



Food Studies Newsletter

Winter 2024

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Anthropology of Meat

Professor Amanda Kaminsky '13

(PhD Candidate in Sociocultural Anthropology at the University of Michigan)

The idea for this course emerged out of my intersecting interests in food, animals, and cultural identity. What better way to explore this complex intersection than by taking a single thing—meat—and analyzing it for a whole month? This class has explored everything from meat and human evolution, to animal ethics and inter-species ethnography. We have tackled complex topics like race and gender, as well as the fascinating topic of disgust. Besides classroom work, we have also benefited from the expertise of outside guests, including Indian Supreme Court lawyer Thulasi K. Raj, Adam Kaminsky ('2016) of Rocky Creek Farm in Bozeman, Montana, and Hank Dimuzio of LegdEnd Farm in Middlebury.



A foggy morning in one of the deer enclosures of Dimuzio's LegdEnd Farm on class field trip

Vermont Farms, Food, and Future

Professor Jeannie Bartlett '15



For the fourth year, students in Vermont's Farms, Food and Future are exploring tough questions about agriculture and food systems in Vermont. In the first week, they focused on why agriculture has been a primary cause of water pollution, and how healthy agricultural soils be part of environmental solutions. At the end of week one they visited Eric Clifford's 8th-generation dairy farm in Starksboro (pictured below), where they learned about soil health, dairy cow nutrition, and the myriad complexities of dairy farming. In the following weeks they'll be visiting other farmers and asking: how can an aspiring farmer access land in Vermont? How is it that Black people own less farmland today than they did a hundred years ago, and what's being done to reverse that? What are the experiences of farmers and farmworkers in Vermont? How is our food system changing, and what can we do to influence the future of food in Vermont towards something we believe in whole-heartedly? The course is taught by Jeannie Bartlett '15, who studied Conservation Biology at Middlebury and has been working in Vermont agriculture since - both in education and outreach for government programs and as a farmworker.

Jake Mendell (center, wearing baby Hank on his chest) gave our class a tour of Foot-print Farm in Starksboro where he, his partner Taylor, and their crew grow greens like this spinach throughout the winter.

ACORN Internship

J-term Intern Emma McKee '23.5



Hey everyone! This J-Term, I'm doing an internship with ACORN (the Addison County Relocalization Network) helping work on the 2024 Champlain Valley Local Food and Farm guide. ACORN's guide is co-published with the Addison Independent and 20,000 copies are distributed to every household and business in Addison County and the surrounding region in May. The Guide is intended to be used by producers and consumers alike as a year-round resource for buying local. I'm reaching out to farmers and business-owners and working on updating the directory of local food and farm businesses from last year's guide. I'm also interviewing local, small- and medium-scale organic farmers about their choices to scale up or not, their challenges with finding labor and markets for their products, and how they have made their farm financially viable for an article that I am writing for the guide. If you're curious about ACORN's other projects like their Food Hub, Farmacy (food as medicine) program, and Tour de Farms, check out www.acornvt.org. ACORN will soon be posting their summer internship to Handshake, so stay tuned!

Natural Fermentation

Professor Elise Singer

I am a family physician, geriatrician turned early-stage healthcare executive that loves science, food and creative projects. I have spent decades fermenting in my own home and love sharing my passion for, and experience with, this basic skill. Fermentation is deeply intertwined with health, community, culture and fundamental human survival and satisfaction. My goal for this course was to kick-start a robust fermentation culture at Middlebury, I hope we hear more about the topic for months and years to come.

Fermentation is the earth's first biotechnology, responsible for life as we know it. For tens of thousands of years humans have known how to harness and enjoy this most foundational method of preserving energy. FOOD 1004 has been a scientific, historical and practical introduction to one of our most basic, and safe, life skills, exploring traditional approaches to multiple categories of natural fermentation. We have made sauerkraut, kimchi, vinegars, kombucha, wild grain cultured baked goods, kefir, cultured butters, buttermilk, crème fraîche, chevre, queso fresco, paneer, yogurt, and grown koji, the domesticated mold precursor to, and foundation for, Asian ferments like fermented beans, miso/jiangs, soy sauces, grain based wines such as mirin and sake and much more. Grace Spatafora led us in a hands-on laboratory where the students visualized their own wild cultures. We spoke with cheese ethnographer Trevor Warmedahl @milktrekker, who zoomed in from India where he has most recently been documenting the camel pastoralist lifestyle of the Fakirani Jats in Kutch, India. We visited a goat herd in Orwell, VT at Tups Crossing Farm run by Holly Menguc '02 and traveled all the way to the uniquely natural-process Parish Hill Creamery in Westminster West, VT to explore their facilities and cave and to learn from the award-winning owners: Rachel Schaal and legendary cheesemaker Peter Dixon. The students finalized our time together with independent kitchen projects ranging from sourdough loaves baked with wild starter compounded with naturally fermented Mexican tepache to Scottish sowens to Scandinavian fermented yogurt drinks.



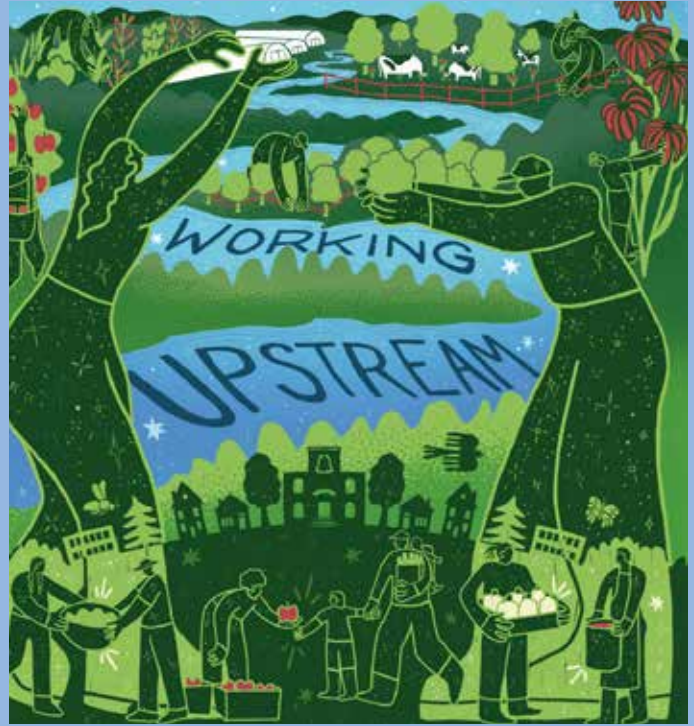
Upcoming Opportunities in Food Studies

NOFA-VT Winter Conference



“The NOFA-VT Winter Conference provides a valuable opportunity for farmers, gardeners, earth tenders, educators, students, policy-makers, and other food system activists to share ideas, resources, and skills.”

February 17th-18th, 2024, UVM, Burlington, VT



VT Farm to Plate - Job Opportunities

