

# NOTABLE EDIBLES

## RUSTICALLY OPTIMISTIC

We love local food at home and in fine restaurants, but we've long been hungry for something in between, a Brooklyn answer to the Farmers' Diner in Vermont. There the short-order fare is as simple as at any truck stop, but the eggs, bacon, potatoes, butter, cold cuts, ice cream, even the grains in the pancakes and pie crust—virtually everything save the coffee accompanying the local cream—are raised right, right outside town. Why can't a Brooklyn eatery put such high-minded ingredients into lowbrow chow?

We're hoping Urban Rustic will do just that. Aaron Woolf and Dan Cipriani (who own Lodge and its next-door, bite-size takeout shop) partnered with musician-caterer Luis Illades to open this "farm-to-market café and grocery" on McCarren Park, and the menu—mostly breakfast platters, smoothies and sandwiches—promises easy eating for unfancy farmophiles.

"Traceability is really one of our prime motivators," says Woolf, explaining they'll stick to sustainable foods from nearby family farms "whenever possible." A documentary filmmaker whose recent *King Corn* exposes America's commodity conundrum, Woolf knows all too well why the dark underbelly of industrial agriculture is worth avoiding.

The tri-fold menu bears a tractor image and exuberantly announces, "we know where our food comes from!" So, although at (sandwich)



press time, the options (turkey-swiss-tomato, mozz-basil-tomato, et al) sound startlingly like the offerings at any deli, and the smoothies (strawberry, blueberry, pineapple and banana) aren't holding too vigorously to the local-sourcing ideal either, we're giving these guys the benefit of the doubt. Cipriani says they're learning fast and shaving off food miles everywhere they can. Speaking of which, maybe I should give up driving to Vermont for breakfast.

*Urban Rustic*  
236 North 12th Street, Williamsburg  
718-388-9444

## COOKIES FOR A CAUSE

When the parents of children being treated for neuroblastoma at Memorial Sloan-Kettering (including a Park Slope child who was treated from 1998 to 2001 and now receives follow-up care, and another Park Sloper in treatment now) found out that only two mil-

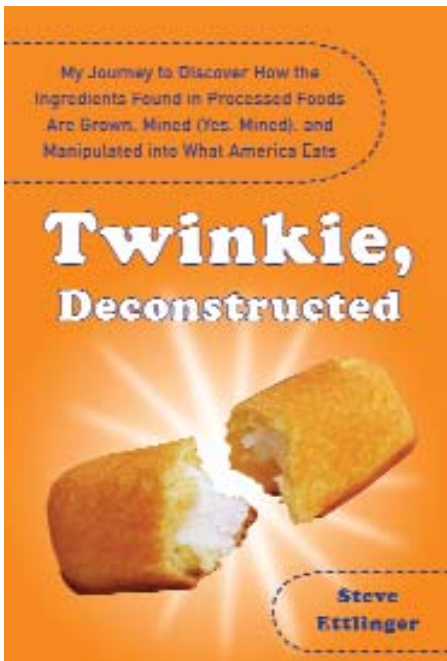
lion dollars was needed to fund the development of a new treatment for this rare and lethal cancer of the nervous system, they decided to raise some dough over the holidays. In true parent fashion, they planned a bake sale.

Making 96,000 cookies sounded ambitious to me, but when I heard that the ingredients had been donated and all the work would be volunteered, baking a difference began to seem a lot more possible. So I signed up and found myself in a tiny rented kitchen in Prospect Heights, taking over at the temperamental oven from a group of French Culinary Institute students. The operation was a well-oiled machine. In just two weeks, 350 of us volunteered. Boxes of cookies were stacked to the ceiling, ready to ship out as Internet orders streamed in. The air was fragrant with citrus shortbread.

Over 8,000 cookie buyers helped to raise over \$200,000. I left smelling of butter, filled with hopes for a new antibody treatment for neuroblastoma—and with a new appreciation for the power of snickerdoodles. [www.bandofparents.org](http://www.bandofparents.org).

— Zoe Singer





## TWINKIE, TWINKIE, SNACK FOOD STAR: ONE MAN WONDERS WHAT YOU ARE

When Park Slope writer Steve Ettlinger’s young daughter asked, “Daddy, what’s polysorbate 60?” he set out to find the answer. His discoveries resulted in his recently published book, *Twinkie, Deconstructed: My Journey to Discover How the Ingredients in Processed Foods Are Grown, Mined (Yes, Mined), and Manipulated into What America Eats*.

A convenience store staple all too synonymous with our nation, the Twinkie contains many omnipresent—yet popularly unknown—industrial “ingredients,” and Ettlinger devotes a riveting chapter to each. His investigation took him on a rollicking ride from phosphate mines in Idaho to cornfields in Iowa, from gypsum mines in Oklahoma to oil fields in China.

While Twinkie’s parent company, Interstate Bakeries Corporation, declined to participate in the research, Ettlinger bears them no ill will, even admitting he’s enjoyed plenty of the tubular cakes in his day. Still, what he learned doesn’t exactly have him reaching for the cellophane-wrapped snack. “Certainly since writing this book I’m much more in tune to the local foods that are abundant in the Slope and all around Brooklyn,” he says. Lately there’s one kind of food on his plate and another in his work: “I’ll continue to promote local and whole foods in my own life and investigate industrial food processing in print and perhaps on the small screen.” Yeah, it must be too hard to write a whole book about all the ingredients in, say, a cabbage.

— CL

## SUSTAINABLE SCOOP

What do you do when you’re an ice cream fanatic and there’s nowhere to get a cone in your neighborhood? Most would settle for a freezer-frosted pint of corner-store chocolate chip.

Not Alexis Miesen. Faced with Boerum Hill’s frozen-dessert dearth and looking for a new challenge after a decade in education and public-health nonprofits, she joked that she should open an ice cream store. Her gal pal Jennie Dundas, an actor and fellow ice cream addict, was “crazy enough” to join in. Sure, neither had run a business before, but they shared a green vision. “We knew we needed to be consistent and committed,” remembers Miesen. “We couldn’t use toxic materials to build the shop, then offer biodegradable spoons.”

The frozen stuff is handmade in upstate dairy country by Matt

White, a fourth-generation ice cream master (his cow Frosty is immortalized in a painting by Mexican artist Bernardo Palau), and the place is equal parts sweet shop and hangout spot. Even in mitten weather, families crowd in for a lick of peppermint stick (flavored with organic candy canes), cool mint chip, fruity black raspberry, or the tangy “real” fro-yo they call “culture.”



Kids pack the play area, stocked with knitted cows, but it’s not just Boerum Hill’s stroller set that has adopted Blue Marble. Thanks to fair trade espresso and free WiFi, plenty of Brooklyn blogging happens on-site in the pre-ice cream hours.

“And then at 10 p.m.,” laughs Dundas, “we have the hipsters pounding on our door five minutes after we’ve closed, begging for ice cream.”

— Stephanie Rosenbaum

*Blue Marble Ice Cream, 420 Atlantic Avenue, 718-858-1100*

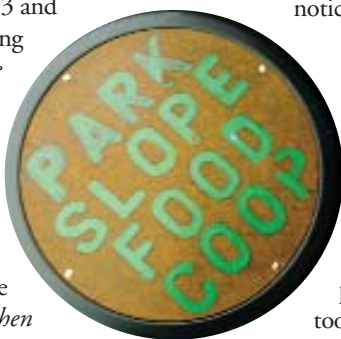
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## PAPER OR PLASTIC? THE FOOD COOP FINALLY LETS YOU CHARGE IT

The member-owned and -operated Park Slope Food Coop opened in 1973 and the following year began publishing its aptly named newsletter, *The Linewaiter's Gazette*. Cashing in on the Coop's motto—"good food at low prices for working members through cooperation"—has long meant long waits to learn the total (even SKU numbers didn't arrive at the Coop until this century), then enduring a second, equally glacier-paced line to pay. And, except for food stamps and a prehistoric, pre-paid personal-check system, it was cash only, with nearly every customer in for an unintended game of blackjack, anxiously eyeing the total for fear those impulse-buy tamari almonds or fresh galangal would push them over the limit.

So when the Coop announced it would accept debit cards this past fall, I grabbed my canvas tote bags and came running. For once, inspired spending wouldn't require schlepping up the block to an ATM, or "un-shopping"—walking back through the aisles returning that can of imported tuna, those cheaper-than-retail-but-still-pricey vitamins, and that where-did-I-even-find-this-algae-based skin cream?

My first time shopping with plastic, I felt like an uptown art collector. I bypassed the



tofu and went for a fancy bag of gorgeously swirled \$8 Tuscan beans, some rough-hewn, artisanal orecchiette and a bottle of the finest olive oil. I was out the door with my pricey purchases before I even noticed the receipt's total.

According to general manager Joe Holtz, I'm not alone in my enthusiasm. Over half of shoppers are embracing the new system, and they're embracing about eight percent more purchases, too.

But was I too quick to adore this brave new Brooklyn? Have we bought into convenience but lost something else?

Yes, if you ask Moe Kornbluth, a member since the Coop's inception. To him, a shopping-cart traffic jam is "an opportunity to ask someone how they're going to use some kind of tropical tuber I never heard of."

I always enjoy chatting with Moe. Then again, there has been more than one instance when, standing in my winter coat with thawing ice cream and the member in front of me detailing the rewards of his one-meal-a-day diet, I've lost my cool. Now when I need milk from grassfed cows and the meter's running, or I've got company coming and no olives, you can bet I'll be swiping the plastic. Charge!

— ZS

## LUGGING YOUR LOW-CARBON DIET

This February 14th, make Mother Earth your Valentine with three little words: "fill 'er up!" No, I don't mean the gas tank of your SUV, not even the Ford Edge, despite its Marlow-plugging commercial.

I mean fill up your tote bag. Americans use 60,000 plastic bags every 5 seconds and if your excuse for eschewing the reusable kind was some inability to sacrifice style, your shipment has come in. Two new Brooklyn-branded bags—conveniently the same number of shoulders on most folks—let you look good while you lug.

Fishs Eddy's terrific tote, above, is water resistant and downright wipe-able. Plus it's so damn cute, has a flat bottom, and is just \$5.95. [www.fishseddy.com](http://www.fishseddy.com).

On, or, ideally, *in* the other hand, Maptote makes a 100 percent calico cotton tote (sturdier than their incarnations available a year ago) that is a great geography primer. Quiz yourself on how to get from Canarsie to Coney, from Bushwick to Brownsville, or from Mill Basin to Midwood. \$15, [www.maptote.com](http://www.maptote.com).



## AS IF GRAND ARMY PLAZA'S ARCH DIDN'T ALREADY MAKE BROOKLYN FEEL LIKE PARIS

Upon reading that French President Nicolas Sarkozy has been mending fences with the States, Shelly Fireman, the restaurateur behind both Brooklyn Diner USA locations (Times Square and 57th Street), decided to offer his own olive branch in return: a Brooklyn take on the classic French charcroute platter. The Brooklyn version includes BD's signature 15-bite hot dog sausage, "Kasseler" smoked

pork chop, fennel sausage, chicken sausage, thick-sliced corned beef served with juniper berry sauerkraut and boiled potatoes. The charcroute platter is \$22.75. Pair it with a half bottle of Alsatian riesling for an additional \$22.





## THE CO-BRANDED PICKLE: PLOUGHMAN'S PACKS A ONE-TWO PUNCH

Last summer, top brass at Wheelhouse Pickles met with the masterminds at Sixpoint, ostensibly to plot a pickle-and-beer tasting event, but the conversation took a fateful turn. “Shane and Jeff asked if I wanted to try making pickles with their beer, wort or brewing byproducts,” remembers Wheelhouse wunderkind Jon Orren. (For those of you who don’t brew for a living, wort is the mixture of malted barley, wheat or other grains from which all beer is born.)

Jon took some home to play with, and remembered that the popular British chutney called “Branston Pickle” (for the brand that dominates the UK market) shines with the bright taste of malt vinegar. It’s a critical ingredient in the classic Ploughman’s Lunch, which features crusty bread slathered with the pickle/chutney,



topped with sharp cheddar and served with apple slices, a hard-boiled egg, pickled onions, a green salad and maybe some pâté, “for fancy-pants people,” says Jon.

He set to tinkering with the recipe, substituting wort from Sixpoint’s Brownstone Ale (which uses 11 malt varieties) for the malt vinegar, and the Ploughman’s Pickle came into being. Before listing the ingredients, Jon has to “take deep breath, this list is long.” True enough it’s a mouthful: turnip, carrot, parsnip, cauliflower, leek, onion, apple, dates, Wheelhouse Bread and Butter Pickles, garlic, brown sugar, tomato paste, fennel seed, mustard seed, coriander, allspice, clove, cinnamon, black pepper, chili flakes, lemon juice, Brownstone Ale wort, and corn starch. The concept is Bri’ish and the veggies are Jersey-grown, but the stuff in the jar is Brooklyn through and through.

Plus it was our New Year’s resolution to eat more wort.

## THE BROOKLYNITES: OUR OWN “FAMILY OF MAN”

In 1955, MoMA opened what has been hailed as the most successful exhibition of photography ever assembled. Edward Steichen’s monumental “The Family of Man” compiled 503 photos, arranged by the stages of life, showing Earth’s citizens, irrespective of country, caste or creed, in common experience: workers, loafers, fighters, lovers, healers, hunters. On the heels of world war, the collection celebrated the essential universality of the human experience.

Over 50 years later, the exhibit’s companion book remains a timeless classic. And while the new book *The Brooklynites* (PowerHouse Books, \$35) isn’t exactly sending it to the sale rack, it’s trouncing it on Amazon.

*The Brooklynites* presents portraits of people from all four cor-

ners of, well, the borough. Photographer Seth Kusher (whose images have graced our lucky pages) and writer Anthony LaSalsa (Brooklynites both) teamed up to capture images and interviews of borough residents from the famous to the nameless, and the result is reminiscent of Steichen’s magnum opus. Although the subjects—deejay, fireman, teacher, boxer, court clerk, metalsmith, actor, veteran, homemaker, accordion player, barber, Coney Island freak-show director—live within a few square miles of one another, the melting-pot message plays like that buoyant global philosophy of unity.

Yes, both books study the gamut of food experiences, the former from beggars to feasters, the latter from a liquor-store owner to a fisherman and from Peter Luger’s Steakhouse to Totono’s Pizzeria. But for once we’re not in it for what’s edible: buy both books and chew on the essential oneness of the world, and Brooklyn.

