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# The Leader

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# read, revel, relax!

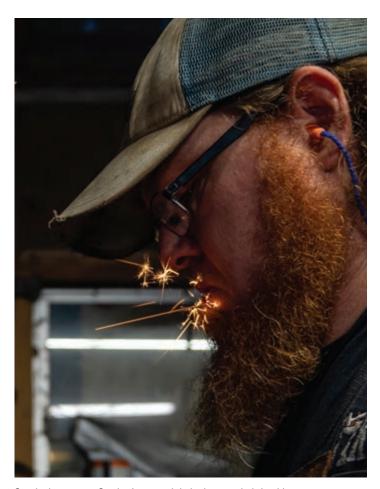
It's full-on summer here in Port Townsend, where I write from The Leader building in the heart of downtown. Sun floods the windows, the houseplants grow in leaps and bounds. Even weekdays, finding parking can be an art and the line to Elevated Ice Cream threads out the door and onto the sidewalk on the busiest days. This burst of light, of energy, this rejuvenation after winter and spring and the infamous drab "Junuary"— some might say it's the apex of living on the Olympic Peninsula. Somewhere between pay-it-yourself farm-stands and ferry lanes lies a fantastic array of local talent. For folks like Jennifer Tillman that might take the form of fancy macarons served up in a one-of-a-kind mobile bakery. Or it could be the polar opposite of such a delicate bite: an iron hair pin forged by Port Townsend local and History Channel competition competition winner Stryker Gooch. The earth-toned hues Charlotte Cooper dreams in linen might be a perfect choice for a drive to La Petite Maison Blanc's decadent array of home accouterments in Sequim. Ever wonder what happens once the hardwoods that thrive in the Pacific Northwest are harvested and prepped for their new life? A quick check-in with Bombardier Arboriculture introduces an artesian milling process that helps create inspired domains for generations to come, while a more ephemeral space might be found under the auspices of Alexis Arrabito, Port Townsend-based pop-up picnic maven. Lastly, what's summer without seasonal fare? Sidonie Maroon, a regular contributor to the Port Townsend Leader, encapsulates the season in her recipe for a refreshing salad, studded with olives and tossed with ingredients readily available on the Peninsula: Kale, garlic, and rosemary.

Read, revel, relax!

## associate publisher, Laura Jean Schneider







Sparks bounce off Stryker's face while he hones a belt buckle.

# forged in tradition

### Kirk Boxleitner

Robert Travis Stryker Gooch is descended from two long-running family traditions, as virtually every man in his family line since the year 1538 has been named "Robert Gooch," and has worked with metals for a living.

"My father was a machinist," said the founder of Stryker Forge, at 160 Cub Road in Port Townsend. "My grandfather was an ironworker who also worked at the paper mill and helped build ships here in Port Townsend. The Port Townsend paper mill actually has a 'Gooch pit,' because so many men in my family have worked there."

And yet, it wasn't until 2020 that Stryker felt like he'd found his specific calling, when he won the Christmas episode of the reality TV series "Forged in Fire" on the History Channel.





David Sherman, a blacksmith at Stryker Forge, uses a blacksmith's hammer to create medieval fidget spinners. It takes Sherman about 10 minutes to create one. Robert Travis Stryker Gooch grinds the latch into a belt buckle to hone its shape.

"I'd been working as a machinist, but after my win I spoke with my wife, then made the decision to become an artisanal blacksmith. I opened Stryker Forge, right here in Port Townsend, in March of 2021," Stryker said.

"I'd already worked with metal for eight years, and cut my teeth doing plenty of knives, but I was able to expand into producing everything from bottle openers to barbecue tools, creating pendants and even fidget-spinners, all uniquely handmade," he said.

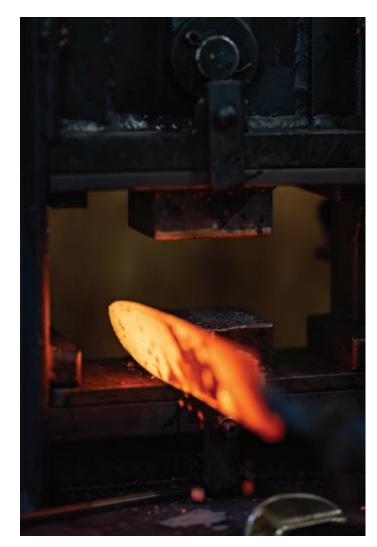
While many artisanal blacksmiths are known mostly for their blades or medieval-themed crafts, Stryker has enjoyed how his current work has also afforded him new twists with the skills he's spent years developing. It's furnished him with a novel outlet for his imagination, while allowing him to help friends, family and customers of all ages relieve their stress through crafts such as his forge's fidget spinners.

"They're all the same size, and have to pass the same inspection standards, but each one is slightly different," Stryker said. "I love being able to make things that are so tangible."

As Stryker Forge has branched out into belt buckles, bookends and even wrought-iron roses, Stryker said he was relieved at finally finding a job field that accommodates his slightly "scatterbrained" tendencies as an artist.

"There are days when I have no idea what I'm about to make until I hit the anvil," he said.

"It takes incredible focus," Stryker added. "It's like trying to mold Play-Doh without directly touching it, because you're shaping hot steel until it's cold. There's a lot of tension, because one wrong move, at any point in the process, can crack the steel or mess up the sheen of its finish."





Robert Travis Stryker Gooch holts a molten hori-hori gardening shovel in a forging press to straighten the steel. The shovel is approximately 1800 degrees while it's being pressed. Freshly quenched, the hori hori lets off smoke. The quenching process hardens the 51/60 spring steel.

Stryker Forge's work has drawn enough fans that Stryker himself welcomes spectators to watch his shop work, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, and he's frequently greeted by crowds of up to 10 onlookers at a time.

Stryker advises others who harbor a passion for pursuing such work to "keep pushing forward," even though he's well aware of the sorts of obstacles they'll encounter along the way. And true to his own advice, he plans to expand Stryker Forge's operations eventually, but only if it can retain its observation space for outsiders.

Outside his shop, much of Stryker's bread-and-butter is annual area gatherings such as the Norse West Viking Festival in Yelm this September, along with the various regional Renaissance festivals, including the Washington Midsummer Renaissance Faire in Snohomish in August.

"This will be my first year there," Stryker said. "I like to make lots of little swords for kids, forging them on the spot, 30 seconds from start to finish, then handing them out for free."

According to Stryker, there have been talks of introducing a similarly themed event to the Port Townsend community as early as next year, with a target date of the second week in July. But in the meantime, he's been content to take part in the local farmers markets, in Port Townsend on Saturdays and in Chimacum on Sundays.

Stryker also welcomes folks to visit Stryker Forge online at strykerforge.com, where they can check out his shop's wares, and learn about classes he offers.

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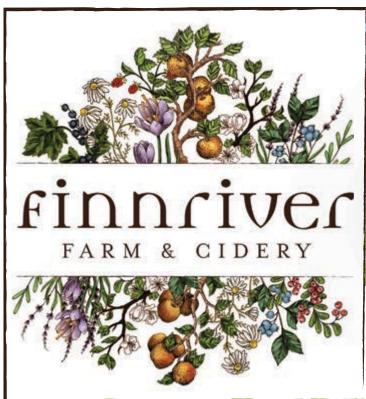
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photos courtesy of Melissa Jentzsch

# timeless apparel, timeless fabric

### by Marci Peterson

The day before I was to meet Charlotte Cooper, I went to her website — lottehandmade.com. — and salivated so much I almost shorted out my keyboard.

Most of her clothing line depicted an array of earth tone hues with a few bright pieces scattered in between like a patch of sunlight breaking through the clouds; a textured landscape of linen.

On my way to Charlotte's house, I made a few wrong turns and quite a few calls to her for directions, which she patiently accepted. I finally asked her to give me landmarks instead of street names because that's how I easily navigate routes to my destinations, and said to look for her 12-year-old daughter, Molly, standing on the corner waving her arms.

The landmark system worked.

I followed Molly up to the front deck where Charlotte walked out to greet me with a smile brighter than the sun. She reached out to shake my hand, but I had a nudge to hold out my arms for a hug.

"Oh, I love hugs," she said.

We entered the living room where the walls were covered with an eclectic variety of art art then down a dark stairway into her bright, spacious work room. Windows covered the south wall, the east shelved books from floor to ceiling, the north had a counter covered with a rainbow of linen, samples of her clothing on two racks and taking up space in the middle of the room was her work table.

"Now this is what I always wanted," Charlotte said, stretching out her arms. "My own space."



"Before we begin," I said, "I want to give you this." I handed her a piece of paper with my order for 12 items. Her laughter was contagious and I don't remember her smile ever diminishing while I was there. Molly sat in the room near me and held out her hands to display 26 bead-and-wire rings on her fingers that she had made.

"She also writes," Charlotte said with evident pride. She went on to tell me that her 11-year-old daughter Helena is into drawing and ceramics and her 14-year-old son Xavier is an aspiring violinist and sailor.

Charlotte began her crafting career as a child.

"I'd go door to door around the neighborhood taking orders for my things," she said with a laugh.

When her teenage son was small, she dreamed up a recycled wool owl hat and began marketing them to shops nationally.

"Owls were having a moment at the time and I secured a booth at the Portland Saturday Market. They were kind of Portland famous for a minute," she said.

But she craved change and dropped the brand to launch a linen bag and tote business in 2018 under the name of Fern Hill Handmade. One Christmas, she and her family went to Orcas Island. Upon returning to Portland, they made the decision to leave the busy city and move to a quieter, more peaceful environment, ending up in Port Townsend.

In the summer of 2019, Charlotte applied for a spot at the Port Townsend farmers market as Fern Hill.

"My reception in the community was so warm and welcoming," she said.

But when the pandemic hit. Charlotte had become a homeschool teacher and full-time household domestic.

"It was a dark time for me," she said. "But I was able to keep the spark of creativity alive through cooking, of all things. And I had always dreamed of making clothing, but never had the space to play around because I was always in production mode. I began to draft designs and dream bigger.

"That strange time was ultimately a gift," she said.

When Commoner opened in Port Townsend, at the urging of a friend, Charlotte approached the owner, Olivia Goldseth about the prospect of selling her clothing line.

"With my fingers crossed behind my back, I basically pitched her a clothing label that didn't exist."





The owner was gracious and offered to take a look at what she had, "Which was nothing," Charlotte said with a laugh. "I ran home to hand print some labels and stitch up a few initial designs. And that's how Lotte began."

Commoner sold the very first Lotte pieces.

"I'll always be grateful to Olivia for taking a chance on me. The idea that my clothing might be nice enough to hang alongside other clothing brands really gave me the boost of confidence needed to take myself seriously," she added.

"Why do you use linen?" I asked.

"Linen has a wonderful drape. It has a lovely heft to it, yet it feels like you're not wearing anything. Lately, I'm doing more bright colors. Have you heard of 'dopamine dressing'? Studies show that wearing bright colors makes you happy." She took a pair of pants from the rack. "I'm also now doing some indigo dying."

"Which you taught yourself, right?"

She nodded then said, "I've also been painting a bit," and handed me one of her watercolored note cards.

"I like to have small, inexpensive items in my booth. Not everyone can afford a piece of slow clothing, but they want to show support

for my work."

On the cards Charlotte captured a scene of pine trees materializing as morning fog dissipated.

Several times during our visit, Charlotte confessed that she lacks confidence and has a hard time marketing her creations. "I don't have what it takes to go out and push my things onto people," she commented. "I'm not good at marketing. I really just want to make things and share them."

Before leaving, I asked Charlotte what would be the most important thing that she'd like to say to our readers. She thought a moment. "Don't let the lack of experience hold you back from just trying anything new. I have no idea what I'm doing! Just go out and do it," she said.

I have one of Charlotte's note cards placed on my desk to inspire me. She may lack confidence, but she has the courage to overcome it. (And did you figure out how she came up with her label? They're the last five letters in her name.)

In addition to the Port Townsend farmers market, Charlotte's clothing and accessories are available on her website lottehandmade.com, and at House of the Faun in Port Townsend, and Fern in Friday Harbor.

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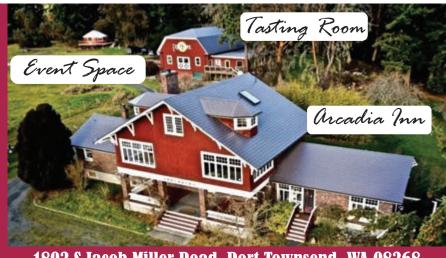






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# hand-selected to feel like home

### by Kirk Boxleitner

Laura Segil has only operated the cozy little gifts and housewares shop for a few weeks, but it represents the culmination of a lifetime of learning to appreciate the idiosyncratic character of various curios and objets d'art she's encountered.

Segil is the owner of La Petite Maison Blanc in Sequim, located in Suite A of 213 E. Washington St.

"I named it 'The Little White House' because I wanted it to look and feel more like a home," Segil said.

"Its decor tends to be lighter and more colorful, and it has an almost European feel, although its wares tend to be found exclusively within this area."

Segil feels strongly about affording a venue for the artistic and artisanal talent that's both native and specific to the Sequim area.

"So many talented, creative people live in and around Sequim," Segil said. "Our store smells fantastic, because of all the spa, bath and body items, including essential oils, that draw upon the area's lavender. And whether it's ceramic sculptures or landscape paintings, the fine art we have available is influenced by the Pacific Northwest's natural settings, down to its shorelines."

Segil and her husband are well familiar with this region's distinctive charms by now, after running the Sea Cliff Gardens Bed and Breakfast together in Port Angeles for the past decade.

"We'd started out with these little gift items in one corner of our bed-and-breakfast, until they gradually expanded into the lobby, then overtook the dining room," said Segil, who realized that running a retail business could be a fun field of entrepreneurship. "As the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity outgrew its now-former space, their generosity meant its loss became our gain, and after being part of the hospitality community for so long, we're getting to know our neighbors now, as they

embrace our business."

Among the activities that La Petite Maison Blanc has been able to take part in as a member of the area's business and artistic community, has been Sequim's monthly "First Friday Art Walks."

As an art gallery owner in Los Angeles for 10 years prior to moving to Washington State in 2014, Segil honed her eye for aesthetics, and came to realize how even mere retail products could be enhanced by packaging that eschewed assembly-line sensibilities.

More recently, the loss of a loved one helped solidify Segil's commitment to showcasing uniquely curated antiques, knick-knacks — and nearly everything in between.

"My mom passed away a year and a half ago, and before we sold her house in Carmel, I went through her remaining things," Segil said. "She had such wonderful keepsakes and heirlooms, including her bed and other furniture, that I've featured as display centerpieces in our shop. They're not for sale, of course, but she taught me about beauty. And her pieces do a fantastic job of evoking the atmosphere I'm hoping to capture."

The feel of at La Petite Maison Blanc is friendly and casual, and customers can expect to be engaged in lively, pleasant conversations, rather than simply ducking in and out to purchase an item or two.

"In a few more weeks, our lapetite-sequim.com website should be able to accommodate those who'd like to shop online. But we still want folks to stop on by, and turn our items over in your fingers," Segil said.

"Some of it is hand-crafted by others, but all of it is hand-selected by me. So come check it out, bring your big dogs, or your husbands, and we'll give them a place to relax."









# 'a quaint little bakery on wheels'

### by Kirk Boxleitner

From a very early age, Jennifer Tillman knew she loved the idea of working in restaurants and kitchens.

Through her teens and 20s, she applied for whatever jobs could teach her more about cooking and baking, from diners to pizza parlors. She learned to prepare food with her hands, to the point that she began baking treats for friends and families' birthday parties and bridal and baby showers.

"Cooking became my passion," Tillman said.

Her lifetime pursuit has culminated in her opening The Short and Sweet Bakery, which can be found at theshortandsweetbakery.com online.

"It's so rewarding to be able to serve something that tastes, smells and looks so beautiful that just its presentation makes people 'oooh' and 'ahhh' with joy and wonder. It's the cherry on top — literally," she said.

Unable to attend a prestigious culinary school, it would take several more jobs - and years - for Tillman to more fully refine her gifts. Her employers at the Stanford Inn and Resort's Ravens Restaurant, in coastal Mendocino, California, offered to intern her in their kitchens for the next four years, however, training her how to make vegan desserts.

"It was a big challenge, but I loved it," Tillman said. "I learned a number of valuable skill sets, and it allowed me to be more creative and expressive. But what it really taught me was patience."

Tillman also came to appreciate, even more fully, the experience of working with her hands.

"Baking is hard work, but it's also therapeutic," Tillman said. "I tend to get stressed, but the exercise of it levels me out. And when you invest that level of care into the food you prepare, making dishes with love and patience and your hands, it not only feels good, but it tastes even better."

"Besides, who doesn't like something sweet?" Tillman said.

It was her readiness for a life change that ultimately led her to Port Townsend.

The move came after years of visiting with an old friend on the Olympic Peninsula, who'd moved back after having grown up in Quilcene, then gone to school with Tillman in California.

"I was searching for a new adventure, and I fell in love with Port Townsend," Tillman recalled.

Her exploration of the town led her to successfully apply for a job at the Sweet Laurette Cafe and Bistro, which deepened her appreciation for baking cakes to commemorate special occasions broadening her experience with French pastries.

"When Sweet Laurette's was sold, I was scrambling for a bit, until I found myself a new home at the Chimacum Corner Farmstand," Tillman said.

She spent the next half-dozen years at its deli bakery.



"Hey, I like savory treats, too," she said. "Also, I learned so much about our county's local organic produce and other food resources, as well as about how to start and run my own business."

Tillman got married in 2020, and has since had a son with her husband. Even so, she couldn't stop thinking about what she saw as Port Townsend's lack of catered dessert services. For more than half a year, she's concentrated on developing her own mobile bakery. She has a working trailer she hopes to debut in late summer, complete with built-in display windows to showcase her finer

selections.

"I want it to be a charmingly quaint little bakery, just on wheels," Tillman said.

"And as I learned the importance of, from the Chimacum Corner Farmstand, I want to source as many of my ingredients locally and organically as I can, because this is an amazing region, with so many good foods to choose from," she added.

# meet the local arborist giving old trees new life

photos courtesy of Bombardier Arboriculture

### by Liz Coker

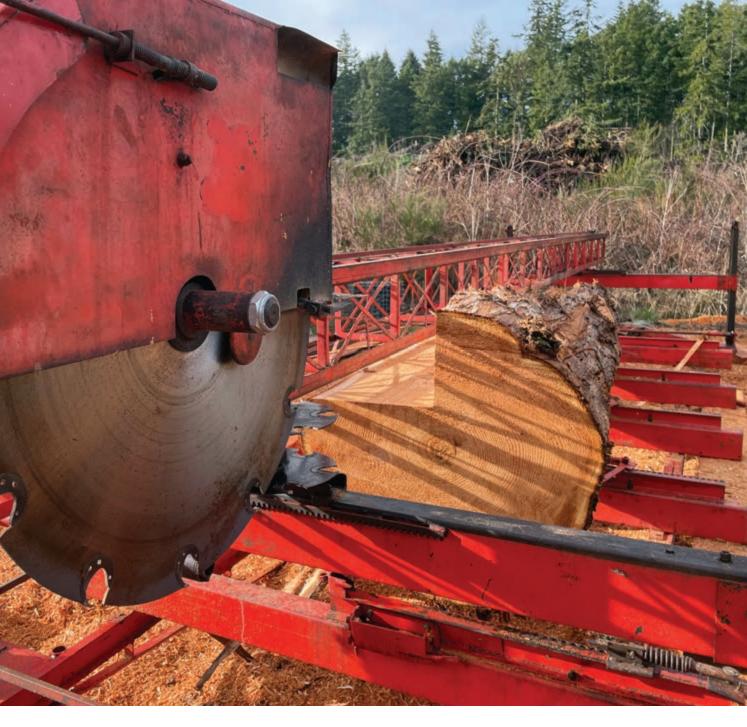
Lodged between ancient mountains and blue water, is a remarkable craftsman who has mastered the art of transforming trees into lumber. Meet Evan Bombardier, a specialist in arboriculture.

What is arboriculture, you may ask? Simply put, it is the cultivation, management, and study of individual trees, shrubs, and other perennial woody plants.

However, in the Pacific Northwest it takes on another dimension as arborists have to manage old forest timbers skillfully and respectfully. According to Bombardier, "Arborists are like tree-doctors. We are specialists in the art and science of tree care. As trees grow older and larger, it is important to understand their risks. Arborist 'read' trees to determine their health and take appropriate action to prolong and maintain the life of the trees in question."

Too often when trees need to be removed, they are chopped into firewood or cut down and left to rot.





However, with the help of a professional miller there is another option. Luckily, Bombardier is both an arborist, as well as a local miller with an extraordinary skill set and a deep love for nature. With his keen eye for detail, he breathes new life into fallen trees that might have otherwise been forgotten.

But what truly sets Bombardier apart is his commitment to sustainability.

"The limbs of the trees are chipped into wood chips. They create an ideal soil structure that gardeners love. Of course, the wood of the trees is desired around the world as some of the best building product available. There are very few alternative wood harvesting systems in place compared to the conventional industrial scale that we see all over the Pacific Northwest in the form of clear-cut," Bombardier said.

So how does an arborist choose a tree for milling that will lead to fine woodworking?

It starts with the often-overlooked art of tree selection.

Starting with carefully selected logs, the miller employs various tools and techniques to transform the logs into usable planks. The first step is debarking, where the outer layer of bark is removed, revealing the smooth wood beneath.

Next, the logs are cut using a chainsaw or large bandsaw, which ensures accurate dimensions for the next phase.

Once cut, these rough-sawn boards undergo a process called seasoning or drying to reduce moisture content and prevent warping or cracking. Finally, skilled craftsmen further refine and shape these planks into beautiful pieces of furniture, boats or millwork that can stand as lasting testaments to both nature and human creativity.

Local milling keeps jobs close to home and proves once again that sustainability begins in one's own backyard.

Actions have consequences, so in this fast-paced culture it is important to consider the impact of our purchasing decisions. When it comes to wood milled products, purchasing locally made pieces can have a positive impact for both individuals and local communities. By choosing furniture crafted by local artisans, such as a miller who transforms trees into lumber which then becomes functional art - we contribute to the preservation of traditional craftsmanship and skills that may



otherwise be lost in a globalized world.

"I am very glad that there is a growing interest in utilizing local building material and furniture wood," Bombardier said. "I have made an effort throughout my career of running tree service crews to honor and utilize all aspects of the trees that have to come down due to health, development, or safety concerns," he added. "I hope that my business can make an impact on the future of sustainable forestry and wood products from the Pacific Northwest.













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### by Ryan Lambert

Do you remember when you packed your last picnic? The usual suspects. Turkey sandwiches, maybe some chips, wine.

Wanna up that game? Alexis Arrabito (Hostess with the Mostess) of Port Townsend Picnics & Parties has got you covered. Alexis created the perfect dream for your next outing into the great wide open.

Splitting time growing up back and forth between Everett and Port Townsend as her father worked on the local ferries she finally made PT a permanent resting spot in 2017.

After a quick jaunt through the Jefferson Healthcare system during the pandemic the opportunity arose to manage the four-suite boutique hotel, The Washington, with her sister, Adrian.

Soon after, Alexis dreamt up and launched the concept of tailoring picnics for custom events including surprise romantic couples days, bachelorette parties, bridal showers, baby showers, retirement parties, celebrations of life, rehearsal dinners, and more. It was her idea to take the stress off and create memories that include everything from custom themes to bringing a full experience to an area of outstanding natural beauty —complete with dishes and glassware hand-picked from local shops, her love of collecting and sharing housewares styled to your experience.

The capsule of themes offered include charcuterie from local vendor Kinna at Wake and Wave Boards and sweets from Cold Mountain Cakes.

Seasonal set-ups can be finicky in the Pacific Northwest environment in the winter months, so indoor picnics are available in the cozy Multipurpose Microvenue at 821 Washington St., complete with a photo booth station and local mixologists making glittery drinks:

You can only do date night, movie and a dinner so many times. Dive into something adventurous and new!

"Above and beyond, surprise and delight, accessibility and comfort," Alexis said.

Packages can include an Instax camera, custom letter board and cool bluetooth speakers with an actual spinning record while it plays. Nice touch.

With a 10-minute head's up when you're done, it all gets picked up while you walk off into the sunset. Think of a pop-up only for you and your loved ones.

Memories forever.



photos courtesy of Beginning & End Photography

# keep cool with a MARINATED SUMMER SALAD

### by Sidonie Maroon

This afternoon, I harvested two varieties of kale — Mars Landing, a wonderful bronzy purple with light green undersides and smooth leaves, which I haven't cooked with yet, and one of my favorites — the Portuguese Tronchuda Beira, which is tender and beloved for its mild flavor.

Looking for salad ideas, I reached on a high shelf to grab "The Trellis Cookbook" by Marcel Desaulnier; contemporary American cooking in Williamsburg, Virginia, published in 1988 and a signed copy! I have an affinity for cookbooks from the '80s through the early 2000s. The authors shared their stories, wisdom, techniques, and cooking philosophies. They don't feel the need for color pictures on every page, and still trust you have a culinary imagination. I tire of cooking blog buzz, poorly written recipes, the echo chamber, and endless ads and pop-ups. These cookbooks are old friends and so peaceful.

There was a recipe, near the back, for summer marinated vegetables. Yum, marinating would give me the opportunity to work with my kale duo.

The word "marinate" alludes to brine, aqua marina (sea water) originally used to describe a pickling process. Now, it means to soak foods in a seasoned, often acidic liquid before cooking.

Marinated vegetables cook on the grill or in the oven, both delicious techniques, and the acids in the marinade help 'cook' the vegetables through a tenderizing process. This is especially useful for sturdy roots and leaves.

The marinated salads I grew up on were too oily and soggy — while often in modern marinated salads, the marinade coats but never penetrates the denser vegetables.

Two approaches that solve too soggy or hard:

The first technique is to blanch the vegetables; I use a large shallow skillet, bring the water to a boil, add salt and blanch for 1 to 2 minutes, depending on the vegetable's size and shape. A perforated ladle works well to scoop the vegetables out and duck them under cold water. No need to fuss with ice cubes.

By taking the time to blanch, it cooks the vegetables to perfection, yet keeps their crunch and soaks up the marinade flavors with less need for oil.

Best of all, blanching creates vibrant colors, whereas just marinating dulls them.

Vegetables to blanch before marinating: onions, summer squash, corn, beets, carrots, peppers, parsley (especially stems), kale, green beans, cabbage, chard, garlic.

The second is to grill or roast the vegetables to a tender bite. The marinade coats the vegetables before roasting, and I add more acid before serving.

I roast in the oven at 425F for 25 minutes. The benefit of this technique, besides incredible flavors, is leftovers. Leftover roasted/grilled marinated vegetables make omelets, sandwiches, salads.

For my kale salad, I'll blanch the kale, onions and garlic for a minute, then rinse them in cold water and pat dry. My marinade will feature lemon, black pepper, rosemary, salt, and olive oil.

Tomato, Kalamata olives, and parmesan cheese will top the salad. Yum, I can't wait to try it. I'm making roast chicken and potatoes to go with and I'm looking forward to dinner.



# ROSEMARY LEMON KALE AND OLIVE MARINATED SALAD

Makes four ½ cup servings

### **Blanch**

1 red onion, sliced into bite-sized pieces

4 cups kale, or one bunch, stemmed and chopped into bite-sized pieces

4 cloves garlic, minced

### Marinade

1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, minced

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, plus zest

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

¼ teaspoon black pepper, ground

½ teaspoon sea salt

### **Topping**

1 diced fresh salad tomato

1/2 cup kalamata olives, sliced

1/3 cup parmesan cheese, grated

### **Directions**

- 1. Chop the vegetables ahead.
- 2. Bring water to a boil in a skillet or pot. Salt (½ teaspoon) the water after it comes to the boil. Add the onions, garlic and kale and bring it back to a high simmer, time one minute, and remove with a perforated ladle. Run all vegetables under cold water and pat dry.
- 3. Grind the salt, rosemary and pepper together, and in a small food processor or blender, blend with the lemon, zest and oil.
- 4. Pour the marinade over the veggies, with the cheese and olives, in a large low salad bowl and allow it to marinate for 20 minutes. Top with diced tomato and serve.

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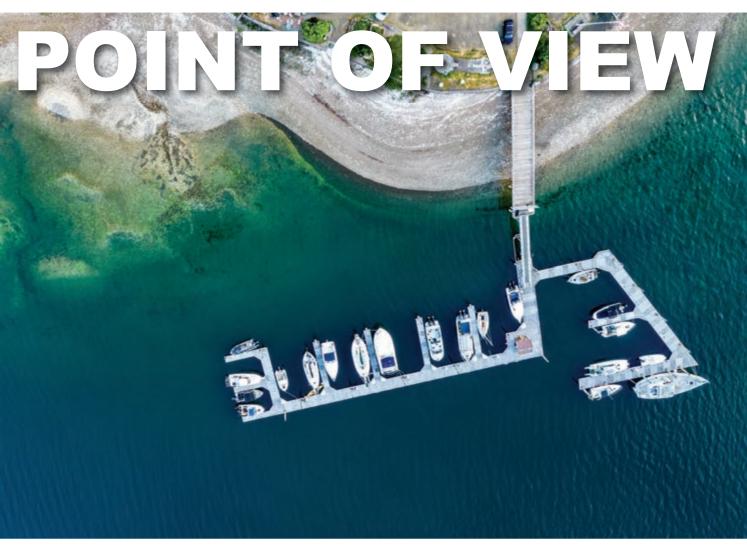
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