



KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN

Jennifer and Nick Charboneau make a toast in the newly expanded pub at Cook's Lobster and Ale House on Bailey Island. The modern space features multiple Maine beers on tap and will be open year-round with a limited menu in the winter.

Island

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of the Franco American Heritage Center in Lewiston.

As the Dubes dived into plates of fried shrimp and clams and sipped martinis at Cook's on a recent Friday night, their daughter welcomed diners to the newly renamed Cook's Lobster and Ale House. Nick Charboneau ran the kitchen while their granddaughter scurried among the crowd. The dream was alive and kicking.

The price tag was scary, the Charboneaus admitted, but Nick Charboneau, who had never been to Cook's before, fell hard.

"We came out here and I said, 'This place is a gold mine,'" he said.

"I saw the potential of owning this property and what it can do," said Nick Charboneau, who tapped friends to help him invest in Cook's. Family members kicked in some too.

"We believed in it. What this place stood for. We are not afraid of risk. We didn't look at it as a risk," added Jennifer Charboneau.

To her, the bigger risk would've been walking away. "For me it was coming home. They say home is where your heart is and for me it's always been Maine," said Jennifer Charboneau.

Not content to have all the fun, Charboneau turned the tables with a real estate possibility for her parents.

"Six months after we took ownership, I heard the Bailey Island Motel was for sale. I quickly told them as I knew it was always their dream to own an inn on the ocean and ... they bought it," Charboneau said.

Though her father runs Dube Travel, an agency based in Auburn, and has no plans to retire, the Dubes were ready to downsize.

"His dream for 30 years was, 'When I retire I would love to have a little B&B or motel by the ocean.' But we gave it up 20 years ago thinking it would never happen," said Rita Dube, sitting in her partly refurbished new home attached to the 11-room inn with peaceful water views. "At 75 and 73, here we are embarking upon that big step."

What do they know about running a motel?

"Nothing," they both said unabashed.

But as a travel agent for more than 50 years, Paul Dube seems well-equipped to handle hordes of tourists.

"I've been in and out of hotels enough times in the last 53 years that I feel like I could run them," Dube said. "I feel I'm very comfortable running a hotel. Plus we've retained the same staff."

The couple bought the motel in late February and have been working nonstop. The week before Memorial Day weekend they were booked solid. Their house in Lewiston is on the market and Bailey Island soon will be home.

"We fell in love with the place and the view," said Rita Dube.

Her husband, filled with energy and a winsome demeanor, will commute to Auburn, and continue to take groups on travel trips abroad.

How will their lives over-

lap, now that they are living and working a quarter-mile from their daughter? On a basic level they will buy in bulk from the same vendors and are sharing contractors. If a motel guest craves lobster they'll be seated at Cook's in no time. If diners at Cook's are so charmed by the island that want to stay longer, the Charboneaus know where to send them.

"All my family has been really wonderful," said Jennifer Charboneau, 43. "When we needed all hands on deck, my brother and sister-in-law were flipping burgers, tending bar. While it is ours, it's really a family affair."

The Dubes are proud of what their daughter and son-in-law have accomplished in less than a year.

"We are bringing it back to the glory days," said Rita Dube.

"There is so much history in this place. Everyone we've met has a story that their grandfather built this place, or they fished off the pier, or got engaged here."

JENNIFER CHARBONEAU

When winter comes and the tourists are gone, Cook's Lobster and Ale House will stay open to give locals an expansive place to socialize. Offering up to 20 local beers on tap, the new lounge replaces a cramped two-seat bar with a contemporary, wood-toned space that can seat 20 at the bar and more at tables lining new picture windows. Concerts and lobster bakes are planned on the point this summer.

Menu upgrades including lobster wontons and a popular grilled chicken and brie sandwich have impressed both locals and tourists.

"It's an anchor for the island," said Richard Moseley, president of the Harpswell Business Association. "Having excellent food is a big draw."

Though this is the Charboneaus' first full season as owners, "they've made an impression on the business community as well as Bailey Island residents," said Moseley.

Despite Harpswell's population growth from 5,000 year-round residents to as many as 35,000 in the summer, "in a small town in Maine you have to have local farmers and fishermen on your side," Moseley said.

Trevor Pontbriand, manager of the Bailey Island General Store, confirmed they do.

"We are definitely excited with the new owners," Pontbriand said. "The hype has brought a lot more people to the area."

Amid the hype and lingering nostalgia, the family is preserving as much of the island's legacy as possible.

"There is so much history in this place. Everyone we've met has a story that their grandfather built this place, or they fished off the pier, or got engaged here," said Jennifer Charboneau. "Everyone has a story about how this place touched their lives."

The course is open to any participants interested in learning the fundamental principles and practices of organic farming. Specialists from the MOFGA Agricultural Services Department and a panel of organic farmers will conduct the course.

Register for one or both days. Lunch will be provided.

For information, go to mofga.org.

Farm

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Another thing that is marked in her homeland is the importance of the community, and that is one thing Eric needed to understand before they married.

"I told him he will not only marry me but he will marry my whole clan," she said. "In my tribe, if you don't belong to the community, you are nothing ... it is a wealth for us to be with our family and with our friends."

Her family loved Eric, who was willing to marry into the clan, so he and Annie wed at the beginning of 2015. As they planned their new life together in America, they thought of settling in Maine instead of returning to Boston. For decades, Eric had a second home on Swan's Island and liked the slower pace of life and the more tightly connected community there. Annie, who had worked in the Philippines for Texas Instruments, wanted to be closer to the land in America.

Once Annie joined her husband in Maine last spring, they spent their honeymoon working as apprentices on an organic farm in Cornville. Every Sunday, on their day off, they drove around and looked for some land of their own. They wanted to stay within commuting distance of Husson University, where Eric had gotten a job teaching writing and literature, but were discouraged by what they found.

"We were almost ready to give up," Eric, who also has opened a law practice in Bucksport, said. "The farmhouses were either going to fall down or were done up as high-end places with Jacuzzis and swimming pools, which we didn't want to have. Then we stumbled on this place. The farmhouse is sound, it has a spring-fed



MICKY BEDELL | BDN

Eric and Annie Woodbury are renovating an old farmhouse on their property on Verona Island. Beside it are a chicken coop and the skeleton of a greenhouse.

pond and it has good soil. It's good for vegetables."

Annie liked it, too.

"You can do anything if there's water," she said.

The property had two buildings and 31 acres that stretch down to the river — enough space for the couple to plant fields, put up greenhouses for their more tropical crops and keep animals including pigs, chickens and ducks. Here, they will plant the Asian crops that Annie loves and misses, along with traditional New England root vegetables. They have been accepted to farmers markets in Bucksport, Stonington and Orono and are in the process of getting organic certification for their land.

"I am learning a lot about organic farming in America," Annie said. "In America, they are going back to nature."

Some of what she is learning feels surprising. In the Philippines, where her people have practiced organic farming for so long, recently many farmers have begun to replace bamboo piping with plastic and water buffaloes

with Chinese-made machinery. It makes for some delicate phone conversations with her family in the Philippines, who worry about her because her community in Maine is so much smaller than they would like.

"They told me, 'It's OK for you to be alone on the farm because you have all the machines,'" Annie said. "It's hard for me to tell them that their practice is the best, because they want to try new things."

One aspect of her old life that she definitely misses is the importance and role of community.

"Here, I am shocked. Individualism is practiced here, and community life is my upbringing," Annie said. "For us, it's a negative thing to be alone."

Though she likes her Verona Island neighbors and the nearby town of Bucksport, she found the Maine winter to be pretty lonely, and the American emphasis on money to be disconcerting. But she made it through.

"I would love to thank Skype and Facebook and [Facebook] Messenger,"

Annie said. "My family said, 'What life are you living? You're alone! It's useless.'"

Those concerns were somewhat assuaged earlier this spring, when Annie and Eric invited the Philippines cultural group BIBAK New England to come to East-West Farm to hold a house blessing and a planting ritual, both of which are sacred ceremonies. The last weekend of April, 30 or so Filipinos came from Massachusetts, Connecticut and other places around New England to the farm to camp, work, celebrate and show their children their traditional ways.

"They were happy," Eric said. "Their kids got to see a more traditional activity. They want to camp and be on the farm."

Annie and Eric hope those kids, and others, will come back to East-West Farm. There will be animals, and fields to tend, rituals to hold and sunsets to watch over the Penobscot River — all activities they want to share with others.

"It's a beautiful spot here," Eric said. "It shouldn't really be just for two people."

Teen

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tion, Morine said, and the family decided to put up a greenhouse to give him the chance to plant and grow his own vegetables.

"When the greenhouse got up and running, Adam decided he wanted to sell vegetables," she said. "He now has a following of loyal customers."

In his greenhouse Saturday, Adam proudly showed off the sprouting greens as he plucked weeds from the rows.

"Those are my onions," he said, pointing to several orderly rows. "But that's a weed, and I don't want that here."

Adam has onions, spinach, lettuce, bok choy and celery coming up in the greenhouse. Tomatoes, cucumbers and green peppers will be available later in the season.

Several feet away, behind the family's home along the St. John River, two coops house Adam's flock of egg-laying hens — he also sells the eggs — and two resident roosters.

"That's Spike and Mr. White," Adam said, pointing to the two roosters. "Did you hear that? That was a rooster [crowing]. I can tell it's one and not a hen because of the way it sounds. That was Spike, by the way."

Two brooding hens cluck contentedly as Adam gently strokes them.

"That's a mom and her baby," he said. "These chickens lay smaller eggs, but I don't see any in here now."

When vegetables and eggs are ready for sale, Morine uses social media to get the word out.

"I'll put a post up on Facebook, and people get in touch with us to let us know what they want," she said. "Then Adam picks it, packages it up and we deliver."

Morine said Adam also supplies the Market Street Co-op in Fort Kent with fresh vegetables during the summer months. More recently, according to his mother, Adam has become interested in the area's wild edibles.

"We are surrounded by food here," Morine said. "You don't need to spend a lot of money to eat good food."

Adam has a difficult time learning in a traditional setting, Morine said, but that does not stop him.

"He's as smart as a whip," she said. "And he is really proud of what he has done with the greenhouse and learning about wild edibles."

To learn how to build and properly set up his 20-by-48-foot greenhouse, Adam watched online instructional and YouTube videos, Morine said. The family also worked together to secure a small U.S. Department of Agriculture grant to fund the greenhouse construction.

From his mother, a former nutrition educator, Adam gained an appreciation for healthy food.

"For a kid his age, he eats really well [and] is not afraid of vegetables," his father, Jeff Jandreau, said.

At the same time, he enjoys teaching his peers about good nutrition and sharing his newfound



JULIA BAYLY | BDN

Rare is the weed that escapes Adam Jandreau's attention. The 13-year-old from St. John Plantation sells fresh produce and eggs throughout the summer season from his Adam's Lunch Box and Greenhouse.

knowledge of wild edibles.

"He really enjoys sharing information on how to grow, find and eat fresh food," Morine said. "It's great to see him interacting with other kids doing that."

Morine credits that attention to a nutritional diet and working in the greenhouse with helping her son's mental and physical health.

"It has built up his confidence," she said. "I can see where he could become a hermit so easily, [but] this business is teaching him social skills, and he will walk up to anyone and ask how they are doing. He is really good with people of all ages."

A believer in helping in any way he can, Adam points to a section of his garden that is reserved for vegetables planted for Katie's Krops, an initiative started by Katie Stagliano of South Carolina aimed at encouraging youth

around the country to plant food to feed the hungry.

In 2013, Adam received a four-year, \$400 grant from Katie's Krops to expand his garden.

"He donates all the food from that part of the garden to the local food bank," Morine said. "Food waste really bothers [Adam] so he even takes old canned tuna or salmon and we make dog and cat snacks out of it to sell."

Adam said he has no intention of stopping his fresh vegetable business and looks forward to making his living as a gentleman farmer as an adult.

"After I turn 18, maybe I can grow all of my own food," he said.

"He has a lot of farmer friends," Morine said. "He loves to talk tractors and crops with them anytime he can. That is wonderful to see happen."

MOFGA course in organic farming

UNITY — The course Organic Farming: Principles and Practice will be offered Tuesday, May 24, and Wednesday, May 25, at MOFGA's Common Ground Education Center.

Admission is free for MOFGA apprentices, \$100 per day for others.

Become a citizen scientist for the Wild Leek Project

The public is invited to participate in a project to expand knowledge about wild leeks in Maine and improve opportunities for the conservation of the species.

Wild leeks (*Allium tricoccum*) are part of the onion family and grow in rich hardwood and floodplain forests. Also known as ramps, the plant is listed as a Species of Special Concern because of limited distribution and total numbers.

The Maine Wild Leek Project is a collaboration between University of Maine Cooperative Extension and the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's Natural Areas Program. In

coming months, participating citizen scientists will receive more information from UMaine Extension about wild leeks, including research on the effects of harvesting and a fact sheet about how to establish a wild leeks patch.

Information about the project, including the reporting form, is online in the April 2016 Maine Home Garden News at extension.umaaine.edu.

Information also is available from David Fuller at 778-4650 or dfuller@maine.edu.

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