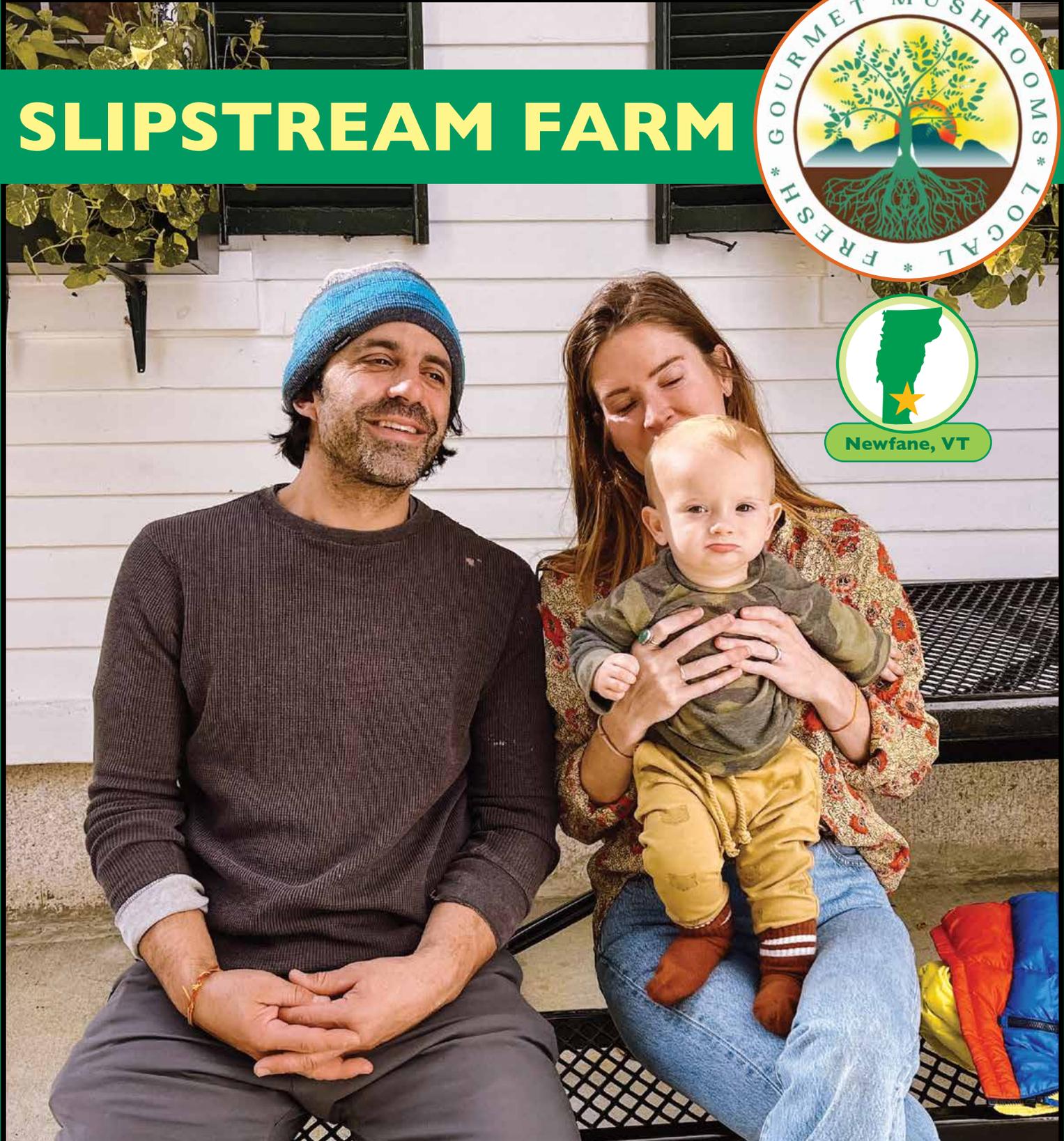


Producer ^{OF THE} *Month*

NOVEMBER 2022



SLIPSTREAM FARM



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

Producer ^{OF} THE *Month*

By Ruth Garbus



Jon and Lizzie Deloge's interest in mushrooms started in an unusual way—not through foraging, eating, or from psychedelic experiences, but from dirt! A few years ago, through Jon's study of composting, he came to think of fungi as powerful "commodities brokers of the soil": they pull in minerals and other nutrients from the surrounding earth and make decisions about which nearby plants they're sent to. The more he learned about these incredible life forms, the more intrigued he became, and his wife Lizzie shared his interest. With a baby in their future and a desire to homestead and live closer to the land, in 2020 they decided to transition away from Jon's successful landscape design business

in Cambridge, MA, and seek a new home in southern Vermont.

On a fluke that now seems magical, they ended up in Newfane after being misled by a wrong address. On their wayward drive, they admired a beautiful property with horses roaming in a field. A day later, that same property was put up for sale. Whereas before they hadn't even known Newfane existed, they now recognized this house and immediately jumped at the opportunity to tour it. When they explored the property, they saw that it was "turnkey ready" for mushroom farming: it had a beautiful new barn with a sealed, insulated room ideal for growing. It was almost as if the mushrooms themselves had led them

to this ideal fungal factory in the forest.

Mushroom farming starts with fungal cultures that have been grown on agar plates or in liquid. Grains such as millet, oats, or rye berries are par-cooked and inoculated with the culture and mycelium begins to grow. When the mycelium has grown entirely around each grain, some of this mixture, called grain spawn, is introduced into bags of moist hardwood sawdust or another substrate. Mycelia are sort of like the roots of fungi, and mushrooms are the "fruiting bodies"—the parts of the fungus that appear above the surface, like a plant. When the substrate has been colonized, slits are made in the bags and, if all the conditions are right,



mushrooms grow through the areas exposed to the air.

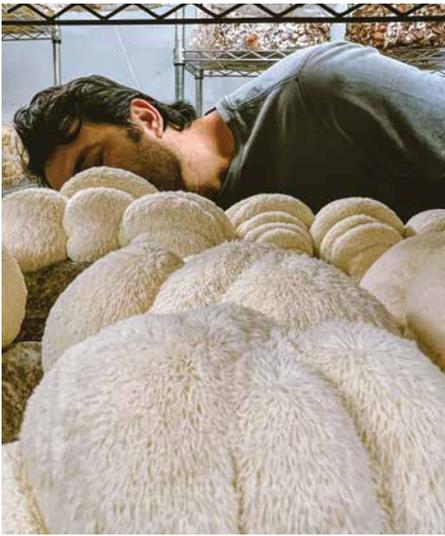
Each stage of the cultivation process requires total sanitation. For the first year or so, Jon and Lizzie made their own bricks of substrate. To pressure-sterilize them, they had pressure cookers hissing away on their kitchen stove from 6 am to 10 pm every single day. To ease their workload and home environment, they're temporarily growing on USDA-certified organic pre-made blocks, but are saving up for a bigger sanitizing device called an autoclave, which will be able to pressure-sterilize 800 pounds of substrate at once, and plan on returning to making their own blocks soon. That way, they'll be able to source the

substrate material locally, creating a truly 100% local product. They will also be visited by the USDA Organic Certification inspector just a few days after this article is published - look for the Certified Organic logo on their packaging soon.

There's a strong mushroom culture here in southern Vermont, centered mostly around foraging for wild mushrooms and grow-your-own enthusiasts. So Jon and Lizzie were surprised that no one else was already growing fresh mushrooms for commercial sale in our immediate area. But even though the time was right and the market was ready, switching to agriculture was still challenging. "Everything goes wrong all the time," said Jon, but

he's embraced the chaos, and tries to bring a sense of acceptance to his life as a farmer and life in general. Jon and Lizzie are incredibly grateful to their customers, the talented chefs they work with, and the wonderful farmers' market communities that have embraced them in the past two years.

Slipstream Farm currently grows five kinds of fresh mushrooms: blue oyster, golden oyster, shiitake, chestnut, and lion's mane, all of which we sell here at the Co-op. They also sell a double-extracted Lion's Mane tincture, which Lizzie brews, bottles, and markets. Lion's mane and its effect on dementia, other cognitive impairments, anxiety, and depression have been the subject of many positive



studies. While the FDA still has not approved any explicit statements about its health benefits, Lizzie and Jon have heard from customers that they've found relief from brain fog resulting from Covid and Lyme disease, as well as tremors and anxiety. Hearing peoples' first-person reports about how Slipstream's Lion's Mane tincture has helped them is gratifying and Jon and Lizzie have a lot of hope in the profound impact fungal medicine can have.. They both take it every day, as do their mothers and many friends.

In addition to making the tincture, Lizzie does all the marketing and sales calls. Jon grows the mushrooms and does face-to-face marketing to restaurants. It's uncomfortable sometimes, he said, showing up unannounced at the back door of a professional kitchen. But it's always gratifying when he opens his box of giant, gorgeous mushrooms and sees the reaction from the chef. "I've never seen mushrooms that look this good" is a common response.

Looking to the future, they're not quite sure what comes next. They're just "pulling all the levers" as they go, to see what feels right. They're exploring some ideas for products that would be more shelf-stable than fresh mushrooms, like frozen five-mushroom ravioli and frozen



Lion's Mane vegan crab cakes, which could add stability to their income. Jon is also planning on cultivating more varieties soon: the Piopinno, the Phoenix Oyster (or "Italian Oyster," as it's also known), and a local variety of Lion's Mane called Comb's Tooth.

Jon and Lizzie eat A LOT of mushrooms. Jon's favorite way to prepare them is in an omelet with blue oysters and cheese, and Lizzie loves to sauté chestnut mushrooms in butter with spinach and garlic. She ate pounds of mushrooms when she was pregnant with their baby, Leo, who was born last November. Jon said Leo might actually be made entirely of mushrooms. You can find their Lion's Mane tincture in the Wellness department, and Jon delivers fresh mushrooms to the Produce department on Saturdays.



How Did Slipstream Farm Get Its Name?

Lizzie explained: "We got the name Slipstream from the opening lines of Van Morrison's 'Astral Weeks,' a favorite song. The line conveys a relinquishing of control and surrender to trust, which we felt deeply as we moved here and started our farm, and continue to feel every day growing mushrooms and raising Leo. And Morrison composed the song in Cambridge, MA, where we lived for a long time, so it's a nod to our roots, and we also have a little stream on our farm, which we love."