

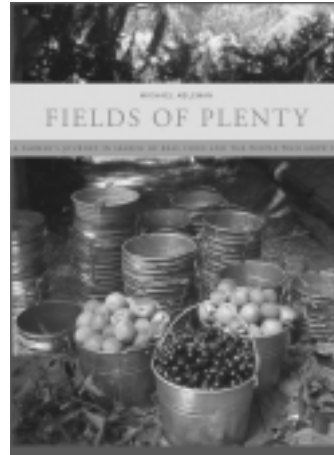
For Hilario it is all irresistible, reaching out eagerly into the universe, where he can never gather enough in, never try enough experiments, never grow enough varieties and colors and shapes. I remember when I felt that way myself, when I wanted to try everything, touch everything, and express myself in vivid and unmistakable abundance. Hilario's world is an immigrant's dream, where anything is possible.

As a full moon rises, it is finally time to eat the tamales. The process took all day, a carefully executed ritual from the harvest of the corn and the husking and grading and removal of the kernels to the grinding and filling of the husks.

Hilario and his two brothers, his grandson, and a nephew sit around the kitchen table with Aaron and me. The women either work in the kitchen or watch a Spanish soap opera that blares on the TV. Each time we finish a tamale, another mysteriously appears on our plates. There will be no refusal here. We eat them with fresh chili salsa and a little sour cream. When I ask Hilario's mother what's in the tamales, she looks at me with surprise and says, "Puro maíz! No mas," in a tone that says, "Why would we need to add anything else?"

Aaron and I are stuffed from the late-night tamale orgy. We exchange glances and signal each other that it's time to leave. I thank Hilario and his family for their hospitality. He

offers us a stern warning: "Do not go to bed on a full stomach." We take his advice and walk the perimeter of the farm several times. As we walk, we scan the flat, sandy, moonlit fields intently, searching for glints of color or infrared heat emanating from the peppers, imagining in their unseasonal company that summer could have just begun.



Michael Ableman is a farmer, educator, and founder and executive director of the Center for Urban Agriculture at Fairview Gardens where he farmed from 1981-2001. He is the author and photographer of From the Good Earth (Abrams, 1993), On Good Land (Chronicle Books, 1998), and most recently Fields of Plenty: A Farmer's Journey in Search of Real Food and the People Who

Grow It (Chronicle Books, 2005). He is currently farming on an island in British Columbia with his wife and two sons. For more information visit fieldsofplenty.com.

EDIBLE GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

This holiday season Edible Phoenix challenges you to think local when preparing your gift list. We polled our staff and friends for edible holiday gifts and here's what they came up with.

For the traditionalist: Bûche de Noel and other holiday treats from Honeymoon Bakery

For the real pork lover: Cowboy Ciao pastry chef Tracey Dempsey's bacon brittle from The Grateful Palate

For the would-be farmer: Their own peach tree lease from Schnepf Farms

For the Mexican food aficionado: Carolina's handmade tortillas with the award-winning Pepitas y Camarones or Flaming Green Garlic Passion salsas from the SalsaKing

For the food-loving business associate: A Queen Creek Olive Oil gift box

For the novice cook: Beginning cooking lessons or knife skills classes offered in January from Andy Food, Epicurean Palette, Kitchen Classics, Plate-it-Up! or Sweet Basil

For the generous cook: The new Plate-it-Up! Cookbook, proceeds from which go to support the Soroptimist International of the Kachinas fund

For your cheesy friend: A 3- or 6-month cheese club subscription from Fromage A Trois

For the dining maven: A copy of *Dine Out Phoenix: Where to Eat from Chic to Unique* by Pamela Swartz, Cloud Nine Press (www.dineoutphoenix.com) along with a gift certificate to your favorite local restaurant

RESOURCES

Andy Food, www.andyfood.com, (480) 951-2400

Carolina's, www.carolinasmex.com, (602) 252-1503

Cloud Nine Press, www.dineoutphoenix.com, or your local independent bookstore

Epicurean Palette, www.epicureanpalette.net, (480) 488-4955

Fromage A Trois, www.fatcheese.com, (602) 358-7914

Grateful Palate, www.gratefulpalate.com, (888) 472-5283

Honeymoon Bakery, www.honeymoonsweets.com, (480) 517-9520

Kitchen Classics, www.kitchenclassics.com, (602) 954-8141

Plate-it-Up!, www.plateitup.com, (623) 937-1267

Queen Creek Olive Mill, www.queencreekolivemill.com, 480-888-9290

SalsaKing Fine Southwestern Foods, www.thehot1.com, (480) 654-8407

Schnepf Farms, www.schnepffarms.com, (480) 987-3100

Sweet Basil, www.sweetbasilgourmet.com, (480) 596-5628