

I wondered if Klaas felt vindicated. After all, his brothers had once scorned his decision to go organic. When I suggested that a “Hey, bro, you blew this one” wouldn’t have been uncalled for, he merely shrugged. “It’s turned out to be a very good development for all of us.”

Klaas harvests some of his cover crops and sells them to his brothers for high-quality feed. And his brothers, who are required by organic regulations to stop milking part of their herd for a certain period, can send these “dried-out” cows over to Klaas to graze with his daughter’s cows—adding even more manure to the soil.

“We’re in a symbiotic relationship now,” he said, smiling. “As Joel Salatin said at Laverstoke, the goal is ‘more than the sum of its parts.’ I subscribe to that. I see the wisdom of that now in ways that I didn’t see ten years ago.”

After dinner, Klaas and Mary-Howell laid out several large pieces of cheese that had arrived earlier in the day from their eldest son, Peter, who was interning at an organic dairy in Germany. Klaas praised the farm for its work in renewable energy and raw-milk cheese.

“Cheese is a wonderful value-added product,” he said, hinting that Peter might one day further expand the dairy.

I got the sense that Klaas was looking beyond just Peter. Bringing in livestock, creating an infrastructure for cheese-making, and reimagining how the farm draws its energy are projects for multiple generations. It was Mennonite-like thinking (*When do you start raising a child?*), preparing for a farm that will sustain the family one hundred years from now.

Over the previous few years, I had seen how the very best farming systems—whether the oak-lined pastures of the *dehesa* or the intricate canals of Veta la Palma—are constantly in flux, adapting and readapting to balance the needs of a healthy ecology with the imperative to feed people. Sitting at the kitchen table, staring out at the view of Klaas’s fields, I could see

evidence of that same evolution. It was (for me, anyway) a peaceful scene, but there wasn't stasis.

In just two decades, Klaas and Mary-Howell have gone from harvesting a few organic grains to complex rotations that include heirloom wheat, vegetables, and legumes—many of them farmed on newly leased land. They've added seed production to the mix, and a seed distribution company to supplement the thriving mill and grain distribution business. And now they've created a small dairy.

One hundred years from now, I suspect that Klaas's heirs will look out on a similar view. If I'm right, it won't be because anyone fought against change. It will be because each generation embraced it.

Perhaps the most dynamic transformations are yet to come. Klaas no longer thinks of the farm as an entity all to itself (not that he ever really did) but as an interlocking piece of a larger community.

"I'm recognizing more and more that not every farm needs to, or should, do every operation," he said, a large bite of the cheese punctuating his thoughts. "Which is really the point. Can you build a community where different enterprises fit into each other and make better use of resources? That's the challenge." By "challenge," he meant *his* new challenge for the future—changing the farm, forever striving to make it more than the sum of its parts.

Of all the insights and observations I've gained from farmers, breeders, and chefs during the research for this book, I can't help dialing back, again and again, to the one that sits with me most heavily.

It was after I told Wes Jackson about Klaas's farm, arguing that it was a good example of sustainability. Wes didn't buy it. "It won't last," he said. And just like that, he rejected not only Klaas's work but also a generation of farmers looking to transition their farms in similar ways. As much as I longed to dismiss him as an old crank, I had the nagging suspicion that he might be

right. History shows that at some point, good farming unravels with just a few shortsighted decisions.

The vagaries of our country's food preferences don't help. Even with the farm-to-table movement running high at the moment, we're still guilty of reducing sustainability down to what we buy for dinner. Rarely do we imagine the whole picture, which means that rarely are we forced to realize that a truly sustainable food system is not simple. It is not built on one or two principles of farming, and it does not produce merely one or two good things to eat.

That whole picture might look like my rooftop view of the *dehesa*. With its two-thousand-year history of diverse farming and its carefully cultivated landscape, even Wes acknowledges that the *dehesa* has lasted, and actually thrived, over generations.

The Skagit Valley is perhaps another exception, if Steve Jones continues to have something to do with it. His work with farmers and his creation of the Bread Lab is about building a community around the right kind of farming and baking.

I bet his vision will endure. But then in a funny sort of way, the time I spent with Steve only underscored Wes's argument. Working together, farmers, chefs, and breeders can become part of a complex web of relationships that supports the health of the land. And yet, as Steve understands (and the *dehesa* got me to see), those relationships don't last without a permanent food culture to sustain them. Few farmers have a Steve Jones to connect the pieces.

Let me put a finer point on this, closer to home. Klaas has the opportunity to create something just as important and as lasting as what Steve created. But missing from his story are crops ingrained into people's culture through good cuisine. That's something only I, along with other chefs and home cooks, can provide.

And it was clear I wasn't doing a very good job. If the chef's role is like that of a musical conductor, our goal is to create harmony—to avoid amplifying one section of the orchestra at the expense of others. As successful and enlightening as my wheat experiments had been, they were still too

single-minded, too focused on promoting only one product of Klaas's farm. I had yet to address the countless "bycatch" crops—the millet, flax, soy, buckwheat, rye, and dozens of other grains and legumes—that made his whole wheat so delicious. And, of course, now there were more additions to consider, such as dairy. Working with these crops seemed like an opportunity—and, the more I thought about it, an obligation—to support the land's long-term ecological health.

The same was true of my relationship to Stone Barns, and to the countless other farms that supplied Blue Hill. Like any farm-to-table chef, I supported these systems by purchasing the daily harvests. But by privileging only the ingredients I wanted to cook instead of championing a whole class of integral yet uncelebrated crops and cuts of meat, I had ignored what was really required to produce the most delicious food.

In order for these farms to last, to be truly sustainable, I needed to learn to cook with the whole farm.



What does whole farm cooking look like?

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that whole farm cooking is what peasants around the world figured out thousands of years ago. They did not choose their dietary preferences by sticking a wet finger up to the prevailing wind, as we do today. They never had that kind of freedom. Instead, they developed cuisines that adhered to what the landscape provided.

Take the cooking of Extremadura, with its regional variations of *migas*—a traditional dish of fried old bread that might include a lowly cut of braised rib meat from their famous pigs. It's a plate as economical as it is delicious. Here in the United States, Hoppin' John, Lowcountry cuisine's combination of rice and field peas with a brassica like collard greens (and a small taste of pork) is based on the same logic. The dish is an ode to soil fertility: the cowpeas provided the soil with enough nitrogen to grow the rice, and the collards usually took up whatever salt was left over from the seawater that flooded into the

basin. There are too many other culinary examples to count, but all of them took their shape and form from what the local landscape could offer.

Not long ago, I sketched out a vision for a Third Plate with a similar ethic in mind: a “carrot steak,” flattened and roasted to resemble a juicy sirloin, with braised beef shank (an underutilized part of the animal) playing a supporting role as a sauce. I meant to invalidate our Westernized, meat-centric conception of a plate of food. As a first stab at the future of good cooking, it wasn’t bad. But it was merely one entry in a possible menu—a hit single without an album to sustain it. *What would a meal look like?*

In a nod to the Mennonite belief that you begin raising a child long before it’s born, I set out to create a menu that Blue Hill will serve a generation from now. I wanted it to be in the spirit of my rooftop view of the *dehesa*, built around the sum of what a farm, or network of farms, can offer. It was a playbook for a new cuisine, one designed to create demand for soil-improving crops and enlarge our sense of what is delicious.

I was picturing specific plates of food, yes, but beyond that, it was an exercise in imagining how the view outside my kitchen window would change as these new ideas took root on our menu.

It will look something like this:



A MENU FOR 2050

MILKY OAT TEA AND CATTAIL SNACKS

How do you begin a meal?

Ángel León doesn’t start with fish. He starts with bread, infusing it with a homemade brew of plankton. It’s a first bite with a larger idea: without plankton, there won’t be any fish left in the sea.

Like Ángel, I'll begin with a larger idea—two of them, actually. The first will take the form of tea made from an infusion of milky oats. Milky oats are baby oats, very nearly mature but still soft and sweet. Klaas, like many farmers, grows oats as a cover crop, mowing them down before maturity so they can enrich the soil and become fertility for the next crop.

Without restoring fertility to the soil, delicious food is not possible. Which is really the message of the milky oats. I'll cook with just the tip of the plant, the immature oat, full of sweet oak milk that makes an aromatic infusion. The rest will remain in Klaas's field to profit the soil.

It's a "take half, leave half" equation, just as with Eduardo's geese. Eduardo explained how the birds eat half of his olives and figs and leave half for the harvest. "The geese are always quite fair," he told me. We will be, too.

If this works—which means if the tea is delicious and memorable—we may well create a market for cover crops, incentivizing more growers to incorporate them into their farms. But more important, we'll create a consciousness about feeding the soil that feeds us.

The second idea will take the form of something wild. It came to me when a forager showed up at the kitchen door with young cattails—native plants that grow next to ponds and lakes. Cattails are a filtering plant, which is why they're so important next to water sources. They act like a sponge, absorbing chemical run-off from the soil and reducing water contamination. You don't want to eat cattails originating from polluted places in the same way you wouldn't want to eat mullet feeding from a polluted pond. Their flavor reflects the health of the environment.

We'll scrape the cattails and sauté their mossy skins in butter and lemon juice. Like scrambled eggs—runny, rich, uncomplicated, perfect—they're a nice way to start any meal. They say: relax, you're about to eat food that's been grown in healthy soil.

Milky oats are agriculture's improvement crop; cattails are nature's wild equivalent. Creating something delicious out of both makes food the measure

through which we better understand nature. It defines cuisine around cooking with the whole farm.

FIRST COURSE: Whole Wheat Blue Brioche with *Blue Hill Farm Single Udder Butter*

The meal will formally begin with a slice of our whole wheat brioche, which will taste even better than it does now.

How is that possible? If you're thinking that the superior bread will be about improved versions of Barber wheat, you're correct—sort of. Because by 2050 we'll be baking our bread with Blue wheat, a delicious, nutrient-rich, disease-resistant variety developed for Blue Hill.

Here's what happened: Barber wheat matured and went through several years of selection—all under the watchful eye of Steve Jones in his Bread Lab—and eventually became a much better version of itself by marrying with a wild wheat relative (which happened to have an attractive blue beard).

"A hundred years ago, breeders never stopped innovating," Steve told me. "We shouldn't either." More lab work, more selection, and the resulting Blue wheat tastes like roasted nuts, with a bright, grassy finish.

Steve sketched out his vision for the wheat in 2013 when he came to visit Stone Barns. I confess I had a larger plan in mind when I persuaded Steve to fly to New York. I wanted to grow wheat at Stone Barns, closer to home, instead of leaving it entirely in Klaas's hands. It was a crackpot idea; cultivating wheat in Jack's eight-acre vegetable field is like trying to fit a car-manufacturing plant into a tortilla factory. Then again, I knew from my time with Steve that our conception of wheat as a monoculture crop, much like our expectation of beef as a seven-ounce portion of steak, urgently needed to be turned on its head. What better place to do it than in Pocantico Hills, New York, thirty miles from midtown Manhattan?

But during Steve's tour, Jack had a more practical concern: Where exactly do you plant the wheat?

Steve had the answer. Several, even. After just a few yards, he pointed to an empty patch of land just opposite the greenhouse, suggesting it as a good spot for wheat. Passing a grassy area in front of the restaurant, he bent his large frame and broke a momentary silence with, "What about wheat over there?" A few feet later, another spot. "Or here?" And then he'd tap my shoulder, point again, and murmur under his breath, "Wheat would look pretty damn good there, too." After wrapping my head around the image of wheat planted in rows like zucchini, I looked at Jack, who takes suggestions about what to plant about as well as a host receives decorating advice from an overnight guest. He seemed skeptical. But then Steve removed a plastic vial from his pocket, filled with dark bluish gray seeds, and handed it to Jack. He apologized for the muddy color.

"We'll fix that. Pretty soon, blue like this," Steve said, pointing to Jack's shirt. "Flavor is great. And the antioxidants are off the charts. Literally never seen anything like it." He added that the wheat wasn't genetically engineered or patented by the university, and would be open to public use.

And that was that. Jack planted Blue wheat in the fall. Our brioche has been blue ever since.



Will Blue wheat one day make its way to Blue Hill Farm in Massachusetts? Maybe. But in the meantime our Blue Brioche will get buttered with Blue Hill Farm's "single udder" butter, which we already use today.

The idea for single udder butter started with the first delivery of grass-fed milk from our family's newly converted farm. But you could argue it really began a few years earlier, when my brother David and I began to notice the forest encroaching on Blue Hill's pastureland.

It was two decades after my grandmother Ann had passed away. The beef

cattle were gone, and that vibrant edge of semiwilderness I'd studied as a child from my perch on the tractor looked increasingly like plain old wilderness. More bramble, thicker ferns. Our grandmother's cherished fields were slowly shrinking. Which is why, in 2006, David and I decided to resurrect the farm as an all-grass dairy. The grazing cattle preserved the integrity of the open space; the dairy began supplying the restaurants with grass-fed milk.

Soon after the first batch arrived, the farmer we'd hired to oversee the land posed a question: Did I know that cows with names produce more milk than cows without names? Apparently he knew as much, so he hung signs on every stall: Annabelle, Daffodil, Jillian, Sunshine, and twenty others. Different names, but also different breeds, and mixes of breeds—a United Nations of bovine diversity.

For me, it brought to mind a slightly different question: do cows with names produce more *distinctive* milk than cows without names? If the answer was yes—and it wasn't hard to imagine, watching the parade of colors and sizes on display as the herd filed into the barn twice a day, that it *had* to be yes—why blend all that distinctiveness into one vat?

As soon as we began separating the cows' milks, their differences became clear. Annabelle, a Dutch Belted cow, is a catholic grazer, producing butter that is bright yellow. Sunshine, a cross of Kerry and Shorthorn, is more discerning. Her butter is ivory white, except in the heat of summer when it turns golden and tastes like pound cake.

Connecting the butter to the personality of the breeds is one thing; connecting it to the condition of the grass is another. Without the flavor-flattening effect of grain feed, the character of the butter changes according to the quality of the grass. We already taste the differences from season to season. A generation from now, we'll go deeper. A recent visit to the restaurant from an older French chef got me to see how.

The chef tasted Annabelle's butter. Mildly disappointed, he declared it a bit bland. He offered rain as a possible cause. (It had, in fact, rained earlier in

Without the high starch of risotto rice, the grains lacked a creamy consistency. So I stirred in a puree of brassicas—kale, broccoli, and cabbage—representing the mustard plants (also nitrogen boosters) in Klaas's rotations. The porridge took on the uniformity of a risotto and, with its dozen or so grains and beans, was deeply flavorful.

We called it Rotation Risotto, and it's been on Blue Hill's menu in the city ever since. One night I walked through the dining room and heard a diner ask, "What's rotation risotto?" The waiter fielded the question with a fine explanation, and then he added, "It's the plant equivalent of 'nose-to-tail' eating." The analogy struck me as exactly right. Nose-to-tail means cooking with the entire animal, not merely the most coveted parts; Rotation Risotto means cooking with the whole farm.

I can be certain that a version of Rotation Risotto will appear in the future, and that's not only because I feel confident about Klaas's rotations continuing, and continuing to evolve through the work of his son Peter, but also because Blue wheat has already introduced a whole new system of rotations to Stone Barns.

Having managed to persuade Craig to give up a full acre of pasture for the project, Jack mapped out a series of crops that would follow the wheat. He was thinking about the soil, of course, and how best to enrich it. I was thinking about my menu, and how many other new grains I could add into my Rotation Risotto.

"You might get a few, we'll see," Jack told me when I asked what to expect. "But you've got your head stuck in Klaas's system. He's a grain farm. We're not." Instead, Jack described a very different set of rotations. "After the wheat is harvested, we'll plant rye and a cover crop to rest the soil," he said. "Some may go to you, some may go to feed the pigs; since we took this land out of Craig's pasture rotations for a while, he'll have to benefit somehow. After that we'll follow with Mazourek's winter squash."

Jack was referring to the Cornell University breeder Michael Mazourek, who years earlier had admitted to me that no one ever asks him to breed for flavor. Upon our request, Michael had developed a super-sweet variety of

winter squash, experimental line number 898, which Jack had been trialing for a few years. It looked like a shrunken butternut squash, with an intense sweetness and an almost pudding-like consistency.

I couldn't believe my luck—a full acre of it to work with. Grains are terrific, but this squash was like nothing I'd ever tasted, and from Jack's point of view, it would make a lot more money than grain. Even better, Michael assured us it would yield only slightly less per acre than conventional varieties of butternut squash. That's because this new variety, like those Mountain Magic tomatoes, was designed to produce good yields for the farmer.

One certainty for the menu of the future: chefs won't just celebrate heirlooms. In a half-century, as long as we embrace like-minded breeders, the idea that feeding a growing world requires sacrificing deliciousness for yield will be considered a silly, antiquated idea. So will the one-size-fits-all mentality of seed breeding. Working together, chefs and breeders can help ensure the production of flavorful and nutritious crops ideally suited to their localities.

Dishes like Rotation Risotto, with a puree of 898 squash swirled in, will help broadcast the message.

THIRD COURSE: *Grilled Crossabaw, Blood Sausage, and Pig-Bone Charcoal*

The future of nose-to-tail eating? Bone to blood. And a few decades from now you will have it at Blue Hill, because I'm predicting Stone Barns will one day raise more pigs.

That's an odd conviction in light of what Steve Jones said later during his visit to Stone Barns, and yet it's one I'm prepared to stand by. We had stopped at a group of Berkshire pigs hustling around the grain bin for their lunch. I mentioned that they'd provide enough manure to fertilize the land where we'd be growing wheat.

"A lot of growers think, *Well, I've got manure from the animals, so I've got*

plenty of nitrogen and phosphorus to fertilize my soil,” Steve said, measuring his words carefully as he stood next to Jack. “But where’s the manure coming from? It’s from grain.”

As he pointed out, we were still importing nutrients extracted from another farm in the form of grain feed in order to get the manure (and therefore the fertility) for our soil. “You’re a bit like a mining operation,” Steve said cheerfully. His point was an unconscious nod to Wes—how long could a system like this last?

But then, over the next several months, I started to see a different system take shape, and the culinary results were as exciting as the ecological impact. Craig, who may or may not have overheard Steve calling out our Achilles’ heel, began removing the dead and unproductive trees from a small area of forest just behind the greenhouse. He used the pigs to clear the underbrush, rotating them around the land and planting grass seeds in their wake.

I happened to pass the area one afternoon the following spring, and what I saw amazed me. I swear it looked like a replica of the *dehesa*. There were no oaks—or rather, there were a lot of oaks, just not the manicured and prolific acorn-producing ones of Extremadura—but there was an abundance of grass and roots to forage, and the trees created the same savanna effect.

Craig’s plan, unannounced but long in the making, was to replicate this *dehesa*-like system around the entire perimeter of the pasture. The goal was to reduce grain imports and ramp up the potential for homegrown forage.

“Sustainability by way of disturbance,” Jill Isenbarger, the director of Stone Barns Center, told me one day about the project. Disturb the land by sculpting it to be more productive but also more in balance with what the environment could provide.

I thought back to Miguel’s description of Veta la Palma as “a healthy artificial system.” (“Yes, artificial,” he said. “But what’s natural anymore?”) As he showed me, the best ecosystems do not preclude human intervention—in fact, they often depend on it, as long as people operate in service to the ecology. It seemed as though Jill had the right idea.

To this Craig added two more ideas, which is where the culinary benefits began to align with the environmental ones. Perhaps inspired by his mini-*dehesa*, or by the breeding genius of Steve, or both, Craig purchased an Ossabaw boar and had it sire two of his Berkshire sows. Direct descendants of the Iberian pigs of the *dehesa*, Ossabaws have the same barrel-like design, muscular legs, and long, pointed snouts, perfect for sniffing out acorns.

The resulting offspring—we nicknamed them “Crossabaws”—were, by far, the best pork I’d ever cooked, with a layer of outstanding fat that was so integrated throughout the muscle of the animal that it was hard not to think of Eduardo proudly holding that slice of *jamón* up to the light. It was also hard not to think of how many more Crossabaws Craig might raise for the restaurant in the next several decades, their flavor improving (to be honest, that *is* hard to imagine) as the land continues to thrive.

The second culinary benefit was a kind of gravy—not necessary, really, but I feel very lucky to have it as part of the pork plate. It started when Craig created a program to convert those dead and unproductive trees into charcoal, a nice benefit for Blue Hill’s grilling station, which up until that point was using store-bought charcoal.

Inspired by the range of homemade wood charcoals, each one offering its own aroma, we got to thinking about carbonizing other things as well. It was the leftover bones from the pigs that first caught our attention. We’d always used the bones for broths and sauces at the restaurant, extracting the flavor and then tossing them in the trash. What if they were carbonized instead, just like wood? And what if, just as with wood, we could retain some of the flavor when we grilled? We succeeded in doing both. The grilled Crossabaw is seasoned in the cooking process by the pig-bone charcoal, and it’s outstanding.

And the pigs’ blood? Adam Kaye, our charcuterie maker, will use this other overlooked part of the animal for his version of a *boudin noir*, a traditional French blood sausage that often incorporates grains or discarded meat scraps. Adam’s version, marrying superior technique and the miracles of coagulation, is pure blood. It’s intense, a sausage with an attitude. And the next

generation of eaters will be ready for it. Celebrating the whole animal will mean celebrating *every* part of the animal, blood and bones included.

FOURTH COURSE: *Trout with Phytoplankton*

Before writing this book, I would have predicted that a generation from now there would be only a sad selection of fish left for our menus. Having met Ángel, and seen his approach to the oceans' offerings, I'm more optimistic. His imaginative sourcing and cooking will inspire other chefs (who will inspire home cooks) to seek out and celebrate less well-known—and lower trophic level—alternatives.

One such alternative appeared last year, when Jack was exploring the forest acreage around Stone Barns. He stumbled upon an old trout ladder, a simple apparatus that uses the natural current to raise the fish upstream. The structure had been built in the 1940s to raise fish for the Rockefeller family.

Right now, almost all farm-raised trout in the United States comes from enormous aquaculture ponds, where the conditions are as questionable as the quality of the fish. But trout, fed the right diet and farmed in conditions that mimic nature, can be incredibly tasty.

Down the road, Jack hopes to supply Blue Hill with brook and rainbow trout, which will feed on compost worms that he is cultivating near the greenhouse. The worms will break down waste from the restaurant's vegetable scraps, providing a nice little sanitation service for the kitchen, and, at the end of the day, some farm-raised fillets of trout.

I imagine we'll serve the trout the same way Ángel might: in a pool of phytoplankton sauce. As luck would have it, a biology graduate student at Dartmouth recently heard of my interest in phytoplankton and offered to sell us his home brew. The first attempts were fine, nothing approaching what Ángel had introduced me to, but I have no doubt that in the next few decades, Ángel's new restaurant—with its fish farm and phytoplankton facility

attached—will ignite even more worldwide interest in protecting and promoting “the origin of life.”

It will be part of this menu of the future because, speaking to Ángel’s point, without it there will be little else to serve.

FIFTH COURSE: *Parsnip Steak, Grass-Fed Beef*

We don’t end tasting menus these days with a vegetable course, but a generation from now we probably will, or we’ll come close, just as I predicted with the carrot steak.

As with everything on this menu of the future, the reason to turn away from a meat-centric plating strategy will be based on the demands of the ecology. If our menus are going to work in partnership with what the land can provide, vegetables and grains will inevitably take center stage.

My vision for a vegetable steak came to life recently when Jack harvested a crop of parsnips in the dead of winter. They’d been in the ground for nearly a year, about five months longer than required. The parsnips were as big as hulking T-Bones and, in the cold conditions, had converted nearly all their starches into sugars.

They were sweet enough to pass as dessert, but we showed off the bravura roots by roasting them like steaks and carving them for our diners tableside. In a few decades, we’ll still be serving something like it—only this time with poached marrow, a bit of braised beef shank, and richly flavored Bordelaise sauce made with the bones.

The addition of the beef will be based on Craig’s decision to raise beef cattle at Stone Barns. As the health of the system improves—as the grass becomes even more abundant because of the complexity of the rotations—there will be an opportunity to expand it even further by adding a new herbivore to follow the sheep.

But that expansion won’t happen without the right kind of cooking to

support it. So the lowly shank, a tough cut (to eat and to sell), will act as a kind of sauce for the parsnip. Sauce-making, like the kind Jean-Louis Pallas-din practiced, will have returned to prominence by then, a perfect way to create a deeply flavored, resonant dish out of these disparate and lowly cuts.

DESSERT: *Rice Pudding, Beer Ice Cream*

The other day I looked out the kitchen window and spotted Glenn Roberts standing in the courtyard. He was dressed in his usual white Polo and khakis, staring up at one of the stone buildings and smiling to himself.

It was a Sunday in late spring, and he and his wife, Kay, had spent the morning walking around Stone Barns. I got the sense that he was a little embarrassed not to be on his own farm, planting. When the conversation turned to Steve Jones and his new variety of Blue wheat, Glenn's eyes nearly popped out of his head.

Not to be outdone, he casually offered something himself. "How about getting Jack to plant some black rice?" he asked. Kay, knowing her husband, left us to talk.

"Rice?" I said. "I don't remember Jack having access to a paddy field."

"This is for dry rice farming," he said. I told him I didn't know there was such a thing. "Oh, hell yeah. You think they have flooded fields in the Himalayas?"

I almost told him I didn't know they *grew* rice in the Himalayas, but luckily Jack happened to pass by. Sensing an opportunity, I corralled them both into the restaurant's bar and asked Glenn to explain.

It turns out he had his hands on a rare class of black rice, an aromatic short grain that grows like a row crop in regular topsoil—no flooding required. He offered Jack the opportunity to be the first farmer in America to trial the seed, just as he had done with the Eight Row Flint corn after we first opened.

Jack agreed, but not before hesitating. He may have been hoping that

Glenn would offer a couple of thousand dollars to plant it, as he had done for the corn. Finally, he stuck out his hand. "I'm in," he said, and they shook on the deal.

Three weeks later I visited Jack in the greenhouse. The sprouted rice was already in seeding trays, awaiting transport to the soil. Jack was planning to plant it in the farthest corner of the vegetable field, in the same spot where Eliot Coleman had turned and raised his arm to the setting sun on that frigid November afternoon more than ten years ago.

In the midst of forecasting the future, it's worth noting that the present would have been difficult to envision even a decade ago. Would Eliot have predicted that this small farm could support not only the diversity of new breeds of animals and vegetables but also three of the world's major commodity grain crops—corn, wheat, and rice?

And yet these grains, and others, have become integral additions to the landscape. In the months after Jack decided to plant wheat and rice, we received three calls, in quick succession. One was from Philipsburg Manor, an eighteenth-century grain mill turned museum five miles from Stone Barns, offering to grind our wheat with their newly refurbished stone mill.

Another call came from a new malting company, requesting barley to malt for beer. Microbreweries are exploding in the Northeast—many of them driven by young entrepreneurs motivated to improve the quality of what we drink—and there is a severe local barley shortage. They wondered if Jack might consider adding barley into his wheat rotations.

And then a local microbrewery called to inquire about Jack selling some of his wheat for a new beer. They asked whether Craig would have interest in feeding his pigs spent wheat from the beer-making process.

I'm as confident about these opportunities materializing in one form or another as I am about Glenn's black rice finding itself in useful partnership with the grain rotations around the farm.

That's the day we'll marry the beer and the rice together in a dessert, if for no other reason than to celebrate these late-inning additions to our menu

and the revitalized community of producers and distributors they've helped to build.



Sitting at the bar with Glenn and Jack that afternoon, I asked Glenn if he saw rice playing the role of an adopted Fourth Sister on the farm. Native American farmers had seen the wisdom in the companion planting of corn, squash, and beans. Could rice join into this symbiotic relationship?

"Oh hell, I don't know," he said, throwing up his arms. "But since there was never a Three Sisters, I doubt it." I figured he was joking, but when I looked over at Jack, he signaled agreement.

"What do you mean?" I asked, in a tone that must have sounded as if I had just been told Santa Claus doesn't exist.

"The idea for Three Sisters has been nice and distilled over time, passed down in a way that's easy for everyone to understand. It's fundamental, the architecture is there," Glenn said, "but it's so totally simplistic."

Jack punctuated Glenn's "so totally simplistic" with vigorous head nods. Looking at me he said, "What did you think? That Native Americans were growing things in row crops?" He shook his head. "No way. They were growing things everywhere. Nothing was disconnected from anything else. It was all one big farm."



In many ways the research for this book began with the opposite idea: take one great ingredient, and discover how it was grown or raised. Learn the recipe, I figured, and help make the harvests from the farmers that surround me more delicious and ecological. But the greatest lesson came with the realization that good food cannot be reduced to single ingredients. It requires a web of relationships to support it.

Aldo Leopold once wrote that the right kind of farming doesn't discard any of nature's component parts. "To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering." The right kind of cooking does the same thing: it promotes the vibrant communities, above and below ground, that make food delicious in the first place.

It's not unlike what I hoped we, as chefs, and as eaters, could do in imagining a Third Plate. The idea is to think not only about ingredient combinations but about *how* they're combined and how that reflects the larger picture.

Those connections begin before the plate and extend beyond it. They are more than the sum of their parts. They have the power to change culture and to shape landscapes.

Maybe what Jack said that day at the bar with Glenn is exactly the right way to think about a Third Plate for the future. Rooted in the natural world, it becomes a blueprint for *one big farm*—forever in flux, connected to a larger community, narrated by a cook through his food.