

Celebrate the bounty of local farms at G-Zen

Cookbook author to discuss farm-to-table movement Sept. 14

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BRANFORD • Eggs “Manolo Blahnik” style with Grey Goose cream. Chilled pea and leek soup with salmon gravlax and picked shallots. Pan-roasted New England pheasant breast with cranberry puree, braised red cabbage, and madeira sauce.

Those with the culinary chops—and passion—to tackle those kind of challenging recipes from locally-grown and -raised food may rejoice. There are no less than 150 of them from the Nutmeg State’s top chefs and local farmers in “The Connecticut Farm Table Cookbook,” which author Christy Colasurdo will discuss the evening of Sept. 14 at Branford’s G-Zen in an event presented by Breakwater Books.

For the rest of us, fear not. The Westport resident and regional evangelist of the farm-to-table movement, who penned the cookbook with noted food writer Tracey Medeiros, has us covered.

Take, for example, the squash almond bisque—“A G-Zen favorite,” Chef Ami Beach Shadle told Colasurdo and Medeiros. Those without access to the bountiful yield of the butternut squash harvest at Durham’s Shadle Farm can head over to the East Main Street eatery and savor the twist of almond butter and cinnamon spicing the rich, creamy soup.

Likewise, the eggs “Manolo Blahnik” style. A specialty at Litchfield’s bistro-wine bar Arethusa al Tavolo, it comes directly from Arethusa Farm and Dairy, a “flourishing, 325-acre farm, with 350 head of cattle and 150 hens of various breeds,” where farmhands are at the ready to “chew the fat,” according to “The Farm Table Cookbook.”

Day trip, anyone?

Perhaps gravlax, the aforementioned Nordic dish comprised of raw salmon cured in salt, sugar, and dill, is neither in your vocabulary nor your gastro-

nomie repertoire. No worries. It’s on the menu at the inventive, market-driven Zinc across from the New Haven Green.

Of course, if your budget can’t take the strain of dining on fare prepared by Connecticut’s top chefs, you can still feast your eyes on the lavish photo of gravlax executed to perfection. Not to mention the mouth-watering portrait of pan-roasted New England pheasant from Muse by Jonathan Cartwright, the Mayflower Grace Hotel and Spa in Washington, Conn.

Not that “The Farm Table Cookbook” solely includes colorful snapshots, reviews of top-rated farm-to-table restaurants, and ambitious recipes like roasted root vegetable and artisan handcrafted sausage stuffing, as well as deviled eggs with cornmeal fried oysters and pickled red onions.

There are profiles of farmers like Jim Dombrowski and Viceth Im, who is Cambodian. The two created the “pint-size” CT Valley Farms in Simsbury which specializes in unique crops like Asian green, Thai basil, and Cambodian green giant eggplant, that they

sell at farmers’ markets in the Hartford area.

There’s renowned chef Michel Nischan who spearheaded Wholesome Wave, a national nonprofit, that seeks to increase affordability and access to healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables for single mothers, veterans, and low-income community members.

There’s also a vignette on Nunzio and Irene Corsino who started Four Mile River Farm in Old Lyme in 1985, raising Angus and Hereford cattle on open pasture and grain- and milk-fed Yorkshire pigs housed in open pens, as well as a flock of chickens, which provide a fresh supply of fresh eggs to their on-site farm stand.

The signature dish the Corsinos contributed to “The Farm Table Cookbook,” Four Mile farm burgers, is, as they tell Medeiros and Colasurdo, “a lazy man’s burger because everything is inside the burger—no need to waste time adding toppings—just grill and enjoy!”

It’s that kind of creativity, and initiative, that reduces to its essence the larger mission of “The Farm Table Cookbook,” whether it’s

used as a cookbook, a culinary travelogue, or a coffee table book to flip through and relish again and again.

“We wanted to shine a spotlight on the collaboration between small local farmers and Connecticut chefs to give people a sense of the diverse array of farms and restaurants in the state,” said Colasurdo in an email.

“Maybe it takes more time, effort, and money to create farm-fresh foods that are better in all ways, but the truth is that once you taste a fresh egg from a local farmer, it’s unlikely you’ll go back to store-bought eggs.”

Even, it seems, if those eggs are eventually named after a high-end shoe.

An evening with Christy Colasurdo presented by Breakwater Books and G-Zen restaurant will take place from 7-9 p.m. on Sept. 14 at G-Zen, 2 East Main Street, Branford. The event is free. Books may be purchased in advance at Breakwater Books, 81 Whitfield St., Guilford, or at the evening of the event. Seating is limited. Call 203-453-4141 or stop by the bookstore to register.



CONTRIBUTED

Christy Colasurdo, author of “The Connecticut Farm Table Cookbook” with food writer Tracey Medeiros.