

# Bell

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well in Maine's foodiest city. "The only restrictions we have to follow is low sodium. We season lightly. And for diabetics, [we] keep carbohydrates low," he said. The facility's Massachusetts-based owner, Northbridge Companies, is committed to regional fare through their Eat Fresh, Eat Local program, believing "age does not lessen the desire for fresh, quality dining; it often enhances it." They even use local wineries to keep spirits bright. Wendy Nowokunski, president and co-founder of Northbridge, said "being part of the local community while providing freshly sourced choices on our residents' menus" is the goal. "Chef Jamie has done an incredible job of collaborating with local farms and fisheries to elevate the program at Avita of Stroudwater and will proudly continue his effort at Stroudwater Lodge," Nowokunski said. The Lodge is another assisted living home opening across the street. Bell will manage both kitchens. This chef may be shielded from harsh Yelp reviews and food critics, but that doesn't mean he cuts corners. Bell creates inventive new menus daily for these elders suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Once a month he makes lobster rolls and offers a special meal on their birthdays.

The only request he can't fulfill is muskrat stew. "A guest remembered hunting for muskrat growing up and wanted muskrat stew," Bell recalled. Why didn't he oblige? "There are USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] regulations against that." He could turn out the insipid fare associated with senior care facilities — stringy beef and mushy veggies — but Bell takes the extra step by making his own soup stocks, deli meats and grinding meat for this captive audience. "That way I know it's not coming from 100 different cows across the state," he said, stopping to sign an invoice from Native Maine, where all his produce comes from. "Nothing we do is pre-packaged, add-water meals. So there is no guessing game to it." Ranging in age from mid-60s to 100, his audience is wide and varied. They span different decades and multiple nationalities. "I have 70 different palates to feed," he said. Many couldn't care less about where their food is grown, but they know a good meal when they taste it. "They still have their likes and different takes on food," Bell said. "Having a great meal still matters a lot to them." Enjoying a salad last week, Janet Bockus, gave it two thumbs up. "I lived through food rations in World War II. There is not much I don't like," the 82-year-old resident said. While Bell's diners may



**Chef Jamie Bell receives fresh local produce from Native Maine in the kitchen at Avita of Stroudwater, an assisted living facility in Westbrook.**

KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN

**Chef Jamie Bell may be shielded from harsh Yelp reviews and food critics, but that doesn't mean he cuts corners**

lies or following trends. Eating is one of the most basic responses to life, and Bell communicates to the memory impaired through this elemental, human channel. "It's fun," he said. "It's social and rewarding. I'm able to use my culinary past to shape my future." To strengthen the link between food and memory, Bell runs and coordinates cooking classes, such as The

History of Pizza Making. In Memory Making Baking, residents make batter while the bread is baking in the oven. "The scent can trigger memories," Bell said. "A lot of these women cooked for their families for years. Being in the kitchen can bring it all back." And about that James Beard Award? "Who's to say they can't give it to an assisted living chef?" Bell said.

# Oliver

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## Rhubarb Coffee Cake

*Yields 1 cake*

### Topping

- 2/3 cup flour
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup flaked coconut
- ¼ cup chopped nuts

### Batter

- 2 cups sifted flour
- 1¼ cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon powdered cloves

- ½ cup salad oil
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup milk
- 2 cups fresh rhubarb cut in 1-inch pieces

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9x13-inch pan.

Assemble the topping mixture by mixing the flour and sugar together and cutting in the butter. Add the coconut and chopped nuts. Set aside.

Make the batter. Sift dry ingredients together in a mixing bowl.

Beat eggs, oil and milk together in another bowl. Add the egg mixture to the dry ingredients and mix well. Fold in the rhubarb.

Turn into the baking pan, spreading the stiff batter into the corners. Spoon topping over batter.

Bake for 30 minutes.

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**Turn them into sauce:** Strawberry sauce is delicious on waffles, pancakes, ice cream and more. Use this easy method to make a 2-cup batch to enjoy now or save for later. Combine 2 cups hulled and chopped strawberries with a half cup of sugar and a half teaspoon of lemon juice in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until it comes to a bowl (the berries will re-

lease their juices as they heat). Reduce the heat to medium-low, and simmer for an additional 5 minutes. Transfer to storage containers and freeze until ready to use. Defrost before using. **Slice them in salads:** If you aren't eating summer berries in your salads, it's time to start. From the classic spinach salad (with sliced strawberries, candied almonds and a balsamic dressing) to more inventive grain salads, tossed salads and more, strawberries pair well with leafy greens, grains, tangy vinaigrettes

and sharp cheeses. **Toss them on ice cream:** Fresh berries on ice cream? Yes, please! (They're good on yogurt and in cereal too!) Sarah Walker Caron is the senior features editor for the Bangor Daily News and author of "Grains as Mains: Modern Recipes Using Ancient Grains," available at bookstores everywhere including The Briar Patch and Bull Moose in Bangor. For more delicious recipes, check out Maine Course at [mainecourse.bangordailynews.com](http://mainecourse.bangordailynews.com).

# McAleer

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how she'll spend the dough. In September or October she plans to launch a new product called Bixby Bites, portion controlled versions of her bigger bars sold in a pouch. "This is a game changer. It allows us to continue to be competitive," said the first Burch fellow. "The food business is very layered and textured. This is an opportunity to scale manufacturing

and continue to grow." With the windfall she will buy equipment for her mini confections, but stopped short of saying Bixby and Co. will staff up to meet demand. Besides cash, McAleer gains access to education, mentoring and networking opportunities from the New York design house. Beyond her inventive chocolate, offered in varieties like vegan dark chocolate, peanut and Maine sea salt, McAleer said the award is a vote of confidence for all Maine-made goods. "Although Maine is a

small state, we are competing on a national level and winning."

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## Benefit BBQ & Silent Auction For John Gerald & Breanne McIntyre

John and Breanne were involved in a serious motorcycle accident on Sunday, May 22, 2016. Both sustained some very serious injuries. They are proving they are strong and determined, but the medical bills are adding up and they both face a lengthy recovery. We are hosting this event to help cover medical bills, household bills, transportation costs and anything else they may need during their recovery. We would like to lessen their stress by making sure they can focus on healing without worrying about medical bills and finances during this process. **Let's all help John and Breanne get back to every day life!**

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**When: Saturday, June 18, 2016  
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