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Making It on the North Fork

Ambitious Food and Wine Professionals Head East to Long Island's North Fork

By LETTIE TEAGUE



Gordon M. Grant for The Wall Street Journal

Anthony Nappa and Sarah Evans Nappa at their Provisions food shop

Contrary to popular myth, not all ambitious young food and wine professionals end up in New York (or, more specifically, Brooklyn). Some actually migrate all the way east to Long Island's North Fork to seek (lesser) fame and fortune in a greener, more pastoral—though perhaps no less competitive—spot.

But success on the North Fork isn't just about doing good work and attracting acclaim; it's also about managing to stay open during the "off season," which can last up to eight months.

"The whole game is the off season," said 35-year-old winemaker Anthony Nappa. He should know; he and his wife, Sarah Evans Nappa, opened the Winemaker's Studio, a wine bar and

tasting room in Peconic, N.Y., almost two years ago. (They close it down for about six weeks in the winter.)



Gordon M. Grant for The Wall Street Journal

A popular North Fork restaurant, Love Lane Kitchen

The Nappas are currently expanding their holdings; they're opening Provisions, a food shop, at the end of this week. Situated next door to the Winemaker's Studio, the store will feature cured meats and cheeses (mostly from New York), as well as canned and dried goods of a caliber "that a chef would want," according to Mr. Nappa, who explained they also wanted to create a store where the locals would shop. "We say we're not all local ingredients, but we're food for locals," he said.

Ms. Evans Nappa, the 32-year-old former sous-chef at the acclaimed North Fork Table and Inn, trained at the French Culinary Institute in New York. At Provisions, she will produce sandwiches of various sorts as well as tapas, while continuing to offer her catering services and awaiting the birth of their first child, due in a few months.

Mr. Nappa, who not only makes wine under his own (eponymous) label but is also the winemaker at Raphael winery, sees his enterprise as part of a larger movement on the North Fork. He rattled off the names of several ambitious young men and women who are making their own wine or running their own restaurants—most notably Carolyn Iannone, the 29-year-old owner of Love Lane Kitchen, one of the most popular restaurants on the North Fork.

Ms. Iannone was the manager of the Mattituck restaurant for three years before the opportunity arose to buy Love Lane Kitchen last year. Ms. Iannone, who grew up in Center Moriches on Long Island, came to the North Fork after college to work at Paumanok Winery. "I really fell in love with the North Fork at Paumanok," she recalled, naming the winery's owners, Ursula and Charles Massoud, as mentors.

She worked at the winery for four years and then left for California (and a boyfriend). She came back six months later with the boyfriend, whom she married last year. When she returned, Ms. Iannone knew that she wanted to do "something big on the North Fork," though she wasn't quite sure what that should be. Tour guide? Wine writer? Then she was offered the manager's job at Love Lane Kitchen.

The restaurant's previous owner, Michael Avella, taught her a great deal about wine and food, said Ms. Iannone, though his focus was primarily on the wines from Italy, where he once lived. Over time, she convinced Mr. Avella to add a few North Fork wines to the list, and when she bought the restaurant she made the list an all-local affair.

"We thought the locals might get sick of local wines, but they love it," said Ms. Iannone. It helps that she



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Two Long Island wines

changes the list frequently and keeps the prices low—bottles cost between \$24 and \$44, and all of the wines are offered by the glass. "People complain that Long Island wines are too expensive," she said. "But there are plenty of wines that are affordable and food-friendly."

Among the 12 wines she's currently featuring are the Paumanok Semi-Dry Riesling (\$35) and Anthony Nappa's white Pinot Noir (\$36), which she describes as possessed of "an awakening acidity." When I admired her choice of adjective, Ms. Iannone laughed. "I guess I still want to be a wine writer," she said.

The menu is locally focused, too; the names of various purveyors appear on the bottom of the page under "friends and neighbors." (Ms. Iannone's mother is an uncredited purveyor who bakes cakes for the restaurant; her chocolate cake is a perennial favorite.)

For her part, Ms. Iannone sees herself as both restaurateur and cheerleader for the North Fork. "This is our backyard—it's our home, and I'd like people to learn about it," she said.

Upcoming: Although Keith Luce is a native North Forker, he left the region at a young age to pursue fame and fortune elsewhere. He served as a sous-chef at the White House when he was 22 and later cooked at the Little Nell in Aspen and the Herb Farm in Washington. Mr. Luce returned a few years ago to run the Jedediah Hawkins Inn in Jamesport and, more recently, to start a restaurant of his own.

It's actually a mini-empire of sorts in downtown Greenport. There are four parts, three of which are in place: an oyster bar (Main); a prep kitchen and pizza joint (Prep); a dessert and tea bar (Nosh); and a New York-focused wine shop and tasting room (Meet) that's scheduled to open next month.

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