

The Betsie Current



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Made in Michigan, Eaten on Main Street

New faces in Frankfort's business district

By Jacob Wheeler

Current Editor

Victoria and Chris Mekas love to cook. Think traditional Americana food, but with a culinary twist. Their ideal evening — at home in Beulah — might feature Chris's cheeseburgers, marinated with vinegar and herb-filled oils before they sizzle on the grill.

Luckily for us, Victoria and Chris are willing to share their favorite ingredients and recipes.

Lynn & Perin Mercantile Co. is the couple's new gourmet food store, which just opened next to their café, Petals & Perks, on Frankfort's bustling Main Street. Lynn & Perin — Victoria and Chris's middle names — opened on May 15 to celebrate Petals & Perks' two-year anniversary.

The gourmet food store marks the couple's fourth business in Benzie County. They opened Victoria's Floral Design 15 years ago and the Hill Top Soda Shoppe 11 years ago. (Both are now located in Benzonia, on the hill between the putt-putt golf course and Shop & Save.)

Flowers, ice cream, coffee, and now gourmet oils, herbs, and spices — four of the most important summer food groups.

"Our inspiration for opening the new store is that we love food," Chris says. "The stuff that we'll carry here you can't get elsewhere in town. Instead of driving an hour to Traverse City, just stop here. Our goal is to be gourmet and to source local foods that reduce our carbon footprint."

Lynn & Perin offers herbs and spices, olive

oils, flavored vinegars, and other great foods with an emphasis on Michigan-made products, both from Northwest Lower Michigan and bigger downstate cities like Grand Rapids and Detroit. Peruse the aisles and you'll find oils made with rapeseed grown in Manistee

County, culinary flour grown on French Road in Leelanau County, coffee roasted at Higher Grounds Trading Co. in Traverse City, Boss Mouse Cheese made in Kingsley, preserves from Food For

Thought near Esch Road Beach, and cheese puffs made with real cheese and real bacon. Bacon makes everything better!

Carrying through with the Michigan theme, they also have fun gift ideas and kitchen utensils. Greeting customers when they step into the checkout line, the outline of Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas have been carved out of the plaster on the wall to

reveal the brick beneath. Lining the shelves that run all along the store's high ceilings are vintage shoes that the couple found in the basement — a throwback to the building's former occupant of more than six decades, Classen's Shoes.



Lynn & Perin Mercantile Co. founders Victoria and Chris Mekas. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

The cat's meow, according to Chris, are the cardboard coolers that are made in Detroit out of recycled paper products. Use them like a tote bag, and take your picnic to the beach. Tourists can walk next door to Petals & Perks to order soups, sandwiches, and salads that are made

using Lynn & Perin's products. The café will feature recipe cards so that when you discover a sandwich that hits the spot, you can buy the ingredients next door.

Lynn & Perin will stay open seven days a week throughout the summer. It may close in the winter, or it may not — Victoria and Chris had originally planned to close Petals & Perks during the cold months, but the year-round

community embraced the café, and it has closed only two days over the last two years.

Welcome to The Hotel Frankfort

The Hotel Frankfort — formerly the Sleeping Bear Inn and the Betsie Bay Inn before that — once again retains its original name. The hotel re-opened last August, but will celebrate its official grand opening on May 29. The public is invited.

"We want to give people a 'wow factor' when they come through the doors," says manager Tami Smith. "Our tagline is 'Come as a guest, leave as a friend.'"

Guests who want a sneak preview before the grand opening can take part in a "Sip 'n Dab" the previous day. They can show up, drink wine, and help apply a fresh coat of paint.

The historic hotel was originally built in 1890 and suffered two fires, in 1905 and 1922. According to Smith, The Hotel Frankfort was rebuilt in 1933 — reportedly one of the few hotels nationwide that were built during the Great Depression. More recently, The Hotel Frankfort has hosted statesmen, senators, and congressmen. This year, it will host the Michigan Republicans' Lincoln Day Dinner and Lt. Governor Brian Calley. Just a week ago, the entire hotel was rented out for a wedding, and there are three additional weddings planned for the summer.

The hotel's renovations over the past couple years have included a remodeled downstairs banquet room which now seats 100 guests, a

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Tick-Borne Diseases Continue to Rise

Prevention tips for Lyme disease awareness month

By Carol Navarro

Current Contributor

While hiking in Benzie County this spring, do not be alarmed if you encounter someone dressed in all white from head to toe. More than likely the attire is not a bio-hazard suit, but rather the new fashion of "in the know" hikers.

What do they know? How to prevent ticks.

May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month in Michigan, and awareness is definitely key to prevention. Spring is an active time for ticks, because the weather is damp and the nymphs are emerging from winter. They are ready to begin active feeding, which can last up to five days once a tick attaches itself to a host.

Last year, *The Betsie Current* reported on the rise in tick-borne diseases — specifically Lyme disease — and sadly the rise continues this year.

Benzie County remains on the 2015 updated Michigan Lyme Disease Risk Map as one of the many Michigan counties with laboratory-confirmed populations of the infected blacklegged (deer) tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), the most common carrier of Lyme disease.

"There is an increase in the tick population that causes Lyme disease along the western shoreline," says Tom Fountain of the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. "It's more common now than in

the past, and people are asked to be more observant."

Hikers and dog walkers would be wise to adopt the new hazmat-like hiking fashion when outdoors in Benzie County and other surrounding counties. The light colors make it easier to identify the poppy seed-sized bloodsucker that hitches a ride when one brushes a leg up against a bush while hiking.

After returning home, hikers should perform a tick check that focuses on the scalp and ears, back, belly button, waist, pelvic and groin area, and behind the knees. Ticks will migrate to these warm regions of the body.

It is important to save any ticks you find that have attached themselves to bare skin for identification purposes, which the Health Department can do for you. While Fountain says that the Health Department has had no reported human cases of Lyme disease, he welcomes people to bring in ticks that they remove from themselves if they suspect it to be a deer tick. The ticks will then be sent to Lansing for identification at no charge. (Note: The Health Department only had a couple of submissions last year and has not had any yet this year.)

Dr. Susan Daly of the Betsie Valley Animal Clinic in Benzonia tests many domestic dogs for Lyme disease this time of year when they come in for their annual heartworm check. So far, over a dozen have tested positive for Lyme but not all are overtly ill.

Lyme disease is an epidemic bacterial in-



The near-perfect outfit for those with *Acarophobia* (irrational fear of small, crawling organisms). Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

fection that lacks effective treatment. Prompt diagnosis is critical but not always possible. Antibiotics are the choice treatment and are most effective in early diagnosis. If the disease becomes chronic or is left untreated in its early stages, it often requires more intensive and long-term treatment — sometimes as long as 2-3 years.

Short-term symptoms can occur with-

in three to 30 days after exposure and include chills, fever, and aching muscles and joints, much like the flu. Long-term symptoms, meanwhile, may mimic a host of degenerative neurological diseases such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's. Multi-system involvement migrates to different parts of the body causing body aches, joint pain, headaches, fatigue, confusion, and heart problems.

Physicians are divided over how to diagnose and treat Lyme disease. Some even deny the existence of chronic Lyme disease.

However, the latest data from the Center for Disease Control indicates that this is a serious epidemic disease, much bigger than previously reported and very likely an underreported one. The annual incidence of Lyme in the United States has been reported to be 30,000 cases, but has suddenly jumped 300,000.

"According to the informal survey we have, I have three people listed that were infected in Benzie County over the last few years," says Linda Purdy of the Michigan Lyme Disease Association. "The Health Department may not know, because their cases may not have been counted."

Part of the problem is the reporting sys-

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Timothy Young: Passion for Fair Trade

Questions & Answers with Community Faces

By Aubrey Ann Parker
Current Contributor

With artisan, organic, and wild-harvested gourmet specialty foods – think Autumn Berry Jam and Pickled Wild Leeks – Food For Thought, Inc. has played a critical role in the local foods movement here in Northern Michigan. But when he started the business out of his house in 1995, Timothy Young was one of just a handful of pioneers in this niche market. The demand for local foods has exploded over the last decade, and Young's business has expanded to 10 full-time, year-round employees and a spattering of part-time year-round and part-time seasonal employees. They grow and harvest many of their ingredients on Young's 10-acre plot, nestled in the backyard of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, and Young's commute to work is a 50-yard walk from his front door to FFT's headquarters next door.

But Young's mission is not just local. Long preceding his creation of FFT, Young has an extensive background in travel and humanitarian activism. Thus joining the board of On The Ground – a Traverse City-based nonprofit that supports sustainable community development in farming regions across the world – was a natural fit. He participated in OTG's Run Across Ethiopia in 2011 to raise funds to build schools for the children of coffee farmers and the Run Across Palestine in 2012 to plant olive trees in the West Bank. Now he has signed on for the Run Across Congo, a seven-day ultramarathon that begins on Sunday, May 24.

Continuing with our interview series on impactful Benzie County characters, *The Betsie Current* caught up with Young while he was picking wild leeks on the day before he was to get on a plane for the Congo.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: Is there a busy season for your or is it pretty constant year-round?

TIMOTHY YOUNG: Summer is definitely our crazy time. We are harvesting leeks and planting crops in the spring. Production really picks up heavily, and it lasts until late fall. Things begin to slow down through the winter. It's a challenge because of the seasonal fluctuations for us, making it hard to keep all our staff employed full-time year-round.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: How have you seen FFT grow? And how do you hope it will continue to grow? What's next?

TIMOTHY YOUNG: There's always fast growth in the early years, and we had our period of relatively flat growth [during] years 12-18. We're not seeing a some growth again, though nothing too aggressive. It's more motivated by the desire to be a better business, providing better jobs and improving the value of our products.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: What are the fa-

vorite products, the year-after-year stand-by products that everyone loves? And what products are new this year that we should be looking out for?

TIMOTHY YOUNG: We're playing with a number of new products all the time. They take time. Our salsa took five years to get right. This year, we'll be seeing some new mustards, a reformulation of our Wild Leek Marinara, and some new pepper jellies and hot sauces. We just put in 200 habanero plants in our hoop house to move



Timothy Young harvesting leeks near his home and business in Benzie County. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

some of this product development along.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: Where can people buy your products?

TIMOTHY YOUNG: We see ourselves as a Great Lakes Watershed brand. So we'll sell in any state attached to the Great Lakes. Our distribution is heavily focused on Michigan and Illinois, however, if someone calls us for Idaho and wants to carry our line, we'll accommodate them – you just won't find us spending time marketing outside the region.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: You've been a business owner in Benzie for a long time – what are the biggest challenges and rewards of working and living here? What's the best, or most rewarding, part of your job? What's the toughest part?

TIMOTHY YOUNG: Toughest part has been finding enough workers. Being a farm-based business can mean a limited access to the workforce. The tradeoff is that we live in paradise. The Sleeping Bear Dunes are outside our back door, and this region is a serious culinary Mecca.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: What are some ways that you and/or FFT gives back to the community? (Green Cuisine + OTG, and any other causes you support; explain these briefly).

Timothy Young: Our forms of giving are always changing. It can span from cash contribution to like-minded organizations to organizing Green Cuisine. Green Cuisine was designed to bring locals in contact with the wide range of beverage and culinary artists in the area. It takes a lot of money, staff time, and volunteers to make it happen, but we're very proud that after 10 years we can say it's Michigan first zero-waste event and it's still free to the public. We get over 1,000 people every year. Sad news is that we're taking a year off and will resume in 2016. Beyond that, Food For Thought allows me to volunteer for a number of good causes, including the boards of the NMC Foundation and On the Ground. With On the Ground, I've been able to link my passion for fair trade with global action. I've been the in-country logistics coordinator for our Run Across Ethiopia, Run Across Palestine, and in a few more days I'll be leaving for Run Across Congo, a 7-day, 7-marathon run across Eastern Congo to raise funds for women's empowerment.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: Are you scared to be going to the Congo or do you feel it should be relatively safe? How can people follow your journey while you are there? How can they contribute?

TIMOTHY YOUNG: The Congo has been one of the most violent places on the planet for 20 years. However, things have really settled down since 2012, and most of the militia groups have disarmed or are contained by the United Nations and the Congolese Army. We are working very closely with partner organizations in the country and the governor of the province. They keep us updated daily on any security concerns. There aren't any at this time, but we remain open to changing our route or pulling the plug should that change. People can contribute easily by going to www.onthegroundglobal.org or if they want to go to Razoo, they can sponsor any one of our running team members. All the runners have their own individual fundraising targets.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: What's your perfect spring day look like in Benzie County? How would you spend it?

TIMOTHY YOUNG: I gotta say, it's mushrooming. And that's because I rarely get much in. Spring is so crazy on the farm and in production that I rarely get out with the kids. We've had a great spring, however, walking the beaches of Sleeping Bear. We're planning to hike every mile of shoreline this summer, and we're already nearly half done.



Lynn & Perin

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Main Street

Continued from page 1

new roof, new carpet in some rooms, a fresh coat of paint, and a new exhaust system. Next up on the renovation checklist is a front deck that will hold 60 patrons and serve drinks and light appetizers.

Matt Videki is the hotel's new executive chef. He has been cooking for 35 years, having served as a chef at the Whistler Hilton in British Columbia and at the Grand Traverse Resort outside Traverse City. Videki specializes in American Bistro and buttresses his cuisine with a vino from a rich wine cellar that is accessible via a spiral staircase near the bar. On his menu, you'll find freshwater fish including Sturgeon, Lake Trout, and Walleye. Grass-fed beef and local fresh vegetables may also find their way onto your plate. Videki hopes to introduce 5- and 10-course wine pairings this summer.

Though Videki plans to serve upscale meals, the atmosphere need not feel pretentious. The restaurant's big tables can seat the entire family — bring Grandma and Grandpa, too, he says.

The Hotel Frankfort features 17 guest rooms that range from standard queen-sized rooms to luxury suites equipped with a hot tub or a sauna. The dining room is open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. until midnight. The public is welcome and need not make reservations.

Mainstreet Musical Chairs

L'Chayim has moved across the street, into the space previously occupied by the kite shop.

FrankZ, a gourmet hotdog eatery, has taken L'Chayim's former spot.

Classen's Shoes has closed, and Lynn & Perin Mercantile Co. has moved into that space.

Maxwell's on Main has closed, and Sunbeams of Promise — formerly above the Frankfort Deli — has moved into that space.

The Frankfort Deli has closed, and the building is currently undergoing renovations.

Wingz & Thingz is Frankfort's first food truck, located in the parking lot between Big Bob's Up North Outfitters and the Frankfort Laundromat.

Leaving its location next to Big Bob's on the east side, Posh Beauty Bar has moved downtown into the space formerly occupied by Glenwood Market.

Crescent Bakery is expanding into the space that was Augusta's Salon.

Ticks

Continued from page 1

tem, according to Purdy, because not all cases meet the criteria to be counted. She gives an example: The rash has to be a certain size, and certain tests have to come up positive. In some cases, physicians do not wait for the

Best Prevent Measures

Follow these prevention measures to avoid contracting Lyme disease:

When in tick territory, wear the 'tick uniform' to make it easier to see ticks on clothing and minimize exposed skin, making it difficult for ticks to find and attach to bare flesh.

Avoid wooded and brushy areas, as well as high grassy meadows, where hitchhiking ticks wait for opportunity.

Use insect repellents that contain 30% DEET or 0.5% permethrin.

Attire: The Tick Uniform

Hat, preferably with a flap to cover the neck: ticks will attach to the scalp, as well.

Long-sleeved white shirt with white- or light-colored long pants tucked into light-colored high socks: these make it difficult for ticks to find their way to bare skin.

Shoes: no bare feet or sandals.

rash to appear nor do they wait for symptoms; they simply treat the disease when a person is bitten by a blacklegged tick because the earlier that treatment is started, the better the prognosis. In other words, it is better for the patient to start treatment rather than waiting for test results to come in, but then these cases can never be counted officially.

"Testing is the other issue for this disease," Purdy says. "There is really no good test out there to say definitively if one has it or does not have it."

Because of this, there are only a handful of physicians in the entire state who are considered Lyme specialty physicians.

Making the disease even harder to treat is the fact that Lyme patients are not easy to treat, and no two patients are exactly the same nor do they necessarily respond the same to treatment.

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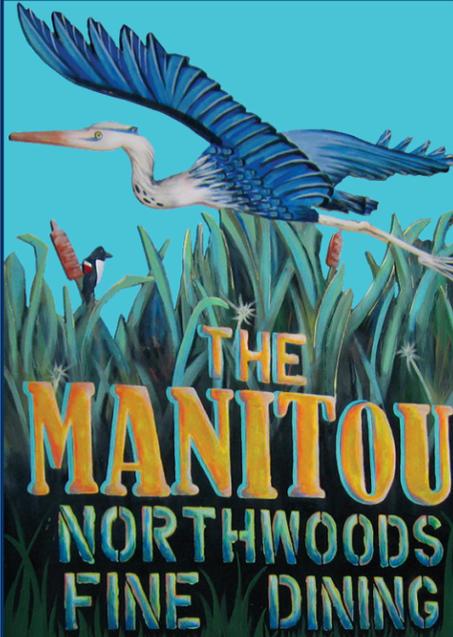
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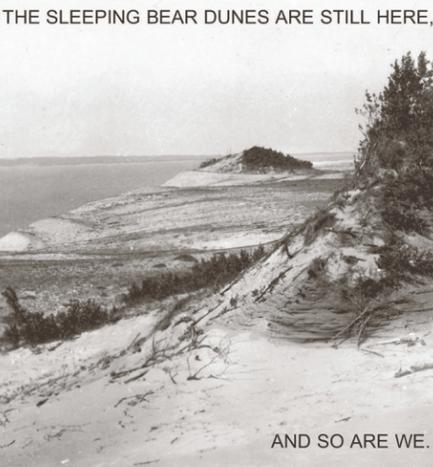
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