

# All Things Food Newsletter

Food Studies Program, Middlebury College

March 2020

## Careers Edition

Dear Food Studies Community,

Spring is just around the corner, believe it or not; and many of us are starting seeds indoors or in greenhouses. For those with longer-term plans in mind, we have plenty of information about career possibilities in this issue and CCI is organizing a Food Studies Career Panel and dinner in Atwater on April 2nd with several interesting alumni talking about their diverse careers.

If you aren't subscribed to AllThingsFood, please let me know so that you can get and share announcements about events, internships and job opportunities.

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### What Can You Do With a Focus In Food Studies?

Food Studies is a rapidly growing field, so some of the jobs that Middlebury graduates will fill have not been created yet. Regardless of the work you do, your liberal arts education will help you to be comfortable with multiple perspectives on the human/environment interface. Some of the key skills that will become increasingly important for jobs in food and agriculture are the ability to analyze and understand systems; to work well in teams of people who have different perspectives and backgrounds, as well as independently; to understand how racial and social inequity affect food and resource access; and to communicate orally, in writing and with figures and graphs.

Vermont's Farm to Plate Network has an Education and Workforce Development Working Group that created several resources for people seeking jobs. You can find [Career Profiles](#), a [Food System Workforce Needs Assessment](#), and a [booklet on Exploring Food System Careers](#) which includes average wages, employment trends, and what a typical day involves. These resources are very useful, but they emphasize jobs that don't require graduate degrees. Middlebury students are also likely to go into work requiring advanced study.

Fortunately, a growing number of universities in the US and abroad have very good graduate programs. Look for possibilities under "Program Listings" on the [Sustainable Agriculture Education Association](#) web-page or on the [Agriculture, Food & Human Values Society](#) web-page. Note that Canada, Europe and England have excellent programs that are often much cheaper than graduate schools in the US.

The possible career paths listed below will give you a better idea of where you might go with your interests and skills. Doing one or more internships is a very good idea, both to learn what kinds of work you enjoy (and really don't enjoy) as well as to build up your resume. Seek out internships through [Vermont Farm to Plate's job list](#), the [Idealist.org](#), the [Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group's job resources](#), or the [COMFOOD-JOBS listserv](#).

## Possible Food-Related Pathways

1) **Work on a farm, aquaculture facility or fishing boat.** You will need experience to do this; so if you are interested in farming, start while you're a Middlebury student at The Knoll, with a FoodWorks internship on a farm, or with another internship. Farms almost always hire extra workers during the growing season. Starting your own farm is an option as well, but you'll need business skills such as accounting and business planning, and practical skills like driving a tractor and fixing machinery, in addition to knowing how to grow food. Farmers and fishers need to be versatile and they need people-skills to market their products successfully.



*The Knoll at Middlebury College*

2) **Start or run a program serving farmers or communities,** such as by working with beginning farmers, managing an urban garden, starting a Farm-to-School program, or addressing community needs for healthy food. The program might be through a governmental agency (such as city government, Cooperative Extension or the Natural Resources Conservation Service) or a non-governmental organization. Consider getting a one-year appointment through [FoodCorps](#), if this interests you. If you are interested in better food systems planning, learn GIS.



*A FoodCorps employee working with children*  
Source: FoodCorps Website

3) **Teach children (or adults)** about gardening, nutrition, where food comes from, and making better food choices. You might want to get a Teaching Certificate to expand your options.

4) **Work in institutional food service** (e.g., in a public school or hospital cafeteria), **catering or the restaurant industry.**

5) **Conduct research** on the health, environmental, economic and social impacts of food system alternatives. Understanding the impacts of what we eat and how it is produced, distributed and marketed is increasingly important, as scientists have illuminated how significant the food system's contributions are to major challenges such as whether populations are food secure and healthy, whether biodiversity is lost or conserved, whether the food system releases or stores greenhouse gases, and whether freshwater is protected. This option will require a M.S. and perhaps a Ph.D. if you want to be able to get funding to design and conduct your own research.



*Hands-on learning at NYU Steinhardt, which provides M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s in Food Studies*  
Source: NYU Steinhardt Website

6) **Start or run a food- or farm-related business.** Your business might add value to farm products (such as by processing) or fill another niche in the food system, such as distributing or marketing food. Basic business skills and accounting will be essential for this job, as well as for running a farm.

7) **Work with a non-governmental organization, a state or federal agency or an international agency** that analyzes or advocates for food or agricultural policy changes in the US or internationally.

8) **Be a food-writer.** Interest in food and nutrition is growing rapidly, and you can place articles related to trends in food and agriculture in many different places.

# Career Spotlight

*A Food Studies education can take you down a variety of paths. Check out the diverse food-related fields Middlebury alumni are now working in:*

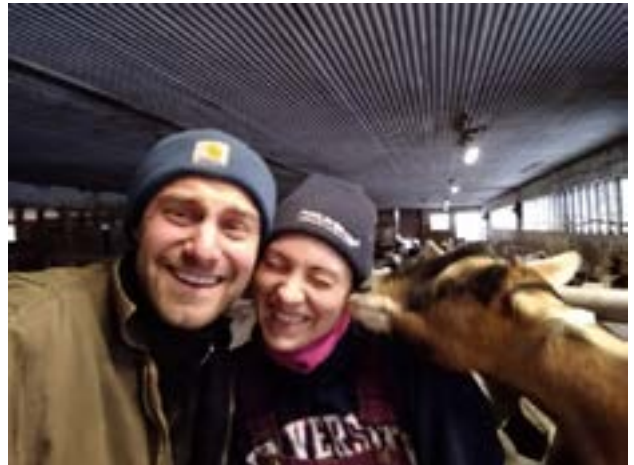
## Holly Menguc '02

### Owner and Operator of Tup's Crossing Farm LLC

*Holly Menguc '02 owns and operates Tup's Crossing Farm LLC, a commercial goat dairy farm in Orwell, VT with her husband Faruk Menguc. The farm is one of around a dozen family farms in the area producing milk for Vermont Creamery.*

"Despite being raised in Vermont, I came to Middlebury with zero experience in farming. I had never been in a cow barn, yet I knew I loved the idea of being around livestock, in a vague bucolic way. I thought I might graduate as a Biology major and continue studies in Large Animal Veterinary science post-grad. In actuality, I graduated from Middlebury with a History of Art & Architecture major and double minors in Mandarin and Italian.

I remember a general feeling in 2002 that opportunities to begin a life in Vermont were very limited and people who wanted to be "successful" went to the city. In my first decade out of Midd I held positions directly in line with my major, working at Christie's, Sotheby's in New York and later as Manager of a Contemporary Asian art gallery in Chicago. My husband was a Post-Producer for Oprah Winfrey. Although "successful" on paper, we were both unhappy in our careers.



*Holly and Faruk Menguc*



In 2016 we sold our home, uprooted our kids and moved to Vermont. Limiting our search to within 30 minutes of Middlebury, we found jobs living and working on an organic cow dairy. We apprenticed on this dairy farm for nearly 3 years. It was a humbling experience but invaluable. In time, we were able to define the direction we wanted our own agri-business to follow, create a business plan that would ensure cash flow and begin making necessary connections within the local farming community.

Dairy farming is a relentless job, 365 days a year. It is also a beautiful lifestyle where you work side by side with your partner, enjoy the quiet of your own home in the middle of the day and are rewarded by the health of your animals and quality of your product. Addison County's dairy farms are also, in my mind, some of the most beautiful places in the Northeast.

It feels like a luxury to live and work where we do.

We milk at 6 am and 6 pm. The goats are run through a milking parlor where they are fed grain and milked, 16 at a time. Milk runs in a pipeline from the parlor to a milkhouse where it is cooled and stored. A milk truck picks up twice a week and transports our milk to Vermont Creamery for pasteurization and processing. We are paid on the basis of total amount shipped, with bonuses for quality and protein. Between milkings, our days are occupied with keeping the animals clean and dry, the manger full of hay and seasonal chores surrounding breeding, vaccinating, kidding and raising kids. In summer months the goats are pastured.



Keeping a dairy profitable in today's market, even with goats, even in Vermont, is a very fine needle to thread. Our herd currently numbers 260 does. In order to achieve financial stability we need to continue to grow. At this point, we have invested everything we have into this venture and financially it is a struggle, but we are also the happiest we have ever been. I don't regret the time we spent in the city before making this choice. It makes us appreciate this life more.

We would like to support other Midd students interested in dairy farming, cheesemaking, goats or beginning an agri-business in Vermont. If we can't answer your question, we probably know someone who can. Find us on Facebook at [Tup's Crossing Farm](#) or through Professor Molly Anderson at Midd. The farm is always open for visitors!"

## Tom Furber '83 CEO of High Mowing Organic Seeds

*Tom Furber '83 is the CEO of High Mowing Organic Seeds, a company which produces non-GMO organic seeds which are sold throughout the United States.*

"After I graduated from Middlebury I went to work in health insurance, which was lucrative, but not satisfying for me. I left to get my MBA at Tuck School of Business. While at Tuck, my partner Laura, got sick and surgery was proposed. We wanted to avoid the surgery and experimented with diet changes, which led us to organic food, and especially preparing the food for ourselves. She healed with the diet change and we have stuck with it for the past 30 years.

After Tuck, I spent 10 years at Hannaford Supermarkets doing pricing, systems reengineering and building a home delivery division, while helping Laura with gardening and pushing organic food at Hannaford.

When we sold the home delivery division, I left Hannaford to write, self-publishing, "Joy, It's Your Choice, Really." I led seminars related to this topic and built relationships that led to consulting work with smaller companies or companies in transition.

We moved to VT in 2010 when I co-founded Farmers To You, a delivery company that brings local organic food to pick up locations in greater Boston. In 2013 I started at High Mowing Organic Seeds as its General Manager, now CEO.

A typical day begins with reviewing emails and my calendar for the day, then checking sales updates. At 9:15 every morning we have a team meeting where every participant identifies whether they have any red (important & urgent) or yellow (important) issues to share so that the appropriate people can work on solutions to meet our grower's needs. We conclude the meeting with people sharing green (success) items.

The rest of my day consists of meetings with managers, individually or in groups, to review status of work and to plan for the future. For example, I meet with the Contract Manager to review the status of our completed and in process contracts with seed growers for crops that will be harvested in the fall of 2020, and discuss ways to improve the process for coming years. I have similar meetings with the



*An employee at work at High Mowing Organic Seeds  
Source: High Mowing Organic Seeds Website*

managers of Purchasing, Quality Control, Packing, Fulfillment, Sales & Marketing, and Accounting.

An example of a weekly group meeting is our Sales/Ops meeting where the operating and sales leadership meet to discuss short term issues (an error in shipping to a customer, a recall of a seed that failed cycle testing for quality, a crop failure and how to substitute a variety for the failed crop, poor communications—missed rush order or sale of an item that created a packing issue). This helps us to solve problems together, reinforce common goals and build trust. At other times this group meets to share and develop metrics/measurements to improve grower/customer satisfaction and improve the way we get, process and deliver seed.

My daily work also includes long term planning. Our business is extremely seasonal, 70% of sales occur between January and April, so there is a lot of day to day activity during that time, while the rest of the year is spent putting in place learnings from the past and new initiatives for growth.

Middlebury taught me how to think in a way that ferrets out essential truths and then to articulate them in a reasonably cogent manner. I'm still a work in process, but I feel that I have been a better participant and contributor with my family, friends, community and workplace because of my experience at Middlebury."

## **Sarah Blackburn '98** **Publisher and Editor in Chief of Edible Boston and Edible Worcester**

*Sarah Blackburn '98 took her major in Art History and minor in Italian to the world of food and became the Publisher and Editor in Chief of Edible Boston and Edible Worcester, magazines dedicated to sustainable food in the Boston- and Worcester-areas.*

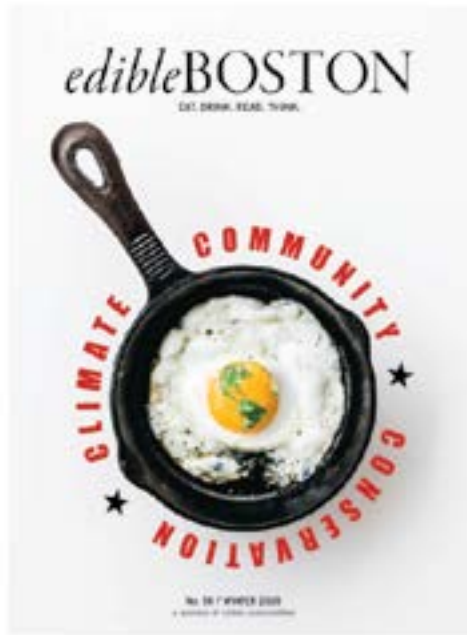
When I left Midd in December of 1997, I wasn't really sure what my career would look like. At school I'd had part time jobs throughout my four years, both on campus and off. I was a waitress at the early iteration of the Storm Cafe, appreciating the local ingredients and scratch cooking; in the afternoons I worked restoring slides in the Art Department's slide library and at the Alumni Office collating class notes for the Middlebury Magazine. After graduation, I knew what I didn't want to do—I didn't want to move to New York (I'm a suburban Boston girl through and through) to work in a big gallery, museum or auction house. And Italy was my first love, having studied in Perugia and Rome during my fall semester prior to starting school, so I set out to find a way back there for work, or for life.

I moved home to Concord and researched opportunities that would send me back to Europe. In the meantime I worked for our public television/radio station in major gifts, I temped in an architecture firm, I volunteered preserving the archives at my local museum. I even took a couple of jobs in travel, first in budget student tours and then in elegant, luxury guided trips. They brought me to Italy, sure, but nothing felt exactly right.

It wasn't until I'd given up the search for the perfect Italian job that I found it: On a whim I popped into my local gourmet store to answer their "help wanted" ad. As I saw it, a simple job slicing roast beef and Swiss cheese would allow me time to find my way back to my goal. Turns out that gourmet shop was my goal—my Italian skills were in need as they'd been looking for an imports buyer who could communicate directly with the small artisan producers they worked with abroad. I spent the next four years absorbing everything there was to know about cheese, charcuterie and artisan foods from all over Europe. I traveled with the owners regularly to Italy and France to seek out the rare and obscure—jams, pastas, pastry, spices, chocolate, cheese—then negotiated contracts and coordinated international shipping both pre-Euro and post. It was the best job a 23-year-old Italophile could possibly wish for.



*Sarah Blackburn*



*Edible Boston's Winter 2020 Cover*

From there, I jumped around in that shop, moving into to the catering department as sous chef and then taking over the produce buying, introducing our customers to the bounties of our local farms—a hard sell in the middle of a store priding itself on the exclusivity of its imported goods. In the early aughts, this was a novel idea: that local food could compare, and even compete with, the luxury of foreign food wasn't something most Bostonians thought about at the time. Now, it's commonplace.

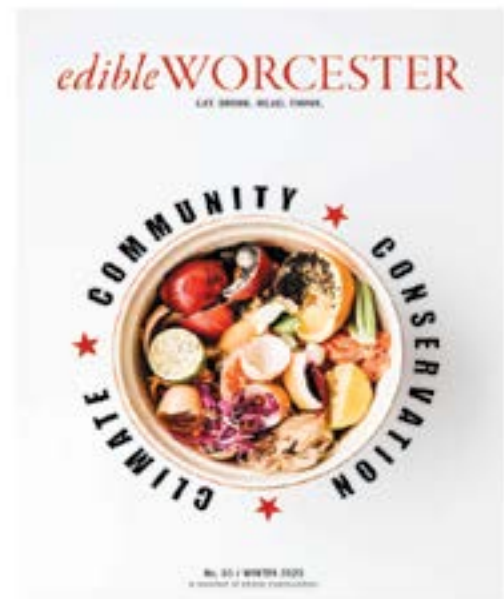
During these years I met and married my husband. We started our family and that was the end of my 50+ hour weeks at the shop, but by that point I'd been cooking on the side as a private chef for a few families in our Cambridge neighborhood. I kept that up and worked a couple of days a week when my children were babies with a farmer friend at a city farmers market. He was growing the best produce in the area at the time, married to a prominent chef/owner in the city, and together we elevated his farmstand to the pinnacle of Boston recognition, a Best of Boston award for Best CSA in 2010.

When it came time to leave the city and move west to the suburbs, I reached out to an old friend from the cheese shop-farmers market scene—she'd launched the Boston iteration of an Edible magazine in 2006 and was in need of some marketing and advertising help. I jumped at the chance. We built an

extensive advertising base and editorial catalog of the best small businesses promoting local food, but recipe development wasn't high on the priority list in the magazine's early days. I started writing and testing recipes, working with a stylist and our creative director to build three new regular columns demonstrating to readers how to best use the local food they were now getting in their CSA boxes and at farmstands. As recipe editor it was important to me that the farms we were profiling had a market for their goods; by simplifying and beautifying the preparation of local vegetables, seafood and meat, I could help ensure that the agriculture and aquaculture of eastern Massachusetts would continue into the future. Better said: If people didn't know what to do with a kohlrabi, or a grass fed steak, they'd be less likely to continue buying them. But if they were given clear and attractive instructions, buying local could become a lifestyle, not just an aspiration.

When the magazine's founder branched out to start a new publication, she promoted me to managing editor. And when she decided it was time to retire and leave Boston's winters for the central coast of California, the time seemed right for me to take over as owner and editor in chief. My husband, a director of quality at a biotech firm, has always been just as interested in food, farming and foraging as I am, so it was a natural progression that we would take on the company together. When we bought the Edible Boston title we simultaneously launched a second magazine, Edible Worcester, to celebrate the renaissance of local food in that city to our west. We now print eight issues a year.

My typical day? I work from home, so between writing and editing I answer emails, manage (a small) staff, meet with contributors and attend events all around our five-county territory. I communicate weekly with the larger Edible Communities structure and serve on food advisory boards for various publishers groups. I oversee (and prep for) the recipe photo shoots which transform our home kitchen into a working studio four times a year, and in recent months I've started producing sponsored video content to promote local seafood, prevent



*Edible Worcester's Winter 2020 Cover*

food waste and more. We are also working with a local tour company to curate branded experiential tours of our region, bringing Edible readers from around the country to Boston to visit farms, breweries, restaurants and markets, and once a year we take groups of Boston readers abroad on artisan food and wine tours so I can get my old-world fix! I do all of this while my young teenagers are at school—I start work as soon as they get on the bus, and after 3:30 I'm back to being a mom, driving to soccer practice and picking up from after-school Latin club. I never thought I could find a career in food that enabled me to have a family, work with my spouse, travel and enjoy the best of what our region has to offer, but here I am.

## Upcoming Events

*Check out what's happening on campus and in the Middlebury area in the Food Studies world!*

March 5-8: Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs Annual Conference: “Anxieties of Empire: New Contexts, Shifting Perspectives” (for more details check out the [conference's website](#))

March 11, 4:30-5:30 pm: “Food System Transformation: What Do We Think We're Doing and Will it Work?” lecture by Professor Molly Anderson as a part of the 2019-20 Carol Rifelj Faculty Lecture Series (Franklin Environmental Center, Hillcrest 103)

March 12, 3:30-5:00 pm: “The Urgency of Pleasure: Theorizing a Rhetoric of Pleasure in Contemporary Cookbooks” lecture by Dr. Carrie Helms (Axinn Center 100)

March 21, 10:00 am- March 22, 1:00 pm: Maple Open House at Shelburne Farms, visit a local maple sugarbush, explore the farm's property, and participate in an Abenaki campfire circle (for more details check out [Shelburne Farm's website](#))

April 3, 9:00 am-5:00 pm: Real Organic Project Symposium at Dartmouth College, participate in a day of lectures and discussions on the importance of organic farming and the future of the industry (to buy tickets check out the [symposium's Eventbrite page](#))

April 29, 10:00 am-1:00 pm: Rural Vermont's Small Farm Action Day at the VT Statehouse, learn about farm-related legislative issues and network with local politicians, farms, and activists (for more details and to RSVP check out [Rural Vermont's event listing](#))