

TRIP PLANNER:  
LONG BEACH PENINSULA  
PG. 78

DIY Flagstone  
Patios

Craft Light Beer?

Boss Blueberry  
Recipes

# 1889

Washington's Magazine

## *Bold* CAREER SECOND ACTS

3 FOOD PROFESSIONALS  
WHO MADE **RIGHT TURNS**



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## Farm to Table A Berry Good Haul

Celebrating one of Washington's  
most prevalent superfoods

*written by Corinne Whiting*

Washington is the nation's top blueberry producer.

ANY WAY YOU spin it, things look deliciously ripe for Washington's summer blueberry scene. The state continues to be the nation's top producer of these coveted, spherical superfoods, with last year's harvest totaling 129 million pounds. Within that impressive haul, 85 percent of these berries are now organic.

The sweetest news for blueberry loyalists—this year has seen the addition of 1,000 acres, and growers have optimistic projections about conditions such as the weather and number of pollinating bees. Blueberry farms exist on both sides of the Cascade Mountains. In mid-June, the harvest begins on eastern farms; around mid-July, the action comes to Western Washington. The peak harvest can last until October, making this one of the longest-running seasons in North America.

### On the Farm

Since 2011, Britt Fletcher and his family have taken advantage of the region's prime conditions at Mutiny Bay Blues, their organic blueberry farm on Whidbey Island. The farm sits in

the midst of many microclimates and gets a bit less rainfall, due to a slight rain shadow from the Olympic Mountains.

Though Fletcher anchors the Freeland operation, it's a full-fledged family affair as the Fletchers grow organically, farm sustainably and sell locally. They also rely on farm manager Ken Petry and his family, who are "crucial to the success of the farm, too," Fletcher said. During harvest, the farm employs about thirty people to hand-pick, sort and package tens of thousands of pounds of berries.

Although the Fletcher family bought the land in 2001, they took a decade to decide it didn't make sense to grow wheat and barley here. "Although you can always adjust the pH level of the soil, it's easier to start with what you need," he said—and blueberries like the low pH naturally found on Whidbey. "Why fight the soil?" he asked.

For blueberries, Fletcher said, it's all about the "p" words: the soil's "pH" and how the beds are prepared, planted, pruned, picked and packaged (pickers here are encouraged to taste a few berries as they go). The family put in 3,500 more plants last May and elevated their grand total to 20 acres of organic



blueberries. The farm now has nearly 200 acres that include lush woods, hay fields for grass-fed beef, a pond and two barns, one of which it rents to a distillery that makes products with the blueberries.

The main picking and packaging begins in mid-July for a five-to six-week period, depending on the weather and varieties, since some mature at different times. The farm grows four primary varieties and twelve other varieties in four test rows. Fletcher's favorites? Liberty, Patriotic and Legacy—his palate leans toward those not overly sweet.

Products such as preserves and granola can be found at the seasonal farmstand. "When you're small," Fletcher said, "it's about making yourself a little different." Loyal fans also find the farm's products at local stores such as PCC Community Markets and Red Apple Markets, plus Whidbey Pies, Orchard Kitchen and the Inn at Langley.

For most of Fletcher's career, he held "paper-pushing" positions. "Having something tangible is so much more rewarding," he said. He really enjoys the job creation aspect of his role, too, especially giving kids as young as 14 the same opportunities he had as a berry-picking youngster. He jokes that he was likely no one's favorite helper, since he ate nearly as many as he picked. Fletcher also finds owning a business intellectually stimulating and likens it to "having a mini-MBA," since you must master subjects from marketing to supply and demand.

"We know we're small, and we don't want to be a commodity blueberry—we want to be a special blueberry," Fletcher said.

Because of that, the family takes great care in everything it does, always operating by a "quality first" mantra. "It takes some art, and some science," Fletcher said.

### In the Kitchen

When it comes to working with blueberries in his Seattle kitchen, chef Ryan Donaldson of Ballard's Gather Kitchen & Bar said, "I like that blueberries bring their own acidity that gives them both a sweet and tart flavor profile." His team predominantly sources from Bow Hill Blueberries and Hayton Farms, both in the Skagit Valley.

For Donaldson, inspiration comes while wandering farmers markets early in the morning. "Foods that grow in season together almost always go together," he said, "so I find myself trying out flavor combinations I may never have thought of before, because I see them in the market." He also loves talking to the producers. "Food is their passion and lifeline," he said, "and I always like to hear how they use and care for the food they grow."

When it comes to scoring the freshest finds, Donaldson advises choosing berries with smooth, firm skin. "I like to rinse my berries in really cold water, pat them dry, lay them single layer and then cover them with a damp paper towel," he said. This helps them maintain that "nice pop" found when biting into the perfect blueberry. We can nearly taste it from here. 🍷

## Washington Recipes

### Blueberry Bites

#### Blueberry Chimichurri

Gather Kitchen & Bar / SEATTLE  
Ryan Donaldson

MAKES 1 PINT

1 large shallot, sliced thin  
2 garlic cloves, sliced thin  
1 tablespoon plus 2 ounces olive oil  
1 cup blueberries  
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
¾ cup chopped parsley  
2 tablespoons chopped parsley  
½ teaspoon dried coriander  
¼ teaspoon dried cumin  
2 teaspoons black pepper  
1 teaspoon salt

Cook the shallots and garlic in a sauté pan over medium high heat with 1 tablespoon olive oil until lightly browned on the edges but not burnt. Add all remaining ingredients to a blender and purée on high until smooth. Adjust seasoning as needed.

#### TO USE

This sauce goes perfectly with a multitude of proteins and vegetables, especially right off the grill, including scallops, halibut, steak (especially ribeye, flank and skirt steak) and barbecue pork shoulder steaks as well as ribs. It also makes a great, bright condiment for fish and steak tacos. The acidity in the sauce will allow it to hold up chilled for at least a month.

#### Barbecued Pork Ribs with Blueberry Glaze with Corn, Farro and Fresh Blueberry Salad

Ben Paris / SEATTLE  
Quinton Stewart

SERVES 4-6

#### FOR PORK RIBS

2 slabs (about 3 pounds) baby back ribs  
2 cloves garlic, sliced thinly  
3 sprigs rosemary, picked

#### FOR GLAZE

1½ pounds blueberries  
2 tablespoons sugar  
¾ cup white balsamic vinegar  
¾ can Coca-Cola  
1 tablespoon black pepper  
Balsamic vinegar to taste

#### FOR SALAD

2 cups fresh corn kernels  
2 cups cooked farro  
1 cup blueberries  
1 cup fresh basil leaves  
Juice of 1 lemon  
Olive oil to taste  
Salt and pepper to taste

#### FOR PORK RIBS AND GLAZE

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Score the ribs' silver skin with a sharp knife and peel away from the concave side of the rack. Season ribs with sea salt, pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Evenly sprinkle the garlic slices and rosemary on the surface, wrap the ribs in foil, and bake for 60 minutes. The ribs can be cooled down at this stage and reserved in the refrigerator for up to a few days.

Combine all glaze ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a simmer for 10 minutes. Transfer to a blender and blend on high for one minute or until smooth. Season to taste with salt and balsamic vinegar.

Brush ribs with blueberry glaze and grill over medium heat. Turn ribs every two minutes or so, glazing repeatedly to build up a thick coating of the caramelized sauce. Once they are seared nicely, set ribs off the heat onto a cutting board and portion into smaller sections.

#### FOR SALAD

Toss ingredients for the farro salad with lemon juice, olive oil, salt and fresh cracked pepper. Plate the salad on a large platter and arrange the sections of pork ribs on the top. Sprinkle with a little flaky sea salt.

#### Blueberry Shortcake

Metropolitan Market / SEATTLE

MAKES 6

#### FOR SCONES (MAKES 12)

2½ cups all-purpose flour  
¾ cup granulated sugar, plus more for sprinkling on top  
2 teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
1½ cups heavy whipping cream, more for brushing on top

#### FOR SHORTCAKE

2 pint blueberries  
2-4 tablespoons sugar, depending on the sweetness of the fruit  
6 prepared biscuits, scones or shortcakes  
1 cup whipping cream, whipped and sweetened, or ice cream

#### FOR SCONES

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Grease or line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a medium bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Slowly stir in 1½ cups cream to make rough, soft dough. Add more cream if needed. Do not over-mix.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead two or three times, just until dough comes together. Divide dough into two pieces. Pat each into a 6-inch circle, ¾-inch thick.

Cut each into four to six wedges. Alternately, pat or roll into one slab, then cut with a round cutter.

Place scones, about 1 inch apart, on prepared baking sheet. Brush with additional cream and sprinkle with a little granulated sugar if desired. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until golden and baked through. Serve warm or cool.

#### FOR SHORTCAKE

Toss the blueberries with sugar and add other fruit as desired—strawberries, raspberries, sliced peaches, nectarines or plums. Taste and adjust sugar, as you like.

To assemble, split scones in half lengthwise. Toast or warm as desired. Lay the bottom on a plate and top with the fruit mixture. If desired, top the biscuits with fresh whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.