



# FRESH FROM MAINE

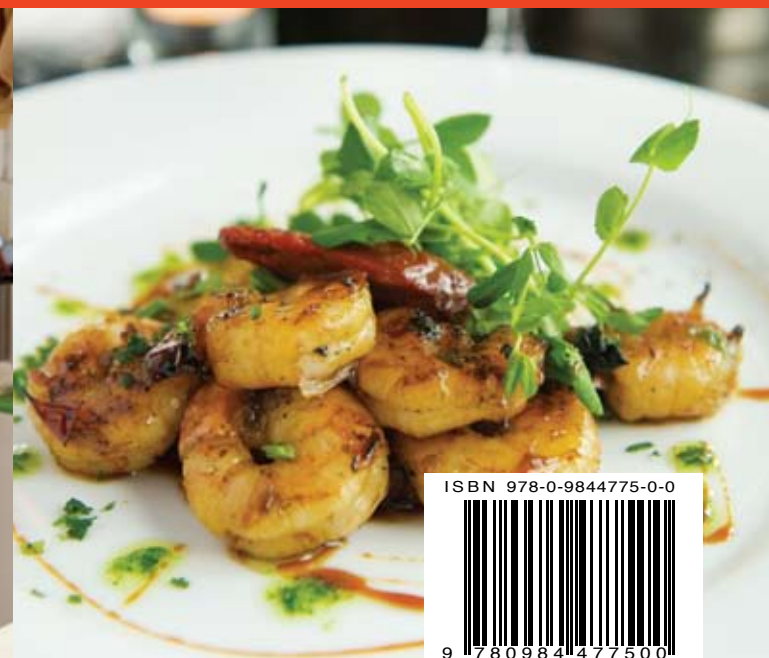
Recipes and Stories from the State's Best Chefs

**"It's such a Maine thing. Mussels here smell like Maine seawater and our seaweed, our rocks and coast. It is such a responsibility not to screw that up."**

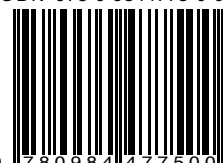
— Brian Hill, Francine Bistro, Camden

In *Fresh From Maine*, author Michael Sanders takes you deep into the world of 20 Maine chefs, their stories, challenges—and even a few secrets—with more than 50 of their recipes capturing the bounty of this land and its waters. Photographer Russell French offers a lush mix of portraits, images of the chefs at work, and their art on the plate.

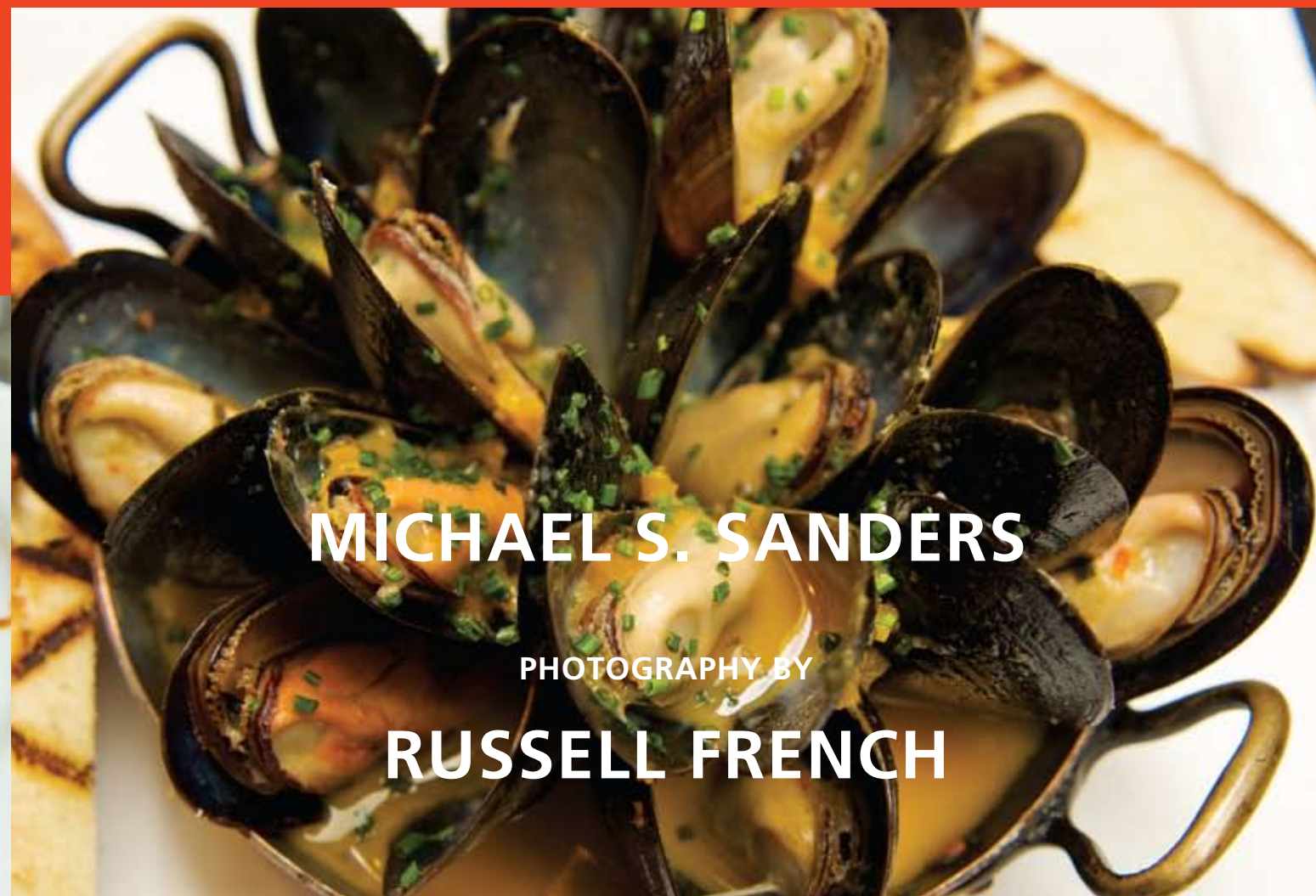
All of these chefs share one thing, working in the sustainable idiom with local farmers, animal raisers, and fishermen to bring the best, all-natural food, much of it organic, to their tables. While Portland is represented by some familiar names such as Sam Hayward, Rob Evans, Steve Corry, and Lee Skawinski, up and down the coast new destinations, new chefs, new gastronomic experiences await. From Anneke Jans in Kittery to Red Sky in Southwest Harbor by way of Bath's Solo Bistro, and Lewiston's Fishbones American Grill, *Fresh From Maine* will open your eyes to just how much good, exciting cooking is going on in this unusual state.



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY

RUSSELL FRENCH





# **FRESH FROM MAINE**

Recipes and Stories from the State's Best Chefs

**MICHAEL S. SANDERS**

Photography By  
**RUSSELL FRENCH**







Decadent Morel Mushrooms on Crisp Brioche at Solo Bistro

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# Caiola’s

**A**fter 14 years at Street & Co. where she finished up as Executive Chef, Abby Harmon packed up a van and headed out to travel the country for a year with her partner, Lisa Vaccaro. Except that a persistent friend wouldn’t stop calling, filling their ears with news of a North End jewel box of a space for *their* restaurant, which the two had already decided to name after Lisa’s grandmother, Caiola.

“Abby went in,” Lisa recalls, laughing, “and she went right up to this beautiful old cork and wood door, the door to the walk-in. ‘I want this place,’ she said. Didn’t look at the space. Didn’t think how many seats or where does the bar go.”

“I knew you could do the structural stuff, the kitchen.” Abby replies with a shrug. “That’s why we’re a good team.”

And right there, you have pretty much the essence of what makes Caiola’s so much more than just a comfy, reasonably-priced, neighborhood joint with great fish just one part of an accomplished, unpretentious menu—though it is all of those things, too. Abby, from Cutler, almost as far downeast as you can go, brings a deep and real connection to rural seacoast New England cooking and traditions, amply influenced by European travel and Italian dinners around the table of her partner’s extended family.

“I love being in New England,” she says, “because you can take all the fish here but cook it like you were in Sicily or France or Spain, with those flavors, using those techniques and ideas. Like the Sicilian Sardine Pasta I make. I was raised on sardines, my mom packed sardines in a factory downeast, and it’s just been a part of my life. But now add Sicily, where they’ll throw in fennel, currants, pine nuts . . .” She finishes, almost smacking her lips.

Lisa, an artist and cabinetmaker, is responsible for the just-so surroundings, all terracotta floors and barn board tables and trim, which together with the comfort food, give Caiola’s a groove more pub than formal restaurant. “Abby gets to be creative in the kitchen,” she says, “but I get to be creative out here.” She gestures at the space, which includes an intimate nook right when you walk in, then an open foyer and bar, to the right and rear two other areas with tables tucked behind half walls because, she continues, “I wanted to make sure every table was next to a wall. It’s more comfortable and private for people, I think, or they can eat at the bar if they want company.”

Finnan haddie, cod brandade, beef tongue, and grilled sardines—all of these you’ll find on the menu, for Abby is faithful to the food of her youth. “My uncle had whole sides of butterflied salt cod hanging from his porch,” she remembers, “and finnan haddie you ate with an egg sauce. My mom would make New England boiled dinner, but with salt cod in place of the corned beef and plenty of beets, carrots, potatoes, and cabbage.”



Chef Abby Harmon

## Chef Harmon at a Glance

### Where do you find your inspiration?

Through my travels, in books from cooks like Elizabeth David and Julia Child and Richard Olney.

### Do you have a spice or a flavor that particularly pleases you?

Anchovies, as a flavor base slow-cooked in their own oil plus olive oil and garlic until they get really nutty and the fish flavor disappears.

### Do you have any chef heroes?

Paul Bertolli is someone whose life I’ve loved watching unfold, particularly after Chez Panisse.

### Favorite midnight snack?

Canned fish. Anything pickled. I love things with vinegar and salt.

### Is there a book that has influenced you lately?

*Falling Cloudberries: A World of Family Recipes* by Tessa Kiros.

# Brandade with Oil-cured Olives, Orange, and Crostini

**For the brandade:** soak salt cod for 48 hours in cold water, changing water morning and night. Put the cod in a pan, cover with cold water. Bring to a boil then reduce to simmer, until fish flakes lightly, about 20-25 minutes depending on the thickness. Remove from pan with slotted spoon, pat dry, cover, and reserve. In the same pot and water, cook the potatoes until fork tender, drain, then rice or mash, preferably the former. Using a Cuisinart, pulse the salt cod a few times, keeping some of it in bigger flakes for texture. Heat 1 table-spoon olive oil in small sauté pan, add leek and cook until soft. Remove leek with slotted spoon and reserve, add ¼ cup olive oil to the same pan, and heat gently. Heat ¼ cup of heavy cream in another small saucepan. In a large mixing bowl gently combine puréed salt cod with mashed potatoes, reserved leek, and minced garlic. Begin adding hot cream and oil a little at a time, and check seasoning of purée, adding black pepper if desired.

**To serve:** preheat oven to 350°F. Cut the baguettes into ¼” slices on the bias, toss with 2 tablespoons olive oil, season with salt and pepper. Bake on a sheet pan until crisp and golden. Set aside. Place brandade in a baking dish, and pour as much remaining cream on top as you want. Create peaks on top of dish using the tines of a fork. Bake until brown, bubbling, and hot in the center, about 10-15 minutes. Garnish brandade with a little orange zest, oil cured olives, and the crostini on the side. A crisp white wine or dry rosé accompanying the brandade will complement its garlicky richness.

Serves 4-5 as an appetizer

## Ingredients

- 1½ pounds salt cod
- ¼ cup+3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2-3 cloves of garlic, cleaned and minced
- 1½-2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, washed and peeled
- 1 leek, white part only, cleaned and sliced fine
- ¼ pound oil-cured black olives, pitted
- Zest of ½ orange



Brandade with Oil-cured Olives, Orange, and Crostini



five fifty five

When Steve Corry and his wife, Michelle, bought 555 Congress Street in 2003 with the intention of turning it into their unique version of a white tablecloth restaurant, they heard plenty of doubters. Today, after an expansion offering a separate, intimate, bar and lounge space, an evolved menu, and an almost overnight

discovery by the national press, the “Nays” have turned not just into “Yeas” but “You bet – and can I have the mussels with roasted garlic and pickled peppers with that?”

Take a few steps into the restaurant’s soothing and restrained brick and copper interior, warm tile floors at your feet and a central mezzanine soaring above, and check your assumptions at the door. Yes, the Corrys certainly deliver everything you expect – faultless wine and table service and a lush array of menu choices tuned to the seasons and the bounty of Maine’s farms and seacoast. But the pair, Steve in the kitchen and Michelle on the floor, aren’t shy about springing the best kind of surprises on the diner. Are those chunks of lobster and black truffle in your mac ‘n cheese? Yes, and that would be four ounces of lobster and generous shavings of truffle because, as Steve says, “The nature of a chef is to be hospitable, welcoming—and generous. If you don’t feel that way, you should probably look for other work.”

While Steve is pleasing your belly, Michelle ups the ante in the service department, coddling her customers in the nicest of ways. They go so far, she says, “as to call certain customers when special dishes and wines come back on the menu, reserve particular seats, order in this bottle or that. We have a customer who loves our pastry chef’s ‘peppermint patties’. They are not always on the menu, but we make sure we have some when she comes. Her name is Pat, and last time she came in the chef embossed the letter ‘P’ on them for her!”

They even understand that, sometimes, people want permission to eat with their hands. Take the experience of those mussels, a full pound of Bangs Island mussels steamed in white wine and garnished with lemon/chive butter, roasted garlic, and spicy house-pickled peppers. Your server delivers it in a cast iron pot, “with lots of homemade bread because you’ll want to soak up that broth and you need to get your fingers in there to eat the mussels,” as Steve points out. “But after, we bring steamed hot towels and finger bowls with lemon water so you can clean up before the next course.”

The two certainly have earned their restaurant chops. In Napa, he cooked at Domaine Chandon while she worked across the street at the French Laundry. Later and locally, she found a niche at the White Barn Inn and he at its sister restaurant, Grissini’s. All of this experience they bring to every plate, every table at **five fifty five**. “We worked unbelievably hard, so many hours!” Steve points out. “And we paid attention the whole time. When we weren’t working, we were eating at others’ restaurants, always asking, what’s good, why, how can we do something like this?”



Chef Steve Corry

Chef Corry at a Glance

Where do you find your inspiration?

My love for eating different things, everywhere.

Do you have a spice or a flavor that pleases you?

I love heat, black pepper, chorizo, pickled cherry peppers.

Do you have any chef heroes?

Robert Curry, of L’Auberge du Soleil in Napa, who mentored me.

Favorite midnight snack?

Midnight for us is actually dinnertime.

Is there a book that has influenced you recently?

Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*.

Do you have a kitchen utensil that is particularly pleasing to you?

I don’t have any knife or tool fetishes. If it’s sharp and it works . . .

Bangs Island Mussels with Roasted Garlic and Pickled Peppers

**For the pickled peppers and roasted garlic:** preheat oven to 300°F. Halve each bulb of garlic horizontally, and douse with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Roast in a small pan in the oven about 1-1½ hours until garlic is golden and quite soft. Cool. When cool, squeeze each clove into the bowl of a mortar and pestle and crush into a paste. Reserve. Put 2 tablespoons of olive oil into a heavy-bottomed 3-quart sauce pan and heat over medium, add carrot, celery, and onion, and cook until onion is translucent but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add water and vinegar and bring to a boil. Add salt. Return to a boil. Remove liquid from heat. Wash the peppers and put them in the bottom of a glass or ceramic lidded container of at least 3-quart capacity. Cover peppers with hot liquid. Cool, then refrigerate and allow to pickle for 2-3 weeks.

**For the mussels:** heat very large high-sided sauté pan over high heat until it is very hot. Add a splash of oil, then the pickled peppers, bell peppers, and roasted garlic, and sauté quickly, about 30 seconds. Add mussels and toss. Add white wine and reduce liquid by half, then add butter, chives, lemon juice, and salt. Toss and then cover mussels with a lid and allow them to steam open. Discard any that do not open. Remove open mussels from the pan with slotted spoon, leaving sauce. Let sauce reduce over medium heat until thickened and then pour over the mussels. Serve with crusty grilled bread. At 555, we use local providers—Snell Farm garlic, Freedom Farm peppers, and Bangs Island mussels, and we encourage you to use your own local, organic ingredients.

Serves 4 as a hearty appetizer

Ingredients  
Pickled Pepper and Roasted Garlic Garnishes

- 1 quart water
- 1 quart white vinegar
- ½ cup kosher salt
- 1 pound hot cherry peppers
- 1 carrot, in ½” dice
- 1 celery stalk, in ½” dice
- 1 yellow onion, in ½” dice
- 2 bulbs whole garlic
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

Mussels

- 4 tablespoons orange bell pepper, in ¼” dice
- 3 tablespoons pickled cherry peppers, seeded and minced fine
- 4 tablespoons roasted garlic
- 2 pounds Bangs Island mussels
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1½ cups dry white wine
- 6 ounces local butter
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives
- Lemon juice to taste
- Salt to taste



Bangs Island Mussels with Roasted Garlic and Pickled Peppers





“*There are a lot of strong flavors in Maine seafood that match our terrior.*”

Pine Needle Mussels being prepared and ready to eat



## Happy Joy Chicken Over Corn Purée

Preheat oven to 500°F. Pat chicken dry. Brush mushrooms clean of any dirt or leaves or centipedes. (You can use rehydrated dried mushrooms squeezed dry, too—black trumpet, porcini, chanterelles.)

Season bird inside and out with sea salt and pepper and stuff body cavity with thyme.

With your hand, carefully loosen the skin on the breast of the chicken and push the mushrooms under the skin on both sides of the breast. Cut a ½” slit in the flap of skin below each of the legs then cross the legs, tucking the end of each drumstick into the opposite slit. This “self trusses” the bird, allowing it to cook nice and evenly.

Place in a 10-inch skillet, sprinkle with a little more sea salt, and pop the pan into the very back of the oven and roast for 35 minutes.

While the chicken cooks, prepare the corn purée. Sweat garlic, shallots or onion, Herbes de Provence, and curry powder in the butter until soft. Add the wine and reduce. Add the corn kernels and cream and cook for 5 minutes. Blend thoroughly at high speed 3 minutes, then strain through a fine mesh sieve and season with sea salt and honey.

Take the chicken out of the oven, and let it rest for 10 minutes. Put the pan over moderate heat on top of the stove. Add one ounce butter to the skillet. Once the butter starts to foam use a spoon to baste the happy little chicken. Carve the chicken. Serve on the corn puree, garnishing with cracked black pepper.

Serves 4

### Ingredients

#### Chicken

1 3½ pound natural corn fed chicken  
1 whole bunch thyme, bruised slightly with your hands to release aroma  
Sea salt, cracked pepper  
1 ounce black trumpet mushrooms  
1 ounce butter

#### Corn Purée

3 cups corn kernels (6 ears)  
2 garlic cloves-sliced or minced  
3 shallots or 1 Vidalia onion sliced  
½ teaspoon Herbes de Provence  
2 ounces butter  
¼ cup Reisling or Pinot Gris  
½ teaspoon curry powder  
1½ cup cream



Happy Joy Chicken over Corn Purée



The space itself is divided into a small bar and relaxed, open-plan area with widely-spaced tables on the first floor and a more private venue upstairs. Out front, a flower-decked stone patio welcomes the guest into a lively bustle of people from all over the country and the world enjoying the food and ambiance under the ancient trees that tower over it.

Along with the thoughtful food and great atmosphere, the Azure Café rounds out the experience with fun and funky seasonal cocktails, and a wine selection praised by Wine Spectator magazine. This is only possible, again, because Jonas cares enough to put his young wines aside until “they are really at the peak,” as he puts it, “the full expression of what they should be, not hurried along and served willy-nilly with the hope that they will be mature.”

“What we do is pretty simple,” Jonas sums up. “We don’t feed egos, either our own or the chefs’, we just feed people.”

Crema Caramella with Toasted Pine Nuts

# Scallops in Vermouth with Mushroom Couscous “Risotto”

**Couscous:** in a 3-4 quart, heavy-bottomed saucepan, sauté the onions in the olive oil over medium-high heat. When onions start to brown, add garlic, stir for 1 minute then add water, couscous, and sea salt. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cover. Simmer 10 minutes, remove from heat, and stir gently to keep couscous from clumping. Set aside.

**Mushroom “risotto”:** preheat large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Melt butter in pan and sauté onions, garlic, and mushrooms until they start to brown around the edges. Add cream and salt. Bring to a boil, add couscous, breaking up any clumps. Cook until most of the cream has soaked into mixture. Remove from heat and, reserving a bit of each for garnish, gently fold in parsley and chives. Adjust salt and pepper.

**Scallops:** preheat medium sauté pan over high heat. Once hot, add oil, and immediately and carefully place scallops in pan with a flat side down. Sear only one side until you can see a light brown caramelization coming up the sides. Remove from heat and add vermouth. Gently remove scallops, one by one, and place them seared side up in a room temperature casserole dish. Add cream to sauté pan with vermouth and return to high heat. Bring to a boil then immediately pour over scallops in casserole dish. Let rest for 2-3 minutes. (The hot cream will finish cooking the scallops.) Season the sauce to taste with salt and pepper. To serve, portion risotto equally in 4 large bowls, divide scallops and place around risotto, pour 2-3 tablespoons of sauce over the scallops, and garnish with reserved parsley and chives.

Serves 4

## Ingredients

### Couscous

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons yellow onion, finely diced
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 cup Israeli couscous
- 1¼ cups water
- 2 teaspoons Maine sea salt

### Mushroom “Risotto”

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons yellow onion, finely diced
- 4 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 2 cups oyster mushrooms, cut in ½” pieces
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons Maine sea salt
- Prepared couscous
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chives, chopped

### Scallops and Sauce

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1½ pounds medium Maine sea scallops
- ½ cup sweet Vermouth
- 1 cup heavy cream

Scallops in Vermouth with Mushroom Couscous “Risotto”



## About the Author

**Michael S. Sanders** has been living and writing in Maine for 18 years, with previous books about food--*From Here, You Can't See Paris* and *Families of the Vine*--on the farmers, winemakers, and chefs of southwest France. He has written for the *New York Times*, *Saveur*, *Gourmet*, and *Downeast*, and is a founding member of Slow Food Portland. His recent work, including this book and the creation of Table Arts Media with Russell French, reflects his realization that "write local" is just as powerful a phrase as "eat local", particularly as Maine is so rich in stories. He sallies forth through life accompanied, as always, by his wife, daughter, and dog. Visit Michael at [www.michaelsanders.com](http://www.michaelsanders.com).

## About the Photographer

**Russell French** is known for his images of food and those who grow and harvest it. "In the studio," he says, "I love the truthfulness and attention to detail that food requires. It is intense and very demanding, and ultimately very satisfying." He lives with his wife, Mary Anne Lloyd, an illustrator, and their sweetheart of a daughter. His work has appeared in *Downeast Magazine*, *The Art of Eating*, and the *New York Times*. Hiking, fishing, camping, and foraging for mushrooms are his major vices, while his table is known to friends and family as a place of fine food and great conviviality. He is a lifetime member of MOFGA and a founding member of Slow Food Portland. Visit Russell at [www.russellfrench.com](http://www.russellfrench.com).

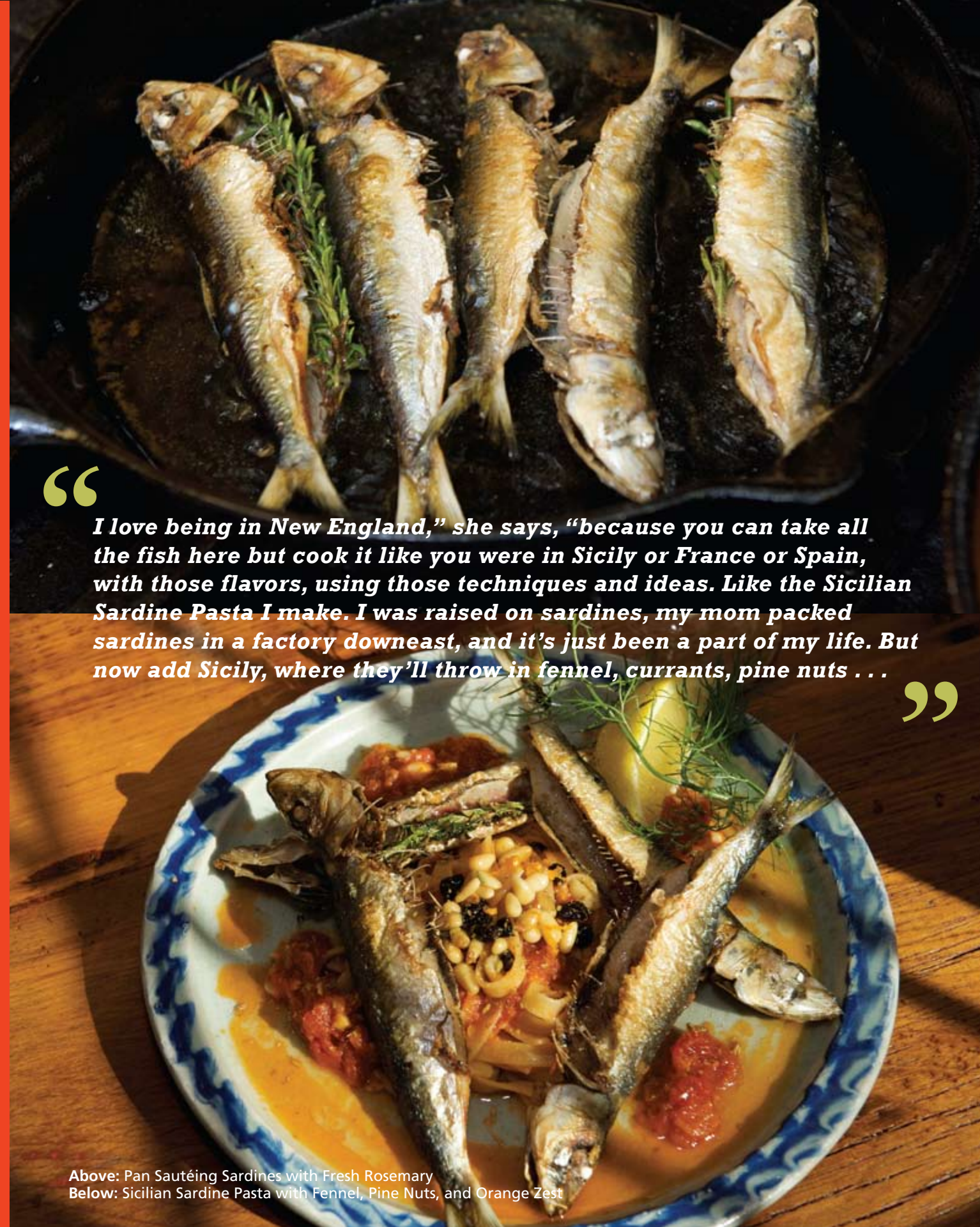
**Fresh From Maine** has a companion website at [www.tableartsmedia.com](http://www.tableartsmedia.com). Register and discover more recipes, extended chef interviews, restaurant news, and other special features.

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***I love being in New England,” she says, “because you can take all the fish here but cook it like you were in Sicily or France or Spain, with those flavors, using those techniques and ideas. Like the Sicilian Sardine Pasta I make. I was raised on sardines, my mom packed sardines in a factory downeast, and it’s just been a part of my life. But now add Sicily, where they’ll throw in fennel, currants, pine nuts . . .***

”



*“In Maine, chefs, fishermen, farmers, and other food producers have had to work symbiotically, and together we have created a culinary scene like no other in the country.”* – Rob Evans, Chef/Co-owner, Hugo’s Restaurant, Portland

Many the summer visitor has walked into a Maine restaurant only to emerge hours later utterly surprised at the perfection of the experience, the quality and freshness of the regional ingredients, the faultless preparation and service. Little do they know that such destinations are to be found from one end of the state to the other, often tucked away in unlikely places. In this first edition of *Fresh From Maine*, we have gathered together 20 of the finest, a discovery on every page presented without arbitrary ratings or cumbersome commentary.

Instead, the chefs speak for themselves, through stories and 50+ recipes, with compelling images of their food for seasoning. Want to know the secret of the caramelized onion crust for lamb at Joshua’s Restaurant without driving to Wells or learn how the El Camino twins in Brunswick make their corn soup so velvety? How about what Kyle Yarborough of Mache in Bar Harbor dips into for a midnight snack or even which chef moonlights as head referee for the Maine Roller Derby League? The surprises in these pages might even inspire you to travel, whether across the country to visit or to the stove to cook up something *Fresh From Maine*.

Above: Pan Sautéing Sardines with Fresh Rosemary  
Below: Sicilian Sardine Pasta with Fennel, Pine Nuts, and Orange Zest