

The Russian Connection on Brookford Farm

The woman who makes our ferments name is Irina. She moved to the USA from Russia a handful of years ago to be closer to her kids and to help raise her grandchildren. Back in Russia Irina, worked as a scientist by day Monday through Friday. As with many people in Russia, many of her non-working hours were spent growing, foraging and raising her own food to "spice things up" a little through the long cold winters. Fermenting vegetables and creating the artful blends which we offer is only one of her many talents. Irina chooses her varieties of vegetables which she will ferment and performs all the trellising and harvesting of the cucumbers in the greenhouse for her amazing pickles. The cucumbers are all harvested at a very young stage and pickled immediately to maintain a crisp which is rarely found in a lacto-fermented pickle. Also adding a wild foraged oak leaf to every jar also helps to maintain the crisp. All of Irina's products are given the care of being produced in her small home kitchen in the Russian countryside. Although she is learning the US varieties, Irina is a master wild mushroom and berry forager as well.

Another one of our all star employees, Azat, came to us last year from a different country of the former soviet Union, Turkmenistan. He also came to be closer to his daughter and help raise his grandchildren. Turkmenistan borders Afghanistan and Iran to their North and was one of the southern border countries of the USSR. The climate in Turkmenistan is very different to what we, in the west, imagine when we think of the long cold blowing Russian winters. Azat describes what sounds to me like the Southeastern US climate. He came of age when the USSR was still thriving and his role in the project was "Tractorist, or tractor driver in our tongue. Tractor driver does not do this profession justice though as "Tractorist" was one of the highest socially ranked professions in the former Soviet land. This was a person held in the highest esteem for controlling the pinnacle of technology responsible for saving the general population from the toils and hardship of endless manual labor. His/her/their work freed up the hands and minds of the people to create art, build buildings, advance science, educate, etc... We are very thankful to have Azat a member of our full time squad. In the winter he has played a vital role in caring for the animals and over the summers he will be a mainstay in our tractors as we rumble around town cutting hay, planting fields, maintaining ditches and trimming tree lines.

Both Catarina and I also have a connection to Russia. We met in the St Petersburg province while working on a farming project. We had both arrived there in 1999, I from the US and Catarina from former East Germany. We spent five years developing Svetlana Village, a farm working around the needs of differently abled individuals. Much like our farm here in Canterbury, Svetlana was right on the banks of the Syass river and we produced dairy, cheese, beef, pork, vegetables, herbs, grain, bread. Svetlana was along the 60 degree north latitude line and we did experience what you would think of a typical Russian winter. We also experienced Russia as it was going through "perestroika". I have many fond memories of my times in Russia and this was a formative time in my life. I'm so happy to have the opportunity to work with both Irina and Azat. It keeps my bumpkin Russian fresh and reminds me of pleasant years. Since I left I've

been dreaming of building a Russian Sauna. I started it a couple of years ago and I hope to finish it soon. Thank you for all your support!