

Food for Thought

People • Products • Purpose

June 2022

"The true genius resides in the farmer who grew the thing; the chef merely celebrates that genius by seizing on the moment of moments (ripeness is all) and setting it off between the quotation marks of a menu."

— Food writer and essayist Michael Pollan, author of *Omnivore's Dilemma*

Lump vs 'Junk'

A family tradition of charcoal barbecuing led this former medevac pilot to start his own brand of high quality hardwood charcoal



"I'm the guy who made charcoal cool instead of just a cheap commodity on a shelf," Jonathan says. Rockwood brand charcoal is made from hardwood furniture scraps that would otherwise go to waste. Sold at Ranch Foods Direct! More at RockwoodCharcoal.com

Just as all meat isn't created equal, neither is charcoal. Where it's sourced and how it's made influences how it burns and what chemicals are saturating the meat during the cooking process. Common

fake pressed briquettes are made from coal fly ash scooped out of power plants and loaded with non-wood substances like limestone, borax and sodium nitrate, much of it shipped in from Central and South America where slave labor still occurs.

"Forty percent of it doesn't burn, and that's why they can sell two bags for 8 bucks. It's all about companies making a cheap product to chase a higher margin," explains Jonathan Heslop, the Missouri-based founder of Rockwood Charcoal.

Jonathan's been a fan of real wood charcoal ever since he grew up learning to grill with his dad on a ceramic Komodo-style grill (think Big Green Egg) a tradition he continued while flying a medevac helicopter for a living (at the time he was the youngest air ambulance pilot in the country.)

"Lump" charcoal remains in a natural form that resembles rough-cut chunks of wood. Rockwood Charcoal is made from the finest Missouri

hardwoods, such as white oak and hickory, which are used in furniture as well as wine and bourbon barrels that get exported to France.

"It's just pure carbon, and the charcoal fines we sell for various purposes including biochar and carbon supplements,"

he says. "We've been the number one consumer ranked charcoal in the country nine years in a row. We have a lot of grill manufacturers who ship our charcoal out with their grills. It's like if you just bought a Ferrari — they want your first experience to be a good one."

Jonathan was a pilot for 15 years and then got into real estate, but all the while he continued to reinvest in his real passion, distributing quality charcoal.

While the pandemic was a boon — "when people are stuck at home, they grill" — it came with a catch: snags in getting the product made and distributed. During the nine months his company was back-ordered, he took time off to go fishing with his four sons. But he's still steamed over how the pandemic was handled.

"When our county wouldn't let anyone go to work, it was online orders that kept me in business," he recalls. "While the small businesses got shut down, Walmart and Home Depot got to stay open — big stores that held more people inside! And they made a killing." He's no fan of Amazon either. "We like to do business directly with smaller companies like Ranch Food Direct," he says. "Every time I've tried to deal with a big company, it's been a nightmare."

The art of the bar



Gila and her husband Joel pour their shared creative talents into designer chocolate that showcases rich, complex flavors; in store now

"Untempered chocolate creates patterns like formations in rock, like geodes, or oil and water when it separates," explains Gila Dar. As a visual artist who loves to dance, she's captivated by these patterns and has adopted them as the signature scroll that decorates the inside of DAR bar packaging. But she also sees other dimensions revealed in the whimsical swirls of chocolate, such as the importance of hand crafting, the value of self-expression and the good that can come from taking a risk and embarking on a creative re-invention.

"A creator is someone who connects with their passion. The main question is always, what's the change you seek to create in the world? We see our business as being all about supporting artists and bringing art to more people," she says. It's also about "the way we consume things and the way we treat our body when it comes to sugar." The low sugar content in bean-to-bar chocolate highlights the rich, wild, complex flavors of the original beans, which are identity preserved and lovingly aged and dried: "It's like wine you taste with all of the senses — it broadens your imagination." Their business model also replaces obscurity with direct relationships. "There's a human intention behind it, rather than just a recipe and a machine," she says.

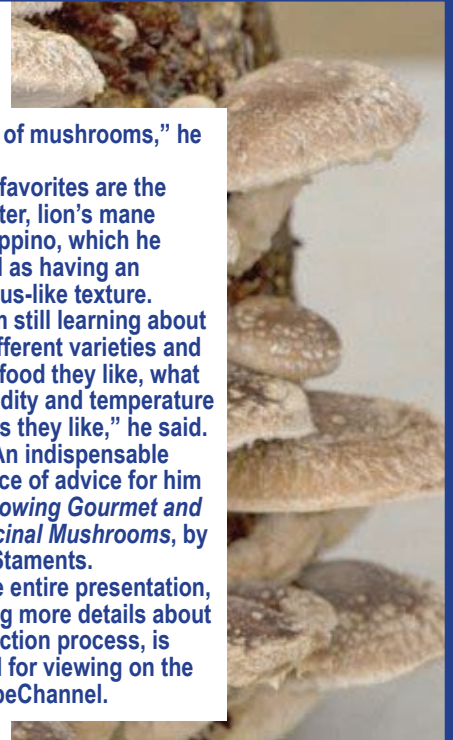


DRINKING IT ALL IN: HOW COCOA INSPIRED A CREATIVE REINVENTION
Enroute from Isreal to a new life in the U.S., Gila and her filmmaker husband Joel spent an extended stopover in Costa Rica, a place frequented by fellow Israelis. (And "a place without an army," Gila says pointedly.) "One of the rituals there is having the ceremonial cocoa drink and eating cocoa beans in their raw form," she recalls. Cocoa only grows within a band 22 degrees north or south of the equator. "If you're not familiar with it, you have no idea what chocolate really is," she notes. "Being one of those people, it was fascinating to us." After visiting cocoa farms, they decided to pursue their own bean-to-bar chocolate company in Denver. Today they continue to source quality beans from the island country that first inspired them.



Chocolate really does grow on trees... and once ground its texture resembles that of peanut butter. "It makes a smooth luscious buttery substance that is 50 percent fat," Gila explains.

Sharing the regenerative magic of mycology



Ranch Foods Direct mushroom supplier Austen Brinker was the featured presenter at the spring meeting of the Pikes Peak Mycological Society, a local club for mushroom enthusiasts, where he shared the story of how he turned mushrooms from a hobby into a full-time gig — in the midst of the pandemic.

"Ranch Foods Direct has been a great retail partner for me," he told the group, explaining that he first dabbled in growing shrooms as a student at CU-Boulder.

In 2020, he quit his job as a construction project manager intending to pursue comedy full-time — right before COVID shut down live performances.

He quickly pivoted to mushrooms.

"We had two restaurants on board right away, but we could only grow 20 pounds a week," he recalled. Now he leases a large warehouse near the Ranch Foods Direct Fillmore store and grows over 100 pounds a week.

"From one little clone, one little tissue sample,

I'll grow out hundreds of pounds of mushrooms," he explained.



Some of his favorites are the blue-gray oyster, lion's mane and the pioppino, which he described as having an asparagus-like texture.

"I'm still learning about the different varieties and what food they like, what humidity and temperature levels they like," he said.

An indispensable source of advice for him is *Growing Gourmet and Medicinal Mushrooms*, by Paul Stamets.

The entire presentation, including more details about his production process, is now posted for viewing on the PPMS YouTubeChannel.

FIESTA AUTHENTIC: Ranch Foods Direct is now supplying beef, pork and chicken to Hacienda Villarreal, a family owned restaurant with bright cheery decor and fresh authentic Mexican dishes including hefty breakfast burritos and flavorful meat-and-salsa molcajete bowls. It's located just down the street from the Peak to Plains warehouse at 460 N. Murray Blvd (and open seven days a week.) "We opened seven years ago in July," says owner Luis Villarreal (shown right.) "We buy from Ranch Foods Direct because the service is good, and the prices are very fair compared with other suppliers." As RFD owner Mike Callicrate explains, "We want to do business with other locally owned businesses that invest in our community. We always encourage our customers to seek out and support local alternatives to corporate chains and big box stores."



EASY CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Try these simple steps for transforming a DAR chocolate bar into a luscious dessert

- Begin by chopping up a DAR bar into really thin bits
- Combine equal parts chocolate and hot milk
- Mix it together and allow the chocolate to melt
- Blend it well (a stick blender works great for this!)
- Place in fridge for 2-4 hours to allow it to set. Enjoy!



**Ask our sales associates
or in-store butchers for
advice on affordable cuts
for smoking or grilling**



**GOOD TO GO: Pick up a Friday steak
night dinner from Colorado Coffee
Merchants to enjoy in the comfort of
home! 302 E. Fillmore 719-473-8878**



*To make this
refreshing appetizer,
combine one-half cup
softened cream cheese
with 1/4 cup chopped green
onions, 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
and 1 tsp reduced sodium soy sauce. Slice
cucumber 1/8-inch thick and top with sauce and
thinly sliced beef. Garnish with herbs or micro greens.*

Shop fresh-cut steaks for Father's Day! Shipping and curbside options available

FOOD FOR THOUGHT is printed and distributed by:



Natural Meat Market

Two convenient locations in Colorado Springs!

1228 E. Fillmore, 719-623-2980

New Summer Hours: Mon - Fri 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Saturdays 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

4635 Town Center Drive, 719-559-0873

Retail Hours Mon - Fri 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Saturdays 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Order online at RanchFoodsDirect.com