For garnish

- Edible flowers, such as nasturtium
- Chives, cut to 6 inches

1. Make Rosemary-Balsamic Vinaigrette. In a small saucepan combine wine, garlic and shallots. Cook over medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes, until reduced by 1/2.
2. Add balsamic vinegar and continue to cook for another 8 to 10 minutes, until reduced by 1/2.
3. Remove from heat and add honey and minced rosemary. Whisk in extra virgin olive oil. Set aside until ready to use.
4. Preheat oven to 350°F.
5. Place flour on a large plate, add salt and white pepper and whisk to combine. Drag fillets through seasoned flour so they are lightly coated on all sides.

6. Heat oil in a large heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat until hot, about 1 minute. Add fillets and cook 2 minutes without turning. Turn fillets over and cook for another 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer fillets to a baking sheet and cook in oven for 8 to 10 minutes, or until fish flakes when pressed with a fork.

7. While fish bakes, prepare tomato topping. Place tomatoes and arugula in a large bowl. Combine 1/2 cup Rosemary-Balsamic Vinaigrette with diced bacon, pour mixture over tomatoes and arugula in bowl and toss well.

8. Divide fish among 6 plates. Top with tomato mixture and garnish with edible flowers and chives and serve.

BEACH PLUM INN'S POTATO-LEEK CAKES

SERVES 6

- 2 large Idaho potatoes, peeled and grated
- 1/2 cup finely diced leeks, green part only
- 2 eggs
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 6 tablespoons canola oil
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a large bowl combine potatoes, leeks, eggs and flour. Mix with your hands until well blended. Divide mixture into 18 small cakes.
3. Heat oil over medium-high heat until a drop of water sizzles when you add it. Add potato cakes, 4 at a time, and cook without turning until golden brown, about 2 to 3 minutes, then flip over and cook another 2 minutes. Transfer to baking sheet and bake in 400°F oven for another 4 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste, then serve immediately.

BEACH PLUM INN'S PAN SEARED VEAL CHOP WITH HEIRLOOM TOMATOES AND SPINACH

SERVES 6

Some heirloom tomatoes, like North Tabor Farm's Moskovich, are available early in the

growing season. If no early heirlooms are available at your grocery store or farmers' market, use yellow or red vine-ripened tomatoes instead.

To roast garlic, cut away top 1/3 of head of garlic so tops of cloves are exposed. Wrap in aluminum foil and roast at 425°F for about 45 minutes, or until golden and soft. Cool completely and squeeze out cloves, then store in olive oil for up to 1 week.

- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 shallots, minced
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 6 cups chopped heirloom tomatoes, (or 6 cups mixed yellow and red vine-ripened tomatoes)
- 6 12- to 14-ounce veal chops
- 1 6-ounce wedge Brie cheese, cut into 6 wedges
- 6 roasted garlic cloves, puréed
- 1/4 cup canola oil plus 1 tablespoon for spinach
- 2 pounds fresh spinach, picked over and washed
- 12 ounces warm demi-glace or reduced beef stock
- 6 sprigs rosemary, for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a large bowl combine extra virgin olive oil, 1/3 of minced garlic, 1/3 of minced shallots, salt and pepper. Add chopped tomatoes to bowl, combine thoroughly and set aside.
3. Make a 2-inch-long by 3/4-inch deep incision in top of each veal chop. Stuff with Brie and roasted garlic.
4. In a large skillet heat 1/3 of canola oil over high heat. Sear veal chops 2 at a time for about 2 minutes on each side, adding 1/3 of canola oil to pan between each batch. Place veal chops in a baking pan and cook in oven for 15 to 18 minutes for medium-rare chops.
5. While veal chops finish cooking, prepare spinach. Heat 1 tablespoon canola oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add remaining shallots and garlic and stir briefly, about 30 seconds. Add

spinach, salt and pepper and cook until wilted, about 1 minute or less.

6. Place spinach in centers of 6 plates and cover with a veal chop. Surround with tomatoes and drizzle some demi-glace over corner of veal chop. Garnish with a sprig of rosemary.

BEACH PLUM INN'S NORTH TABOR FARM SALAD

SERVES 6

To roast beets, preheat oven to 450°F. Wrap beets in aluminum foil and roast for 35 to 45 minutes, or until they can be easily pierced with the tip of a paring knife. Cool completely, then peel.

For Basil Vinaigrette

- 2 tablespoons champagne or white wine vinegar
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons minced parsley
- 1/4 cup minced basil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon minced shallot
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

For salad

- 3 medium beets, roasted, skinned and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound haricots vert or green beans, blanched in boiling salted water for 4 to 6 minutes (or until crisp yet tender in middle) and cooled in ice water
- 1 small Bermuda, Vidalia or Spanish onion, thinly sliced
- 3/4 cup rice wine vinegar
- 1 14-ounce can artichoke hearts, drained and cut into quarters
- 1 roasted red pepper, roughly chopped into large pieces
- 1/2 cup sliced scallions
- 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
- 3/4 pound fresh greens, such as arugula, watercress, spinach, mizuna, red Russian kale or amaranth leaves

- 1 9-ounce wedge Stilton blue cheese, cut into 6 slices

1. Make Basil Vinaigrette. Combine all ingredients in blender and blend until smooth. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside until ready to use.
2. In a medium bowl combine roasted beets with 1/2 of olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Let sit at room temperature for 10 minutes.
3. In a separate bowl combine haricots vert or green beans, onions, rice wine vinegar, remaining olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Let sit at room temperature for 10 minutes.
4. In another bowl combine 3/4 of artichokes (save remainder for another use), roasted red peppers, scallions, balsamic vinegar and salt and pepper to taste. Let sit at room temperature for 10 minutes.
5. To serve, toss greens with basil vinaigrette and arrange in centers of 6 plates. Divide roasted beet salad evenly among plates, placing on one side of greens. Repeat with haricots vert salad, then again with artichoke heart salad. Rest wedge of Stilton near greens. Top with freshly ground black pepper and serve immediately.

ZEPHRUS' ROASTED ASPARAGUS AND SHIITAKE SALAD

SERVES 4

- 4 cloves garlic, minced (about 2 teaspoons)
 - 1 bunch asparagus cut into 2-inch pieces
 - Salt
 - Freshly ground black pepper
 - 1/4 pound shiitake mushroom caps
 - 1 small red onion, sliced
 - 2/3 cup halved grape tomatoes
 - 1 red pepper, roasted and sliced
 - 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 - 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil plus extra for drizzling on asparagus
1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
 2. Toss 1/2 of garlic with asparagus and

place on rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast 5 minutes, then transfer to a large bowl and set aside.

3. Toss remaining garlic with shiitake mushroom caps and roast on baking sheet 5 minutes, then transfer to bowl with asparagus and cool completely. Add sliced onions, tomatoes and red pepper.
4. Whisk together red wine vinegar, olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Toss with vegetables and serve.

ICEHOUSE'S OYSTER AND TOMATO PAN ROAST WITH SALSIFY, FENNEL AND CURRY OIL

SERVES 4

At the Icehouse restaurant, chef Job Yacubian likes to serve this oyster pan roast with a simple green salad, a few slices of a baguette and a glass of white Bordeaux wine. Note that the curry oil must be made at least two days or up to two weeks ahead of time.

- 1/4 cup curry powder
- 1 1/2 cups canola oil
- 24 oysters, rinsed and scrubbed clean of all sediment
- 2 cups white wine
- 1 tablespoon salt, plus extra to taste
- 3 pieces fresh salsify root, peeled and sliced into 1/8-inch thick rounds
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 head fennel, diced
- 1 shallot, diced
- 2 large tomatoes (preferably heirloom) peeled, seeded and diced
- 1/4 cup crème fraîche
- White pepper
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped chives

1. Heat a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add curry powder, reduce heat to medium and toast until dark brown, stirring occasionally. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water and stir to make a smooth paste. Transfer paste to a large jar. Add canola oil and seal. Store oil for 2 days, periodically shaking jar. After 2 days remove oil on top, being careful

to leave behind solids.

2. Place oysters in a large pot with wine and bring to a simmer. Cover and steam over low heat just until oysters open, about 2 to 3 minutes. When cool enough to handle, remove oysters from shells, then strain remaining liquid through a fine-mesh sieve and into a clean pot. Place oysters in strained liquid to keep them moist.

3. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add 1 tablespoon of salt. Fill a large bowl with cold water and ice and set aside. Blanch salsify until tender, about 4 minutes, then strain and plunge into ice water until salsify is cool. Drain and set aside.

4. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add fennel, shallots and 2 tablespoons of water and sauté until translucent.

5. Place oysters, strained oyster liquid, tomatoes, fennel mixture and blanched salsify in a shallow saucepan and warm over low heat—do not allow to boil. When warm, add crème fraîche and stir until completely dissolved. Add salt and white pepper to taste. Using a slotted spoon, evenly divide oysters and vegetables into 4 bowls. Return liquid to a boil, then pour into bowls. Garnish with chives and curry oil and serve immediately.



ABOVE: Soft flower petals and a variety of succulent greens are all part of a day's work on North Tabor Farm.

RESTAURANTS

For all the beauty and flavor without any of the prep work, stop in at the following fine restaurants which feature North Tabor Farm produce.

Alchemy
17 Main Street
Edgartown
508-627-9999

Balance
57 Circuit Avenue
Oak Bluffs
508-696-3000

Art Cliff Diner
39 Beach Road
Vineyard Haven
508-693-1224

Icehouse
688 State Road
West Tisbury
508-696-3966

Atria
137 Main Street
Edgartown
508-627-5850

Sweet Life Café
63 Circuit Avenue
Oak Bluffs
508-696-0200