

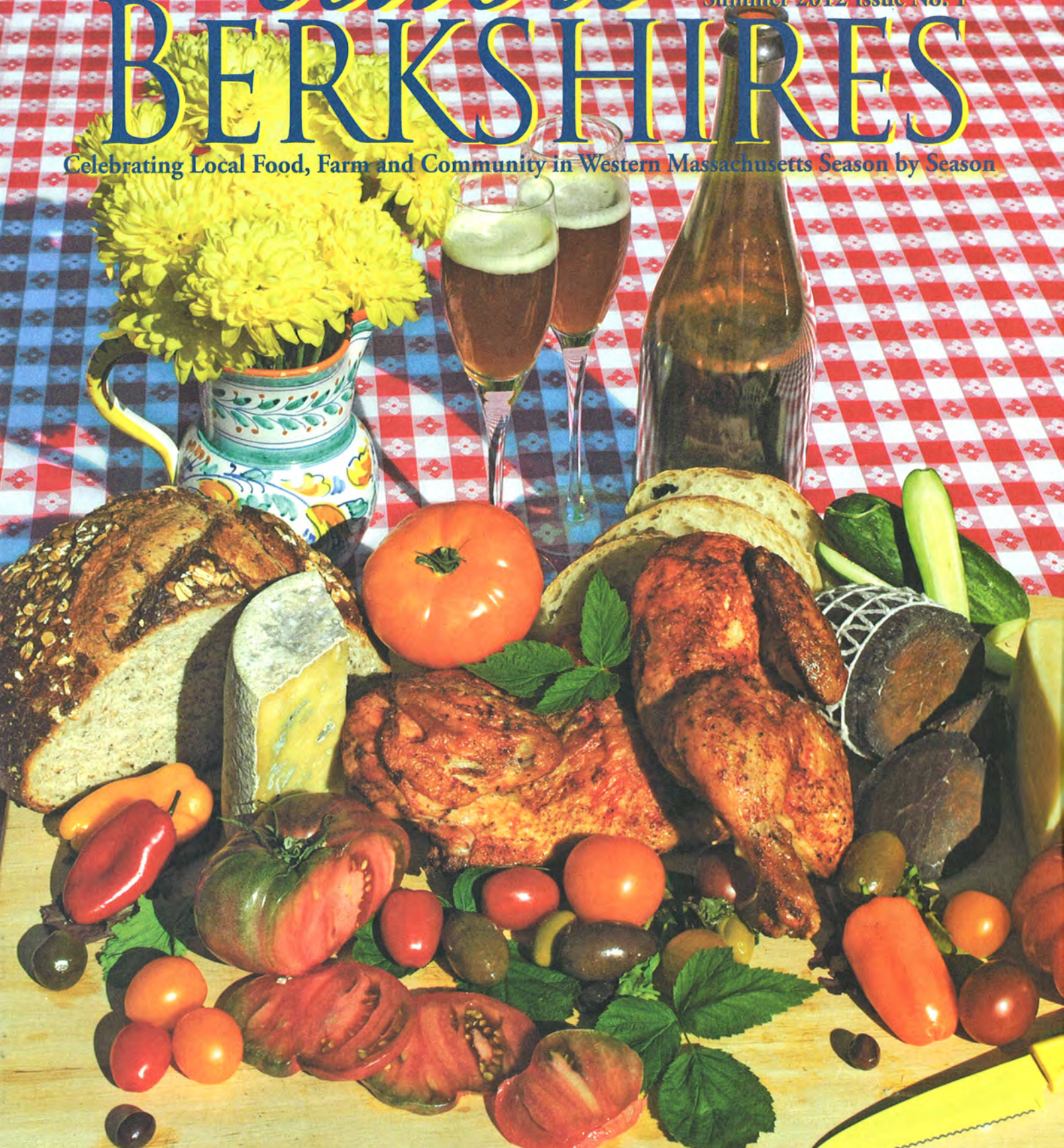
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Celebrating Local Food, Farm and Community in Western Massachusetts Season by Season



No Bull • Lunch with the Gov • Chasing the Whey

GATHER 'ROUND THE GRILL

Backyard cooking is key to savoring summer

By Jake Levin and Silka Glanzman



As children we are led to believe that for the rest of our lives “summer” will be synonymous with “vacation.” Despite our highest expectations, each and every time the days get longer and the trees get fuller, life speeds up and we’re whisked from June to September without so much as an afternoon on the playground. But the one thing we always count on—and take the time for—is a good barbecue.

Simple Grilled Chicken

- 1 tablespoon coarse salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- Olive oil
- 2 whole chickens, cut into pieces

Preheat grill to medium-high.

Drizzle olive oil over chicken, and rub with salt and pepper. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes.

Place chicken on grill, skin side down. Close cover and grill 8 minutes. Flip chicken, and close cover again. Grill until chicken is cooked through, about 15 minutes more.

Transfer chicken to a plate, and let rest 15 minutes. Serve with panzanella.

Summer is the best time to host a party: no-bake meals, disposable plates (compostable, of course) and the opportunity to unwind with good friends as the day cools around you. But it even for die-hard entertainers it’s tricky to find the time to put together a big meal, or the energy to stand in a hot kitchen for longer than it takes to pour a glass of lemonade.

That’s where the grill comes in. As long as you have a grill, and access to a great farm stand or veggie garden—and we are lucky to have many here in the Berkshires—you can quickly and easily create a colorful, delicious and impressive summer feast!

This summer we’ve been hooked on the ciabatta from Housatonic’s Berkshire Mountain Bakery. So in an effort to consume as much of this flawless loaf as possible, we’ve been experimenting with an age-old crowd pleaser: Panzanella. This harmonious Tuscan salad is traditionally a pile of stale bread, tomatoes, onions, vinegar and olive oil but we always throw in whatever else might be in season—right now peppers, cucumbers and fresh herbs.

Headed to a potluck? Then this robust salad is all you need. If you’re hosting your own gathering, serve it as a refreshing side with a simple and flavorful grilled chicken, like the ones from North Plain Farm in Great Barrington.

Sticking to the reliable, time-honored formula is always an option, and you’ll have no trouble finding a good recipe. But to make a more backyard-friendly dish grill the tomatoes, peppers and bread, pulling out any extra sweetness while adding that good ole’ deep char flavor. Keep it local by using apple cider vinegar instead of the traditional red wine variety. Improvise, incorporating the bounty of the market—string beans, grilled eggplant or arugula as you see fit. And if you’re going ahead with the chicken, as we suggest you do, keep it simple with salt and pepper, a little olive oil and the richness of a pastured chicken. We promise you’ll wow your guests without breaking a sweat! ✕

We welcome our readers to submit an essay for “The Last Bite”. If your essay is chosen for publication, you will win a gift certificate for dinner at an area Farm to Table restaurant.

Grilled Panzanella



- 1 fresh ciabatta, cut into 1-inch slices
- 2 pints cherry or grape tomatoes
- 1 whole shallot, sliced into ¼-inch rounds
- 4 bell peppers, cut into 1-inch strips
- 2 cucumbers, peeled and cut into ¼-inch-thick quarters
- 1 cup chopped parsley and basil
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup olive oil plus more for grilling

Combine shallots with vinegar in a small bowl. Set aside.

Turn the grill to medium. As it heats, drizzle olive oil over ciabatta, peppers and tomatoes. Add to the grill when it reaches the proper temperature

Char ciabatta, peppers and tomatoes on both sides. When they are thoroughly grilled, remove from grill and place on a large platter.

Break the bread into smaller chunks and toss together with the tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, shallots, vinegar, herbs and olive oil.

Serve warm.