

saxy chef

handmade and uniquely delicious



Antrim, NH



Producer **OF THE** *Month*

NOVEMBER 2020



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Producer OF THE *Month*

by Jon Megas-Russell



Pies will likely be one of the many treats that you bring to your holiday tables this November and December. They have a rich history dating back to the Ancient Greeks when they were made with meats such as chicken, lamb, pigeon, and beef. Only in the last couple hundred years have sweet pies become a favorite at gatherings. From apple and blueberry to pecan and cherry they always delight at the end of a meal. However, not all pies are made equally and that's why we turn to the Saxy Chef to hand-make hundreds of sweet pies for us each holiday season and throughout the year. The inspiration for these pies comes from a love for baked goods, music, mentorship, and the best possible flavor. Her hope is that she can bring love and joy to people through her baking—making one smile with every bite.

The Saxy Chef (Aubrey Saxton) is classically trained in fine dining and learned the craft while attending the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. She received an associate degree in Culinary Arts and soon headed west to try and make a life in California. However, she never made it past Missouri, where she and a boyfriend settled for a few years. She worked in an American fine dining restaurant where they hand-made pizzas, pasta,



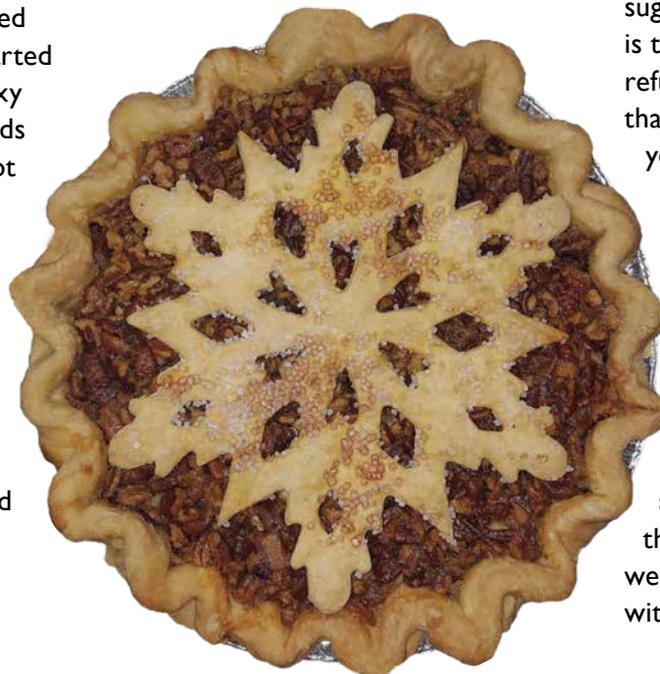
and bread, and grilled up one of the best steaks she has ever tasted. She loved her time in that restaurant—cooking, testing out what she learned in school, and always learning more. However, she found herself wanting to head back east as she was deeply homesick. Upon her return she spent some time working at The Stage, a restaurant in Keene, New Hampshire. She got her first break in baking when a local farm stand's source for hand-made pies closed up shop. Her dad referred that farm stand to Aubrey to become their baker. The funny thing was, at that point she had never baked a single pie in her life. So, she spent many long nights practicing baking pies and once the farm received their first delicious taste, they made her their exclusive pie baker. With her classical training and now her new experience with pies, she was hired as a baker at First



Course of the Monadnock Developmental Services. This organization held job trainings for adults and allowed her to connect deeply with the community and share her love of baking with lots of people. She spent many hours trying out recipes for baked goods, with lots of mistakes but many more delicious successes including cakes, pies, cookies, and brownies. And along the way, she helped people obtain job skills.

Aubrey's love for baked goods dates back to her childhood but she always felt like many of the recipes she tasted were either visually beautiful and lacked flavor or just too sweet. So, after her experiments at home and at First Course, she was inspired to offer perfectly flavored pies and baked goods, so she started her business and called it the Saxy Chef. She knows that baked goods are not good for you so "why not make them worth it?" Adding that when she trained at the Culinary Institute of America, their philosophy was "every bite should be the best," and to ensure that your dessert be as "important as the rest of your meal." What this means for Aubrey is real ingredients and lots of them. Sugar. Flour. Eggs. Butter. Fruit. Chocolate. Marshmallow. All the delicious sweets

you can imagine that make a baked good absolutely memorable. She shared that sometimes it can take a very long time to come up with a great recipe. Her pies must have a texture that is sensational, each bite with a crispy crust and soft filling. There are two secrets to her pie crust, in particular: one she cannot disclose and the other being the baking temperature of 345 degrees. She found that this temperature makes her crust, as she says, "Right on." She takes the same textural approach with her cookies and baked goods—they must mix chewy, crunchy, sweet, and salty, to balance texture and flavor—perfection in every bite.



Her ingredients are as local as possible, with New England apples, Maple Meadow eggs, cherries from New York state, rhubarb from local farms in New Hampshire, and all of her dairy acquired through Black River Produce from farms in Vermont. She utilizes a tremendous amount of fruit and thus prioritizes obtaining from U.S. sources. Her flour is sourced from the U.S. She also has choices to make when it comes to ingredients such as chocolate. Cheaper options contain more ingredients and she always likes to choose more expensive options with fewer ingredients. For instance, chocolate with fewer ingredients ensure her customers are consuming sugar over corn syrup. Again, flavor is the key to her success, and she refuses to cut corners—confident that her baked goods will delight your taste buds.

Pie making starts at 9 a.m., rolling out dough, making filling, and baking for at least six hours, to ensure pies are ready to be packaged at 3 p.m. when the "packaging girl" arrives. Every single one of her baked goods is handmade. They bake pies twice a week and other baked goods on the other three days of the work week. The kitchen is always filled with great music, a major source



of inspiration in the bakery—some days classic rock such as Led Zeppelin and other days pop music such as Taylor Swift. A manageable day is baking 200 pies, whereas during the holidays, upwards of 400 will be baked five days a week. Often the Saxy Chef bakes a full day just for the Brattleboro Food Co-op, and then another day during the holidays for other locally owned businesses, co-ops, and farm stands. Her bestselling pie is apple, and while strawberry rhubarb is also a huge seller, Aubrey believes her best pie is the “Scrap Pie.” She created this many years ago with leftover filling from other pies such as cherries, strawberries, rhubarb, and mixed berries. It is no longer made with the filling scraps from other pies, but the name stuck. She would love to only make this pie but so many people love the classics such as apple, cherry, blueberry, and pecan, so she must continue to offer a delicious variety.

Aubrey grew up with lots of people having a hand in teaching her about cooking and baking. This included her high school job at Subway, her time studying at the Culinary institute of America, and hands-on experience working in restaurants. She feels that her teenage years and early twenties spent in kitchens have been helpful in shaping who she is today. She wants to share her experiences with a new generation of young women. Luckily enough, Aubrey bakes pies in Antrim, New Hampshire, just down the block from the Teen Center, a place from where she has hired many of her staff. She believes that if they learn nothing about baking during their time with her, that is okay, as long as they gain confidence in being strong, independent women who know they can achieve their highest goals. Being a mentor is becoming more and more important to Aubrey, and she loves that her bakery is taking shape as a place for learning.

Moving forward, Aubrey’s main goal with her business is continuing to focus on making it a great workplace. Things like great wages, trainings, and team building would allow for her staff to develop skills and to create efficiencies. Baking can be tedious, and she hopes to find ways to make each day a little



easier, more fun, and filled with music. Training up her staff would allow Aubrey to bake more, which would also support her bottom line, leading to more investment in her long-term goals. As the business grows, she would like to diversify her offerings, finding new recipes that fit her niche and that would be well received by her largest customers, local food co-ops. New baked good offerings would allow her to express her creative side. Lastly, like many folks she wants to update her website with new photos, offerings, and a richer story to share with customers. Be on the look-out for fun updates very soon. As we head into the holiday season, Aubrey feels great about what she will be offering the Co-op and is excited for the long work days to ensure that your table is filled with delicious baked goods! We suggest considering a Saxy Chef pie on your next shopping trip, whether is in store or through our curbside pickup program. 🌿