



TURNIPS, REBRANDED

Brian Alberg of the Red Lion Inn

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Turnips have come a long way—from subsistence staple to the item at the bottom of your co-op box. Today’s turnip has grown into a new future, playing new and revival roles, creatively paired with new co-stars and fit with fancy dressings.

Turnips are top-of-list for Red Lion Inn and Eat on North Executive Chef Brian Alberg. He describes his favorite dish, butter poached turnips with Farm Girl Farm smoked tomato sauce and lemon gremolata:

“I believe that food should be playful, sincere, and showcase the terroir and region from which it comes; this dish plays to each of those traits,” says Alberg.





“Playful because it eats like a meat dish but is not; sincere in that each ingredient is prevalent and complimentary to the others; tastes of the minerals and earth while brightly giving a nod to the shire.”

Why would Chef Alberg, who plays such a big role in the cuisine of the Berkshires, whose expertise earned him a place on the staff of the AAA four diamond Saybrook Point Inn & Spa, who is an active member of the James Beard Foundation, have such a fondness for such a humble vegetarian dish?

“I think of this dish as more of a starter than a side or entree although it can easily be adapted for either,” he says. “It is a dish I serve to friends and frequent guests, as a way to stimulate their palate and their thoughts on food. Typically, my MO is being the big flavor meat cooking guy: lamb, game, pork, beef. This dish contradicts me and also peoples’ perception of what vegetarian food tastes like. It’s my favorite because it creates the ever-so-important first impression into my food.”

Chef Alberg’s words and actions reveal a strong personality focused on sharing. Like drawing out flavors to delight the palate, Alberg turns the spotlight on the hardworking men and women who bring fabulous recipes to life alongside him and on the local farmers who produce vegetables, herbs, fruits, milk and butter as well as raise livestock and artisans who bake bread and pastries. His longstanding relationships with farmers, food producers, and restaurants, make Alberg a one-chef engine for the local economy.

Detailing the ingredients of his favorite dish, Alberg says, “Laura Meister at Farm Girl Farm in Sheffield grew the turnips and tomatoes. Laura and I have been teamed up as chef/farmer for a decade. The crumbs for the gremolata come from Berkshire Mountain Bakery in Housatonic and the herbs from various local farms. High Lawn Farm Dairy in Lenox produces the butter from Jersey cows which have a butter fat ratio higher than other dairy breeds giving it a richer mouth feel.”

With this dish, Chef Alberg tells a story. Food is not only enjoyed with families and friends around the table. Enjoyment is also in the livelihood of the farmers and the camaraderie of the kitchen staff. He invites us to look at a root vegetable like the turnip and consider the possibilities. **F**

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